

THEOLOGICAL ROUNDTABLE

The Francis Effect on the *Munus* *Docendi* and *Gubernandi* of the Church

Many observers detect a noticeable change in tone and practice between the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI on the one hand, and that of Francis on the other, a shift from what some have called a more rigorously doctrinal and juridical approach to a more inclusive and pastoral one. This change has been dubbed “the Francis Effect,” and numerous commentators have attempted to discern its fundamental characteristics and its impact on the wider church. This roundtable, based on a “reading of the Roman tea leaves” first proposed by James T. Bretzke, SJ, at the 2015 College Theology Society Annual Convention and revised for this issue, offers an interpretation that focuses on the service (munus) of teaching and governing exercised by the pope and its practical impact on the church. In their responses to Bretzke, Julie Hanlon Rubio and Reid Locklin explore this impact further and point out both the strengths and the limits of the Francis Effect.¹

Keywords: papacy, Francis, Curia, synod, church governance, *munus*, paradigm shift

Introduction

One obvious and incontrovertible result of what has been called the “Francis Effect” is the sharply increased journalistic interest not only in Pope Francis himself, but also in the Vatican and even the church on the

¹ An abbreviated version of this article was presented at the College Theology Society Annual Convention at the University of Portland on May 29, 2015. I am especially grateful to Professor Reid Locklin of the University of Toronto for responding to my paper there. My presentation included a PowerPoint slide show that may still be useful in illustrating many of the points made here; see <https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/BretzkeFrancisEffectOnChurch.pptx>.

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local levels.² While this results in a wealth of material related to my chosen topic, this advantage poses many particular challenges. It is a bit like trying to score a bull's-eye on what is very much a moving target.³ In the Koine Greek New Testament, a term from archery is used for this failure to hit the target: *hamartia*, rendered by the Latin Vulgate as *peccatum* (usually translated as "sin"). However, trusting in Pope Francis' overarching message of mercy, I hope that I shall be forgiven for missing the mark, if not sidestepping certain targets altogether.

Even to scratch the surface of my proposed topic would occupy this entire issue of *Horizons*. So instead, I wish to propose a briefer treatment, presenting some concepts drawn from cultural anthropology and rhetorical studies that can serve as a framework for analysis and reflection on the significance of some of the more important ongoing developments in the *munus docendi et gubernandi* of the church in the current pontificate. The end product then will be a bit like a mosaic, with pieces that illustrate certain key aspects of the effect and effectiveness of this papacy. Thereby I hope to avoid another Koine term for "sin," *hubris*, presuming that I have produced a finished tableau.

A mosaic consists of smaller individual pieces set within sketched-out sections that can progressively reveal a much larger work. While at this point I am unable to produce the entire picture, a preliminary reading of the "Roman tea leaves" can illustrate key aspects of the Francis Effect, including the following divergent perspectives:

- The ecclesial landscape *ad intra* and *ad extra*
- Attitudes toward the "world" and the "pope"
- Legal versus pastoral paradigms
- Deductive versus inductive readings of "Truth"
- Moral and pastoral analyses of concrete situations

² As veteran Vaticanista John Allen observed in a recent column for *Crux*, "Pollsters and sociologists continue to debate whether there's a discernible 'Francis effect' on Catholicism in terms of measures such as Mass attendance and willingness to self-identify as Catholic. One arena in which there's no doubt that Francis has had an impact, however, is journalism, specifically the willingness of media organizations to invest in Vatican coverage. Recently, for instance, the *Wall Street Journal* hired veteran Rome correspondent Francis X. Rocca, a friend and colleague" (John L. Allen Jr., "Beyond Powerlessness over Anti-Christian Persecution," *Crux*, April 18, 2015, http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/04/18/beyond-powerlessness-over-anti-christian-persecution/?s_campaign=crux:email:daily).

³ The core of the present article was completed by the beginning of May 2015. Some additional modifications (mostly in the form of notes) have been added as events unfolded in the church.

- Doctrine and tradition, continuity and change
- Conflict of duties and the hierarchy of truths
- Politics and primacy of conscience
- *Sensus fidelium* and the magisterium.

Morto un papa, se ne fa un altro

Morto un papa, se ne fa un altro (A pope dies; they just make another) is an Italian adage combining the sentiment of “It’s not the end of the world” with those of the French *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose* (The more things change, the more they remain the same) and the Latin motto *Semper idem* (Always the same).⁴ However, proving that all these generalizations indeed are false, Pope Benedict XVI immediately shocked not only the cardinals gathered on February 11, 2013, in the consistory *aula* (those whose Latin acumen allowed them to understand the pope’s discourse) but also the rest of the world, once the translation was delivered, with the announcement that for the first time since Pope Celestine V in 1294 a pontiff was resigning on his own initiative.

Shortly after discerning that the smoke pouring out of the little chimney over the roof of the Sistine Chapel on the evening of March 13, 2013, was indeed *bianca*, the bells in churches around most of the world began to ring in anticipatory confirmation of the announcement of the results of the papal election. While waiting on the phone with one of the local Boston news outlets, I was watching the events on my computer when the senior Cardinal Deacon of the College of Cardinals, Jean-Louis Tauran, stepped out on the loggia of St. Peter’s, proclaimed the traditional formula “*Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum: Habemus Papam!*”⁵ and continued with the phrase “*Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalem*

⁴ The Italian adage is used generally to downplay the significance of what might be considered to be historical events of grand importance. For a concise translation and explanatory gloss on the Latin motto and similar Latin ecclesial expressions, see James T. Bretzke, SJ, *Consecrated Phrases: A Latin Theological Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013). This was the episcopal motto of Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani, the ultraconservative who from 1959 to 1966 was the prefect of the “Holy Office,” whose formal title was the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition (today the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith). Ottaviani was known for his fierce resistance to many of the changes adopted by Vatican II, as well as his pivotal role in preventing any relaxation of the discipline outlawing artificial birth control expressed in Paul VI’s 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae*.

⁵ For a video of the event (from the first white smoke to the appearance of Pope Francis), see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfAbTLlewjs>. Paul Valley, in his *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), reported that an old rival of the new pope’s in Buenos Aires refused to allow the bells in his church to be rung in celebration; see Mark Lawson, “Pope Francis: Untying the Knots by Paul Valley—review,” <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2013/aug/02/pope-francis-untying-knots-review>.

Bergoglium.” The only “Bergoglium” I knew was the reputedly notorious former Argentine Jesuit Provincial who was reportedly against liberation theology and had supposedly handed some of his own men over to the military government during the period of the infamous “Dirty War,” when so many thousands of people simply “disappeared” if they were suspected of being in any way on the side of the poor.⁶ Tauran then concluded with the formula “*qui sibi nomen impo-suit Franciscum,*” and I thought, “Well, at least he didn’t pick as his papal moniker John Paul III or Pius XIII.” I thought “Francis” was a clever touch for the first Jesuit pope, as it would allay some of the fears connected with the prediction that the endtime would begin with the election of a Jesuit who, with the humility characteristic of Our Least Society, would take the name “Peter.”

What came next in the ceremony, though, revealed to me—and to tens of thousands of others around the world—the first sharp contrast of the “Francis Effect.” Papa Bergoglio appeared and spoke his first public words as pope: “*Fratelli e sorelle, buona sera!*” His accent was far better than that of his two non-Italian predecessors, though I thought his choice of words a tad too folksy (I wondered if he were at a loss for words in the vernacular of his new diocese).⁷ But as he continued it was clear to me that he was quite fluent in the language. His next words and actions began to cement further my hope that this would not be just another *morto un papa, se ne fa un altro* moment accompanied by the usual pomp and pageantry. Most remember the moment when he bowed his head and asked for the prayers of the gathered throng in St. Peter’s Square *before* imparting his first *Urbi et Orbi* pontifical blessing.

While many were also both struck and pleased to see the new pope had eschewed the scarlet mozzetta, gold pectoral cross, and red Prada shoes employed by Benedict XVI in his first public appearance, some on the loggia were heard to mutter in horror, not quite *sotto voce*: “*Questo é il fine del mondo*” (This is the end of the world).

The Overarching “Francis Effect” Thesis

While it did prove to be “the end” of a certain type of world, it was *not* quite the *eschaton* prophesized to accompany the election of a Jesuit pope.⁸

⁶ This part of Jorge Maria Bergoglio’s past is very fairly treated in Vallely’s *Pope Francis* (see especially chapter 3, “Jesuit Secrets,” and chapter 4, “What Really Happened in the Dirty War”).

⁷ For a contrast with the first appearance of Papa Ratzinger, see <http://www.americanheritoric.com/speeches/popebenedictxvi.htm>.

⁸ As this tradition went, the coming of the Antichrist would be realized in the election of a Jesuit as pope who would then take the name “Peter” (which no other pope had ever

Clearly a variety of paradigms had begun to budge, and any number of established guidelines in the art of reading Roman tea leaves would shift dramatically as well.

As my central thesis on the so-called Francis Effect, I would propose the following. In their pontificates Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI focused primarily on presenting the *church* itself as the best bulwark of “truth” in a modern age severely disturbed, in their eyes, by the scourge of secularism, with its infections of relativism, nihilism, gender ideologies, and so forth. Antidotes to these serious diseases were provided in magisterial documents such as the papal encyclicals *Fides et Ratio*, *Veritatis Splendor*, *Evangelium Vitae*, and the Declaration *Dominus Jesus* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to name but a few.

In contrast, I believe that Pope Francis is trying to refocus the attention of the church on the *gospel* itself, and his view of the church as a missionary field hospital populated by many deeply wounded souls who need the healing of the gospel through the ministrations of health-care workers not afraid to go out to them. While there is obviously an overlap between these recent papal perspectives, they are neither mirror images nor copies of one another. I would argue that this core perceived difference accounts for both the strong support and the considerable resistance the Jesuit pope has occasioned.⁹ A logical corollary to this thesis is that voices have been added that during the previous two pontificates were either largely silent or quite muted in their utterances.¹⁰

Optic of Global Pre-Scientific Convictions, Fundamental Values, and Root Paradigms

While theologians, historians, and journalists employ distinct categories and concepts in analyzing pontificates, some underutilized methods come from cultural anthropology and rhetorical discourse. My experience of living for well over a decade outside of my native culture, both in Asia

dared even to contemplate). Undoubtedly Bergoglio was well aware of this old prediction, and so his choice of Francis blocked total fulfillment of the prophecy.

⁹ Support for this thesis can be easily found in any number of places. See, e.g., Garry Wills, “The Pope Is a Christian!” *New York Review of Books*, March 29, 2015, <http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2015/mar/29/pope-francis-against-rome/>.

¹⁰ One emerging, leading example of a voice that certainly supports the ecclesiology of the Francis Effect is that of Manila Cardinal Luis (“Chito”) Tagle. See, e.g., Joshua McElwee, “Cardinal Tagle: Church Should Not Look to ‘Idealized Past’ with Nostalgia,” *National Catholic Reporter*, May 22, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/news/global/cardinal-tagle-church-should-not-look-idealized-past-nostalgia>.

and in Europe, has convinced me of two important, interconnected truths: that culture is one of our core modalities of being human, and that cultures vary considerably in shaping not only our basic institutions, art forms, and the like, but more fundamentally how we view the world, and moral categories of right and wrong, good and bad, and even nature itself. “Culture” is a polyvalent term that is quite impossible to define or even describe in fifty words or less. Thus we must also track what we mean by a particular use of “culture” in a given context.

Since Vatican II much has been written on these themes.¹¹ Karl Rahner used the expression “global pre-scientific convictions” to describe core cultural perspectives that are often incorporated (or, as Rahner says, *hineingeschmuggelt* [smuggled]) into argumentation largely unawares by those making the arguments themselves.¹² Rahner’s insight functions much like what many cultural anthropologists term “fundamental values” and “root paradigms.”¹³ Fundamental values express deeply held cultural assumptions about the world as a whole, and in particular about human nature and concomitant appropriate behavior. For most Americans an example of one such “fundamental value” might be our notion of “justice as fairness,” expressed as egalitarianism and enshrined in the “one person, one vote” principle. Other

¹¹ See James T. Bretzke, SJ, “Cultural Particularity and the Globalization of Ethics in the Light of Inculturation,” *Pacifica* 9 (1996): 69–86.

¹² Though Rahner was writing about ethical argumentation, his basic insight can be employed in many other disciplines as well and is worth quoting here: “In order to substantiate moral precepts, proofs, often very rigorous and subtle, are adduced; and yet we gain the impression that these proofs tacitly and without reflection really assume from the outset the very conclusion at which they aim, that the conclusions are, so to speak, smuggled [*hineingeschmuggelt*] into the premises of the argument (in good faith, of course) and that the proofs are convincing only to someone who was convinced of what was to be proved even before any proof was forthcoming” (Karl Rahner, “On Bad Arguments in Moral Theology,” *Theological Investigations*, vol. 18, *God and Revelation*, trans. Edward Quinn [New York: Crossroad, 1984], 74).

¹³ The principal cultural anthropologists I am referencing are Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, Clifford Geertz, and their disciples and colleagues. For a good explanation of these terms by a theologically trained cultural anthropologist with extensive cross-cultural personal experience in Korea and Europe, see William E. Biernatzki, SJ, “Symbol and Root Paradigm: The Locus of Effective Inculturation,” in *Effective Inculturation and Ethnic Identity*, Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures, no. 9, ed. Ary A. Roest Crolius, SJ (Rome: Centre “Cultures and Religions”—Pontifical Gregorian University, 1987), 49–68. See also Victor W. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974); and Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explanations in Cosmology* (New York: Parthenon Books, 1970); Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

cultures do not necessarily share this particular egalitarian understanding of justice or fairness.

Root paradigms are the ways in which these fundamental values are organized, modeled, and instantiated (e.g., in our legal systems, electoral processes, checks and balances in our government, church structures, etc.). Fundamental values and root paradigms are easily found in our theological cultures as well, and differing views on these may help to explain not only any number of theological debates, but even the more deeply troubling and perennial issue of the *odium theologicum*.

Theologically it is crucial to realize the inherent limits of any paradigm theory. If we can accept the not overly daring premise that *only* God can *fully* know the whole of created reality exactly as it is, then perhaps we might be able to grant a logical corollary, namely, that for the rest of us creatures our own knowledge will be necessarily incomplete and partial. Epistemologically we need to understand complex realities according to models and paradigms. If this is true, can we accept—at least in theory—that there might be a legitimate pluralism of such paradigms, and that these paradigms are not destined to be eternal and unchanging? The next conclusion would be the necessity of a basic stance of openness to revision of our paradigms, both because of the changing reality (which is a “constant” of human nature) and refinement in light of new insights.¹⁴

The Epideictic Genre of Rhetorical Discourse

I will be returning to these concepts throughout the remainder of this article, but before proceeding to reading our Roman tea leaves in earnest I need to introduce one additional analytical approach to the subculture of moral discourse, what church historian John O’Malley has labeled the *epideictic genre* of rhetoric.¹⁵ Related to my thesis on the Francis Effect, a considerable amount of the change we have witnessed in this papacy can be attributed

¹⁴ Obviously here I am referring to the foundational work of Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), as well as the seminal insights of Cardinal Avery Dulles, SJ, especially in the latter’s *Models of the Church*, expanded ed. (New York: Doubleday/Image, 2000).

¹⁵ O’Malley first introduced this concept in his seminal work, *Four Cultures of the West* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2004), and then employed it with respect to many of the ecclesial cultural paradigm shifts that occurred in Vatican II in his *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2008). I would observe that instead of the “four cultures” that O’Malley describes, it would be more accurate to call these “four aspects” of cultures.

to a return to this epideictic rhetorical discourse. O'Malley describes this genre this way:

The purpose of the epideictic genre, the technical name for panegyric in classical treatises on rhetoric, is not so much to clarify concepts as to heighten appreciation for a person, an event, or an institution and to excite emulation of an ideal. Its goal is the winning of internal assent, not the imposition of conformity from outside. It teaches, but not so much by way of magisterial pronouncement as by suggestion, insinuation, and example. Its instrument is persuasion, not coercion.¹⁶

The documents of Vatican II for the most part are characterized by this epideictic genre in that “they hold up ideals, then draw conclusions from them and often spell out practical consequences. This is a soft style compared with the hard-hitting style of canons and dialectical discourse. It is rightly described as ‘pastoral’ because it was meant to make Christian ideals appealing.”¹⁷

Regardless of whether Pope Francis has explicitly adopted an epideictic rhetorical genre, a good deal of the exercise of his papal *munus docendi* and to a lesser extent his *munus gubernandi* fit its broad characteristics.¹⁸ In this, Francis has echoed the “medicine of mercy, rather than that of severity” enunciated by John XXIII in the latter’s address that opened Vatican II, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*¹⁹—an echo that any number of people have clearly caught. Many of those who have caught the echo have been encouraged and enlivened, and have also noted a contrast with a number of the themes and approaches of the two predecessors.²⁰ But as the fallout since the

¹⁶ O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 47.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The clearest example that I can find for this epideictic rhetorical approach is Pope Francis’ allocution to the Italian Bishops Conference (CEI), May 18, 2015, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2015/may/documents/papa-francesco_20150518_conferenza-episcopale-italiana.html; English translation: http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-s-address-to-italian-bishops-conference--2?utm_campaign=dailyhtml&utm_medium=email&utm_source=dispatch.

¹⁹ *Mother Church Rejoices*, October 11, 1962, in which the pope critiqued those “prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster” while at the same time encouraging the assembled Council Fathers “to use the medicine of mercy rather than the weapons of severity” in their pastoral approach in responding to the primary purpose of the council itself. For the official Latin text, see http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/la/speeches/1962/documents/hf_j-xxiii_spe_19621011_opening-council.html; English translation: <http://conciliaria.com/2012/10/mother-church-rejoices-opening-address-of-john-xxiii-at-the-council/>.

²⁰ One of the more detailed early presentations of Pope Francis’ thought is found in the interview he conducted with Fr. Antonio Spadaro, SJ, in the summer of 2013 and

October 2014 Extraordinary Synod has made abundantly clear, others also have caught both the echo and the contrast, but without the accompanying optimism and encouragement. A central reason for these widely divergent responses to the same ecclesial events in the Franciscan papacy can be traced to significantly conflicting fundamental values and root paradigms operative in our contrasting ecclesial cultures.

Borrowing further from O'Malley's typology of the four aspects of cultural discourse (prophetic, academic, rhetorical, and performative), I believe that whether the many who witnessed the initial papal appearance did so with either optimistic hope or pessimistic horror depended significantly on how they had been enculturated into differing ecclesial fundamental values and root paradigms. In the treatment of "culture four," the artistic/performative, O'Malley concentrates largely on what we might term "high art," concluding that "in our era culture four tends to stand on its own, unintegrated into a larger scene, though a huge exception must perhaps be made for its popular forms, commercialized though they often are."²¹ Regrettably he does not probe the cultural underpinnings much for differences and disputes in style, which is an oft-missed opportunity, since in the church today some aspect of the "culture wars" certainly can be traced back to this important artistic/performative dimension.

For example, I believe a considerable amount of the pushback and criticism of Pope Francis' simpler liturgical vestments can be traced back to the fundamental values and root paradigms inherent in differing conceptions of what constitutes legitimate "performative" culture. One of the most visible icons here would be Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke. His preference for the Extraordinary Form of the liturgy with its accompanying baroque vestments is not just a matter of personal style à la an ecclesial instantiation of the old philosophical bromide *de gustibus non disputandum est*.²² This may be true in the limited arena of O'Malley's "culture two" (the academic) but certainly *cannot* be verified in the other three cultures.

published simultaneously in a number of Jesuit periodicals around the world, such as "A Big Heart Open to God" in *America*, (September 23, 2013), <http://americamagazine.org/pope-interview>.

²¹ O'Malley, *Four Cultures*, 232.

²² For a compilation of Burke's "quotable" pronouncements, see <http://www.stpeterslist.com/13590/i-smell-heresy-11-cardinal-burke-memes/>. Michael O'Loughlin develops this connection further: "In their quest to reform the liturgy, some Catholics hope to remake the culture"; http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/06/05/in-their-quest-to-reform-the-liturgy-some-catholics-hope-to-remake-the-culture/?s_campaign=crux:email:daily.

The Francis Effect on the Pope Himself

While the focus of this article is on how the other parts of the church have registered, amplified, resisted, or rejected the effects of the new papacy, it will be helpful to delineate briefly some of the major effects of the papacy on Jorge Maria Bergoglio himself. Before he stepped out onto the loggia of St. Peter's, the newly elected pope reportedly experienced a profound "consolation." In Ignatian spirituality this sort of consolation is not just a positive emotional feeling of well-being or success, but more deeply a quite special grace, given by God and for God's own purposes, though primarily to encourage and strengthen us for the inevitable difficulties that lie ahead. I suspect that Pope Francis interpreted this grace not as a validation of his success at coming in first in the conclave balloting, but probably more in line with the consolation Ignatius received at the little chapel in La Storta before entering Rome in 1537. Like Ignatius, if we accept being placed with Christ under the standard of his cross, God will bless our efforts in the way that Divine Providence (rather than human wisdom) judges to be best.

Recalling my thesis, I believe Pope Francis is trying to focus the attention of the church on Jesus' gospel itself, rather than on the church as an institution. This represents both a significant cultural change and a real paradigm shift in what Francis sees as a necessary return to the priority of the "fundamental values" that Jesus' own public ministry aimed to incarnate.²³ Mercy, not sacrifice, would be chief among these fundamental values, and here we see that Pope Francis has stayed remarkably on message. The root paradigm he has used repeatedly is the metaphor of the church as a missionary field hospital that must refocus on the necessary triage of responding first to the deepest wounds of souls who desperately need the healing ministrations that the gospel can provide through a church if it is not afraid to go out to them.²⁴

The *Munus Docendi* and the *Munus Gubernandi*

Arguably the most pronounced evidence of the Francis Effect is how the core *munera* or official duties of the church have been impacted and re-envisioned. In the 1983 Code of Canon Law (CIC) the *munus docendi* (service of teaching) is treated at length in Book III. Its exposition is

²³ For another take on the role that "culture" plays in Francis' reform, see veteran Vaticanista Andrés Beltramo Álvarez's book *La Reforma en marcha: Emoción y deconcierto en tiempos de Francisco* (Barcelona: Stella Maris, 2015); see also <http://www.romereports.com/pg161281-andres-beltramo-pope-francis-reforms-are-a-cultural-revolution-en>.

²⁴ The *locus classicus* for Francis' "field hospital" metaphor is his interview with Fr. Spadoro (see note 20).

hierarchically presented from the pope down to the baptized layperson, but it is worth keeping in mind that the CIC does explicitly allow for lay exercise of the *munus docendi*, as long as this is in cooperation with bishops and priests (cf. CIC c. 759). In the canonical paradigm the *munus docendi* is closely linked therefore to the *munus gubernandi* (service of governance), and for legitimate governance and jurisdiction sacramental ordination is presumed.

Since this canonical paradigm has not shifted appreciably in terms of who is empowered to exercise these *munera* since Bergoglio has assumed office, in discerning the Francis Effect we will have to focus instead more on “what” is being taught and “who” is now doing the governing. In these two areas we can discern both important changes in the various subparadigms and fundamental values, but also—and perhaps not surprisingly—we also see increasing resistance and outright rebellion. These latter negative dynamics give further evidence to support my basic thesis that what is essentially in play here are tensions akin to what the seminal thinker of paradigm theory, Thomas Kuhn, has termed a “revolution” in operative paradigms.

Material to be marshaled to support this premise is plentiful and diverse, and we cannot even briefly touch on the principal exemplars. So I will offer simply as additional “mosaic pieces” the following topics (recognizing that an even larger set of potential themes will be passed over without so much as honorable mention):

- The 2014 International Theological Commission (ITC) document on the *sensus fidei*, contrasting this with the 2009 document on the natural law²⁵
- Ongoing efforts to reorganize and reform the Roman Curia, including the Franciscan consistories creating new cardinals
- Appointment of bishops in key diocesan sees, such as Chicago, San Diego, and Santa Fe
- Dealing with the sexual abuse crisis and episcopal responsibility
- Follow-through on unfinished business from the Benedictine pontificate, such as the visitation of the American communities of religious women and oversight of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)
- The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy and its accompanying Bull of Indiction²⁶

²⁵ “*Sensus fidei* in the Life of the Church” (2014), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html; “In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law” (2009), http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090520_legge-naturale_en.html.

²⁶ “Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy” (*Misericordiae Vultus*), April 11, 2015, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html.

- The October 2014 Extraordinary Synod and the October 2015 regular triennial Synod on the Family and Evangelization.

Sensus Fidei in the Francis Pontificate

Roman dicasterial documents can furnish one gauge for measuring change over time. In 2009, at the midpoint of the papacy of Benedict XVI, the International Theological Commission (ITC) published a document on the natural law as furnishing a basis for a universal ethic.²⁷ One year into Pope Francis' papacy the ITC released another document, "*Sensus Fidei* in the Life of the Church." Certainly this project was in the works prior to the resignation of Benedict XVI, but it does indicate some recognition of the new pope both explicitly and implicitly.²⁸ Some things brought forward in the ITC "*Sensus fidei*" document definitely would not have appeared in the days of the John Paul II-Joseph Ratzinger collaboration, but one still is left with the strong impression in the current document of two baby steps forward and one and a half in reverse, as we see continued emphasis on the nearly exclusive role of the hierarchical magisterium in the exercise of the *munus docendi* and the proper response of acceptance on the part of the faithful.²⁹

²⁷ See note 25. For a largely quite positive commentary on the ITC document, see John Berkman and William C. Mattison III, eds., *Searching for a Universal Ethic: Multidisciplinary, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Responses to the Catholic Natural Law Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014). M. Cathleen Kaveny, one of the essayists, believes the document does show a rhetorical shift to the epideictic style (Kaveny, "From a Heart of Stone to a Heart of Flesh: Toward an Epideictic Rhetoric of the Natural Law," *ibid.*, esp. 229–33). I must admit I do not entirely share her optimistic view of what is in play in this particular text. For a more critical review of both the document and this essay collection, see my review in *Catholic Books Review: An Online Journal*, <http://catholicbooksreview.org/2015/berkman.html>.

²⁸ Pope Francis is referenced directly four times in the document, though the quotes hardly furnish more than a bit of "garnish" to a dish that was clearly already in the oven.

²⁹ See two key paragraphs of the ITC "*Sensus fidei*" document: "The magisterium also judges with authority whether opinions which are present among the people of God, and which may seem to be the *sensus fidelium*, actually correspond to the truth of the Tradition received from the Apostles. As Newman said: 'the gift of discerning, discriminating, defining, promulgating, and enforcing any portion of that tradition resides solely in the Ecclesia docens.' Thus, judgement regarding the authenticity of the *sensus fidelium* belongs ultimately not to the faithful themselves nor to theology but to the magisterium" (§77); "The faithful must reflect on the teaching that has been given, making every effort to understand and accept it. Resistance, as a matter of principle, to the teaching of the magisterium is incompatible with the authentic *sensus fidei*" (§80).

In the past, we would do a careful reading of these tea leaves in what O'Malley would probably term "culture two," the academic,³⁰ scrutinizing such passages very carefully to see if we could discern any shifting sands in the official magisterial positions. But one of the key aspects of the Francis Effect is that reading the Roman tea leaves has taken quite a different tack, based on a much larger variety of leaves in the cup, with residue much easier to see (and more difficult to ignore).³¹ More recently Pope Francis has even called for a "listening magisterium," and anecdotal evidence is emerging that some bishops heretofore noted for their reluctance to engage in dialogue now are entering into genuine conversations over contested matters.³² This seems to be another piece of the mosaic of the Francis Effect that time should flesh out in greater detail.

Reform of the Roman Curia

When Vatican II opened, curial officials and theologians in the Roman institutions predicted a short and peaceful meeting. After all, these people had done all of the homework and had all the schemata ready for the assembled bishops' collective *placet*. Events obviously proved them quite wrong, but the curia officials were not overly disturbed, for, as the Italian *barzelletta* went, "Granted the bishops and their *periti* may have found the 'key' to the Council, but we [the Curia] will change the locks after they leave." A strong case could be made that the church locks had indeed been remastered. In

³⁰ One of the effects, perhaps, of the current papacy is the renewed interest this concept has occasioned. It was the central theme of the annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America meeting in Milwaukee (June 11-14, 2015) and was featured in "Wake Up, Lazarus," a theological electronic mailing list that takes up different themes and invites theologians to post short reflections (<http://wakeuplazarus.net/2015/sensus.html>).

³¹ For a helpful article that covers some recent scholarship and proposes an expansion of the understanding of *sensus fidelium* to involve the entire *triplex munera* of priest, prophet, and king in which all the baptized participate, see Anthony Ekpo, "The *Sensus Fidelium* and the Threefold Office of Christ: A Reinterpretation of *Lumen Gentium* No. 12," *Theological Studies* 76, no. 2 (June 2015): 330-46. For more works on the relation of the *sensus fidelium* and the magisterium of the church, including the role of dissent, see James T. Bretzke, SJ, *Magisterium and Moral Theology Bibliography*, <https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/MagisteriumBibliography.pdf>.

³² In a theological conference hosted by Georgetown University on May 23, 2015, Cardinal Walter Kasper delivered a talk in which he outlined what he believed Pope Francis desired in terms of the relationship between the magisterium and the *sensus fidei* of the whole church, which Kasper termed a "listening magisterium." Just how this would be worked out concretely remains to be seen. See <http://ncronline.org/news/global/cardinal-kasper-francis-wants-hierarchy-listens-sensus-fidei>.

the run-up to the 2013 conclave it became clear that a significant number of cardinals voiced hopes for “reform,” but probably both they and the world were just expecting a little more lubricating oil poured into the locks’ chambers and not a wholesale conversion.³³

This time, though, it seemed to more and more bishops and cardinals that the curial lock system needed more than a few squirts of oil, or a largely cosmetic rearrangement, as had occurred the last time the Curia had been threatened with an overhaul with John Paul II’s 1988 *Pastor Bonus*. If culture is indeed foundational in any society or organization, then it should come as no surprise that attempts to confront long-standing and deeply embedded bureaucratic offices, practices, and personnel provoke more than a little pushback. When finances are involved the difficulties are magnified exponentially. Historians analyzing the Francis Effect will undoubtedly credit Pope Francis’ initiatives in these areas as being of particular significance. Actual deep-seated reform is a very tricky business that cannot happen quickly or by fiat, and there will always be a push-pull effect—a sort of tug-of-war between those who feel events are moving too quickly and others who hold that the pace needs to be picked up considerably.³⁴ So far, it seems that Pope Francis has resisted throwing his lot in with one side or the other.

It was also a strategic stroke to turn over the mandate for the Vatican finances to Cardinal George Pell of Australia. As he is the only cardinal from the continent of Australia, it was virtually impossible not to include him in another of Francis’ bold initiatives, the so-called Gang of Nine—the cardinals who would act as an extracurial cabinet to assist the pope.³⁵

³³ Echoes of similar contemporary pushback on the part of curial cardinals are reported by John Allen, *The Francis Miracle: Inside the Transformation of the Pope and the Church* (New York: Time Books, 2015). Allen recounts that an Italian curial cardinal told him that “Bergoglio won’t be here forever, but we will.” See Paul Valley’s review of Allen’s book in the *Boston Globe*, April 23, 2015, <http://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/books/2015/04/23/book-review-the-francis-miracle-inside-transformation-pope-and-church-john-allen/ITzXYILhoq2KarQINWf4oM/story.html>.

³⁴ For an example of one Vatican expert who believes that real change needs to go more deeply and more quickly, see Robert Mickens’ interview with veteran canon lawyer Ladislav Orsy, SJ, “Can Pope Francis Succeed in Reforming the Curia?,” *National Catholic Reporter*, May 26, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/roman-observer/can-pope-francis-succeed-reforming-curia>.

³⁵ Here we see another aspect of the “Francis Effect,” the resurgence of influence of the chair of the Council of Cardinals, Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, whose career nose-dived during the papacy of Benedict XVI. See John Allen, “Comeback of Honduran ‘Vice-Pope’ Symbolizes Pope Francis Era,” *Crux*, May 12, 2015, <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/12/comeback-of-honduran-vice-pope-symbolizes-pope-francis-era/>.

While Pell is the most conservative of the group, by giving him this new “day job” the pope both got him out of Australia and has kept him very busy, leaving less time and freedom for the interview circuit in the style of Cardinal Burke.³⁶ Changing culture, especially when it is interwoven with finance, is particularly challenging. And so it should come as no surprise that some of the old guard of the Curia have resisted these efforts in a variety of ways.³⁷

With the other curial posts the pope moved cautiously but deliberately, and key changes in the Secretariat of State, Congregation for Religious, and consulters for the Congregation of Bishops are probably the areas that most amplified the impact of the Francis Effect on the *munus guberandi* of the church. Administratively at least Francis is seeking to steer a middle course so that no faction or wing can claim total vindication or lament absolute defeat. Benedict’s last major curial appointment, Cardinal Gerhard Müller as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), remains firmly in place,³⁸ and the liberty he has taken to outline repeatedly positions that most would consider to be at odds with the pope’s agenda may point to another key aspect of the Francis Effect—namely, the freedom to disagree publicly.³⁹ It is not, even for Gammarelli’s and its

³⁶ Pell, however, has encountered some problems of his own. First, he was criticized for certain expenditures (no doubt leaked by disgruntled curial officials), and as this article was completed a new story emerged involving Pell’s confrontational handling of clerical sexual abuse victims while still archbishop in Australia. See http://www.cruXnow.com/church/2015/06/04/cardinal-george-pell-and-the-australian-abuse-probe/?s_campaign=cruX:email:daily. Pell has begun his own counteroffensive by initiating legal action against one of the more critical journalists, Peter Saunders. See <http://m.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/george-pell-seeks-apology-from-peter-saunders-over-60-minutes-interview/story-fni5smt-1227387416928?sv=210afb7429bee287ae5274b057ad5543>.

³⁷ See, e.g., John Allen’s column for *CruX*, May 3, 2015, <http://www.cruXnow.com/church/2015/05/03/pro-life-anxiety-over-pope-francis-looming-ecological-manifesto/>.

³⁸ The CDF seems to be functioning very much the same as in the previous pontificate. The May 7, 2015, appointment of Pell’s successor in Sydney, the conservative bioethician Archbishop Anthony Colin Fisher, OP, as a CDF consultant would not be taken by many as a progressive tendency.

³⁹ There are many instances of this exercise of “freedom” in Cardinal Müller’s various interviews. See, e.g., “Cardinal Müller Says No to Second Marriage without Annulment,” <http://www.globalpulemagazine.com/news/cardinal-muller-says-no-to-second-marriage-without-annulment/1016>. Conservative Vaticanista Sandro Magister floated the rumor that Pope Francis’ long-awaited encyclical on climate change had been scrapped because of feared opposition from the CDF (<http://magister.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2015/05/11/e-questo-sarebbe-il-teologo-di-fiducia-del-papa/>), but Vatican press spokesperson Fr. Federico Lombardi, SJ, denied this claim (<http://m.ncregister.com/daily-news/father-lombardi-eco-encyclical-on-track-for-expected-june-publication/>).

preferred customers with a penchant for baroque brocade, the *fine del mondo*.⁴⁰

Creating cardinals eligible to choose one's successor has always been a most important way in which popes can continue to affect the church from beyond the grave. In this sense Pope Francis is simply mirroring the strategies of his predecessors, but obviously the "who" of the cardinalatial *Who's Who* bear strong witness to the Francis Effect in the *munus gubernandi*. The February 2015 consistory included men from eighteen different countries and many diocesan sees that either had never had a cardinal or had not had one in centuries. Here the pope clearly moved away from the *cursus honorum* tradition. New cardinals truly represent genuine diversity and underscore the efforts of the pope to make the hierarchical church more the "voice of the voiceless," to echo the vocabulary of the new Ethiopian cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel.⁴¹

In a follow-up to this latest consistory on April 13, 2015, Pope Francis appointed these new cardinals as consulters to a number of Vatican congregations. This is where the real work and corresponding influence take place, and where past prelates such as Cardinals Justin Rigali and Burke excelled. Burke's replacement on the Apostolic Signatura, Cardinal Dominique Mamberti, was named to several of the posts formerly occupied by Cardinal Burke, such as the Congregations for Bishops, Divine Worship, and the Causes of Saints, and the Secretariat of State. The other new cardinals who were among the "surprises" named by the pope were named consulters to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples: Cardinals John Atcherley Dew, archbishop of Wellington, New Zealand; Pierre Nguyen Van Nhon, archbishop of Hanoi, Vietnam; Francis Xavier Kriengsak Kovithavanij, archbishop of Bangkok, Thailand; Arlindo Gomes Furtado, bishop of Santiago de Cabo Verde, Cape Verde; and Soane Patita Paini Mafi, bishop of Tonga. Despite the positive dimension of bringing the periphery into closer proximity with the historical center of Roman Catholicism, some honest concerns have

When the Vatican released the title of the encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home* on May 30, 2015, Magister was quick to grouse that using an Italian rather than a Latin incipit for a document destined for the whole world was a poor move ("Laudato sii': Un'enciclica tutta francescana," May 31, 2015, <http://magister.blogautore.espresso.repubblica.it/2015/05/31/laudato-sii-unenciclica-francescana-fin-dal-titolo/>).

⁴⁰ Gammarelli's, located behind the Pantheon and across from Santa Maria sopra Minerva, is the preeminent ecclesial tailor shop that furnishes not only the papal cassock but most other hierarchical sartorial finery.

⁴¹ See <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/new-cardinal-vatican-should-be-voice-voiceless>.

been voiced about the overall, long-term effectiveness of this increased geographical and cultural diversity.⁴²

Appointment of “Francis Bishops” in Key Diocesan Sees

Reforming the church must include the appointment process for new bishops. It would be ludicrous to think that any pope could master the personnel dossiers of every possible episcopal candidate, but there is probably nothing more significant in the practical realm that a pope can do to leave a legacy of change that will last beyond his pontificate, whether it be long or short. The emergence of what are now being termed “Francis Bishops” was prepared for by Pope Francis himself by first reconfiguring the consulters on the powerful Congregation for Bishops. Vis-à-vis the United States episcopacy, the removal of Cardinals Rigali and Burke has proved to be of monumental importance, as we now are beginning to see a run of new appointments that differ dramatically from the protégés of these once nearly almighty “king makers.”⁴³ Examples of “Francis Bishops” would

⁴² Despite the positive dimension of bringing the periphery into closer proximity to the bureaucratic center of Roman Catholicism, some honest questions have been voiced about the long-term effectiveness of this increased geographical and cultural diversity. See, e.g., David Gibson’s analysis, *US Catholic*, February 17, 2015, <http://www.uscatholic.org/news/201502/pope-francis-diversifies-his-cardinals-will-they-have-clout-where-it-counts-29819>: “But will diversifying the College of Cardinals make it look more like the church’s global flock of 1.2 billion members? Or will it leave the electors so fragmented by geography, language, and viewpoints that they won’t be able to serve as a counterweight to career churchmen in Rome? ‘Prelates who have no Vatican experience, who don’t speak Italian, and who don’t themselves have the experience of running a large and complex ecclesiastical operation, may feel a natural tendency to defer to the old hands’ who have been blamed for Rome’s troubles, veteran Vatican expert John Allen wrote on the Catholic news site *Crux*. The bottom line is that Francis may run the risk of bolstering the old guard rather than cutting it down to size.” For a contrary interpretation based on the same data, see the lament posted by conservative blogger Deacon Greg Kandra, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/deaconsbench/2015/02/for-anyone-who-wants-to-go-back-to-the-way-things-were-before-francis-its-game-over/>.

⁴³ Examples of episcopal protégés of the Burke/Rigali faction would certainly include Salvatore Cordileone (San Francisco), Robert Vasa (Baker, Oregon, and now Santa Rosa, California), Thomas Olmsted (Phoenix), and Michael Barber, SJ (Oakland). Another “culture warrior” who could be counted in this fraternity (even if not having the same strong personal connection with Rigali and Burke) would be Robert Morlino (Madison, Wisconsin), who in an interview with Raymond Arroyo on EWTN asserted that bishops “are chosen by God” and therefore “govern by divine right.” The pope is just the “instrument” of God in this appointment process, and Morlino indicates that it is theologically problematic to judge or remove a bishop, since he has been chosen

include recent appointees such as Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago; Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego;⁴⁴ Bishop John Stowe, OFM, of Lexington, Kentucky; and Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe.⁴⁵ This cultural paradigm shift has been welcomed by many, including President Barack Obama,⁴⁶ though conservative blogs such as Pewsitter.com make it clear that the sobriquet is meant only in the pejorative sense, usually adding to their headlines captions such as “Not a word about abortion, contraception, or gay marriage” to nail down the condemnation and dismissal of these new hierarchs. And to be honest, they have a limited point: indeed part of the Francis Effect seems to be picked up in these newly promoted bishops’ political agenda, which does indeed focus more on the common good,

by God (interview broadcast on February 12, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BVp-oIPh1Q>; the remarks on episcopal divine right come at 7:00 into the interview).

⁴⁴ For an example of how a new “Francis Bishop” prioritizes challenges that the church must address, consider the “echo” of Pope Francis by Bishop McElroy, who participated, along with 120 other ecumenically representative religious leaders and President Barack Obama, in a three-day conference, “Catholic-Evangelical Summit on Overcoming Poverty,” organized by Georgetown University (May 11–13, 2015). In his remarks, McElroy lamented that “society has learned to live with the notion that certain people have fallen outside the covenant, and that’s just the way it is. Our God does not believe that this is acceptable.” Catholics also need “a spiritual framework of buy-in” when it comes to poverty; the degree to which Catholic communities accept the church’s social teaching has “diminished.” Believers must be “converted from a culture of indifference to the poor to a culture of solidarity with the poor,” he said, calling for structural reform “rooted in social and economic reality.” Growing inequality threatens the very existence of the United States. “A permanent, excluded underclass is contrary to the vision of our founders,” he said. “We seek to be a society that offers opportunity to everyone. The level of inequality we have now stamps out that opportunity, and we become a distorted society” (quoted in Michael O’Loughlin, “Catholics, Evangelicals Team Up to Fight Poverty,” *Crux*, May 12, 2015, <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/12/catholics-evangelicals-team-up-to-fight-poverty/>).

⁴⁵ See Archbishop-elect John Wester’s interview with the *National Catholic Reporter* on the role of bishops in the Francis era, at <http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/santa-fes-new-archbishop-reflects-role-bishops-francis-era>.

⁴⁶ Speaking at the same Georgetown conference as Bishop McElroy, President Obama observed that “nobody has shown that better than Pope Francis, who I think has been transformative just through the sincerity and insistence that this is vital to who we are, this is vital to following what Jesus Christ our Savior talked about” (quoted in Charlie Spiering, “Obama: Churches Should Focus More on Poverty instead of Abortion and Gay Marriage,” *Breitbart*, May 12, 2015, <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2015/05/12/obama-churches-should-focus-more-on-poverty-instead-of-abortion-and-gay-marriage/>). For more on Obama at the Georgetown conference, see Michael O’Loughlin, “Obama: Christians Need to Act More like Pope Francis,” *Crux*, May 12, 2015, <http://www.cruxnow.com/life/2015/05/12/obama-christians-need-to-act-more-like-pope-francis/>.

economic issues, resistance to the death penalty, a more Christian approach to immigration reform, and so on.⁴⁷ “Listening,” as Archbishop-elect John Wester put it, is the verb of choice in the exercise of the *munus gubernandi*.⁴⁸

Dealing with the Sexual Abuse Crisis and Episcopal Responsibility

While Pope Francis’ removal and reassignment of Bishop Franz-Peter Tebartz-van Elst of Limburg, Germany (the so-called Bishop of Bling)⁴⁹ could possibly have been carried out by John Paul II, and perhaps more reluctantly by Benedict XVI, membership on the episcopal endangered species list during these pontificates was largely confined to those considered doctrinally suspect such as for supporting women’s ordination.⁵⁰ Dealing with the scourge of the dysfunctional episcopal administration that allowed for the cover-up of decades of clerical sexual abuse was a much larger and more complex cultural manifestation of clericalism that neither John Paul II nor Benedict XVI could really even “name,” much less effectively address.⁵¹

Of course, some of the initiatives undertaken by Pope Francis had been prepared by both the 2002 “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the efforts of then Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict

⁴⁷ See the address of then Archbishop-elect John Wester to the Utah League of Women Voters, in which he says that real immigration reform has to begin with ourselves, so that we first see undocumented immigrants not as “illegals” but as brothers and sisters (<http://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2452684-155/bishop-wester-immigration-reform-may-require>).

⁴⁸ See http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/05/02/abp-elect_wester_my_first_priority_is_to_listen/1141254. See also “John C. Wester: Politically Engaged, Social Media Savvy,” *Albuquerque Journal*, <http://www.abqjournal.com/582274/news/archbishopelect-a-humble-person.html>.

⁴⁹ A theologian who focused on Catholic identity and evangelization to counter what he considered increasing secularism in Germany, Tebartz-van Elst was first named an auxiliary bishop of Münster by Pope John Paul II in 2003, then promoted by Benedict XVI to the See of Limburg in 2007. His lavish renovations of his episcopal palace (€40 million) provided the tipping point that led to his removal from the diocese by Pope Francis in October 2013.

⁵⁰ See, e.g., the events leading to the removal of Bishop William Morris of Toowoomba, Australia, by Pope Benedict XVI in May 2011.

⁵¹ Consider in this context the case of Auxiliary Emeritus Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit, who was told in 2011 that he must resign as pastor for violating the *communio episcoporum* by speaking in favor of extending the statute of limitations in filing reports by victims of clerical sexual abuse. Gumbleton had been a thorn in the magisterial side for decades on a number of issues ranging from war and peace to acceptance of homosexuals among the clergy.

XVI, to confront better the insidious evil of clerical sexual abuse. However, it was only Francis who was finally able to take the logical “next step,” which Benedict and the American bishops frankly were loathe even to contemplate, namely, bringing into the consultative process laymen and laywomen who had been abused, and finally to take action against a bishop guilty of a relatively recent effort at business as usual in the cover-up game. The “de-Finn-istration” of the deeply conservative Kansas City Opus Dei prelate Robert Finn was a pill too bitter to swallow for those who looked first and foremost to preserving the interests of the institutional church, and like many other similar changes in the *munus guberandi* this too exhibits a line of action never really possible in the previous two pontificates.⁵² Even after Finn’s belated resignation, many conservatives,⁵³ led most notably by William Donahue of Catholics United for the Faith, lamented the forces that had driven this “orthodox” and “traditional” bishop from his office⁵⁴ without even the benefit of the usual exit gambit of *promoveatur ut amoveatur* (promote in order to remove). Some of the conservative postings noted, not without some justification, that the left exhibited a mixed reaction, with the genuine relief that the church was finally rid of the meddling bishop, accompanied by a certain amount of *delectatio morosa* as well.⁵⁵

⁵² Though Finn’s “resignation” was one of the more notorious recent examples of cover-up of clerical sexual abuse, it is not the solitary instance in which Pope Francis has taken more decisive action. Another example would be the very quick acceptance of the resignation of Belgian Archbishop André-Joseph Léonard of Brussels on the heels of a Belgian court’s award of €10,000 in damages to a sexual abuse victim in a ruling that held the archbishop responsible for failure to take action on prior abuse complaints (see <http://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=25101>). This sort of swift action would have been highly unlikely under Francis’ predecessors.

⁵³ The county prosecutor, Jean Peters Baker, responded in a public letter to the misinformation circulated by one of Finn’s strongest backers, Fr. Gregory Lockwood (<http://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article20340576.html>).

⁵⁴ For a sampling of these reactions, see “Hated for Being Catholic: The True Reason Why Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-Saint Joseph Was Sacked on April 21 Is Obvious; He Was a Catholic,” Gloria TV, <http://www.gloria.tv/media/1e9B8K7yo1Z>; Frank Walker, “Finn Removal: Before It’s Over FrancisChurch Will Be So Squeaky Clean There Won’t Be a Catholic Left,” http://www.pewsetter.com/view_news_id_201798.php; Tantumblogo, “Poor Bishop Robert Finn Finally Hounded from Office,” <https://veneremurcernui.wordpress.com/2015/04/21/poor-bishop-robert-finn-finally-hounded-from-office/>. Of all the conservative reactions, Donahue’s was the most disingenuous, as it seemed to suggest Finn had been sacked for moving toward greater transparency in removing any semblance of cover-up by episcopal superiors of the misdeeds of their clerical subordinates (<http://www.catholicleague.org/bishop-robert-finn-resigns/>).

⁵⁵ For a sampling of more balanced left-of-center reactions, see Michael Sean Winters, “The Resignation of Bishop Finn,” *National Catholic Reporter*, April 21, 2015, <http://>

The Francis Effect on Diplomacy

Pope Francis and the Francis Effect are being increasingly felt in the world of diplomacy as well. Space does not permit an in-depth treatment here, but the following are some bullet points that deserve further study:

- Regime change in the Secretariat of State: Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone out, Cardinal Pietro Parolin in
- 2014 Prayer Service with Shimon Peres of Israel and Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in the Vatican gardens
- Being “undiplomatic” in denouncing Armenian genocide in Turkey
- Brokering a breakthrough in United States-Cuba relations⁵⁶
- Recognition of the Palestinian state⁵⁷
- Beatification of Oscar Romero⁵⁸ and normalization of relations with liberation theologians.⁵⁹

ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/resignation-bishop-finn; Brian Roewe and Soli Salgado, “Reaction to Finn’s Resignation: Sadness, Relief Settle on Diocese,” *National Catholic Reporter*, April 21, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/news/accountability/reaction-finns-resignation-sadness-relief-settle-diocese>.

⁵⁶ For an analysis of Pope Francis’ own possible impact in Cuba, see John Allen, “Francis Has the Chance to Help Catholicism in Cuba,” *Crux*, May 11 2015, <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/11/francisc-has-to-help-catholicism-in-cuba/>.

⁵⁷ See Jodi Rudoren and Diaa Hadid, “Vatican to Recognize Palestinian State in New Treaty,” *New York Times*, May 13, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/14/world/middleeast/vatican-to-recognize-palestinian-state-in-new-treaty.html>. But see also John Allen, “No Novelty in Vatican Reference to ‘State of Palestine,’” *Crux*, May 13, 2015, <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/13/no-novelty-in-vatican-reference-to-state-of-palestine/>, as well as his follow-up on the broader context of Vatican diplomatic attitudes to Palestine, “Explaining the Vatican’s Perceived Pro-Palestinian Tilt,” *Crux*, May 18, 2015, <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/18/explaining-the-vaticans-perceived-pro-palestinian-tilt/>.

⁵⁸ The May 23, 2015, beatification of Salvadoran martyr-bishop Oscar Romero is also widely viewed as a result of the Francis Effect and a more positive toleration, if not acceptance, of liberation theology. On this point, see John Allen, “Beatification of El Salvador’s Oscar Romero a Turning Point for Catholicism,” *Crux*, May 18, 2015, <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/16/beatification-of-el-salvadoros-oscar-romero-a-turning-point-for-catholicism/>. Another commentator suggests Romero’s own vision corresponds to Francis’ plan for the church; see Pat Marin, “Does Romero’s Beatification Signal Where Francis Is Leading the Church?” *National Catholic Reporter*, May 19, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/news/global/does-romeros-beatification-signal-where-francis-leading-church>. For why Romero’s path to sainthood was blocked during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, see the discussion around Ashley Beck’s *Oscar Romero: Archbishop of San Salvador and Martyr* (Salford, UK: Catholic Truth Society, 2015). An interview with Beck can be found at <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2015/05/21/why-did-romero-have-enemies-at-the-vatican/>.

⁵⁹ E.g., Gustavo Gutiérrez’s positive remarks at a Vatican press conference on May 12, 2015, in the context of his participation as a guest theologian at the general assembly of *Caritas*

The Francis Effect and Women in the Church

As in every other section in this overview, a proper consideration of issues relating more directly to women in the church would demand more than the allotted paragraph. To support the thesis on how the core cultural concepts of fundamental values and root paradigms mark this papacy we could point positively to the happy, though frankly unanticipated, conclusion of the Apostolic Visitation of communities of American religious women, and more especially the de facto truce arranged in the Vatican oversight of the LCWR.⁶⁰ Neither felicitous endgame would have been in the playbooks of the curial benches in the last two pontificates—or indeed in any pontificates’ similarly peaceful “nondefinitive” resolution of such an acrimonious conflict since the Borghese Pope Paul V mandated a cease-fire peace between the Jesuits and Dominicans over the “will and grace” dispute of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

In other areas the scorecard is decidedly somewhat mixed,⁶¹ though on the whole the pope is clearly more progressive than his predecessors.⁶² He

Internationalis: <http://www.cruznnow.com/church/2015/05/12/liberation-theology-founder-praises-new-atmosphere-under-pope-francis/>. *L'Osservatore Romano* even published on May 18, 2015, an excerpt of a new book by Jon Sobrino on his memories of the death and funeral of Archbishop Oscar Romero (<http://www.osservatoreromano.va/it/news/lo-sconcerto-e-il-coraggio>). Sobrino had been the subject of a critical 2007 notification by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. See also Jim Yardley and Simon Romero, “Pope’s Focus on Poor Revives Scorned Theology,” *New York Times*, May 24, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/24/world/europe/popes-focus-on-poor-revives-scorned-theology.html>, which gives an overview of the history of liberation theology highlighting contrasts between Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis.

⁶⁰ For an overview of the whole affair, see John Allen, “Why the Vatican’s Crackdown on Nuns Ended Happily,” *Crux*, April 16, 2015, <http://www.cruznnow.com/church/2015/04/16/why-the-vaticans-crackdown-on-nuns-ended-happily/>. For the “joint report” of the LCWR and CDF, see <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/joint-final-report-on-the-doktrinal-assessment-of-the-leadership-conference-of-women-religious-lcwr>. For a perspective from the secular press, see Laurie Goodstein, “The Nuns Spoke Out, but the Archbishop Listened,” *New York Times*, May 15, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/15/us/the-nuns-spoke-out-but-the-archbishop-listened.html>.

⁶¹ Lest there be too much jubilation over the resolution of the LCWR standoff, the editors of the *National Catholic Reporter* observe that as long as there are no systemic changes to this particular mode of exercising the *munus guberandi* in the CDF, there would be little to prevent another such scenario from occurring. See “Hierarchy’s Flaws Persist despite Collegial End to LCWR Investigation,” <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/editorial-hierarchy-flaws-persist-despite-collegial-end-lcwr-investigation>.

⁶² For example, Pope Francis’ audience with an international group of male and female religious working in the Archdiocese of Rome on May 16, 2015, provided important context for how he sees the role of women in various sectors of the church, including spiritual

has repeated that the women's ordination issue has been settled, but it no longer seems quite the litmus test it once was for the granting of *nihil obstat* or episcopal promotion or demotion. He welcomed Lutheran Archbishop Antje Jackelen of Uppsala, the first woman to head the Church of Sweden, to the Apostolic Palace on May 3, 2015.⁶³ Women have been appointed to more positions of responsibility in the Vatican Curia,⁶⁴ and in American dioceses women have a much higher percentage of key positions than in the workplace at large.⁶⁵ Pope Francis has also called for equal pay for women, based on the Christian concept of radical equality, a stance that John Paul II would have been particularly uncomfortable with since the Polish pope stated repeatedly that women's highest vocation was to be exercised as wives and mothers in the home.⁶⁶ One of the more prominent "Francis Bishops," Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago, named a woman as the chief operating officer for the entire archdiocese.⁶⁷

direction. See Cindy Wooten, "Church Needs Women's Voices, Input, Experiences, Pope Tells Religious," *National Catholic Reporter*, May 18, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/francis-chronicles/church-needs-womens-voices-input-experiences-pope-tells-religious>. For a translation of the full transcript, see <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-s-q-and-a-with-consecrated-persons>.

⁶³ The event received only a short mention (with no photo) in *L'Osservatore Romano*, which probably indicates not everyone was pleased by this papal outreach. For a report, with photo, see Robert Mickens' "Letter from Rome," <http://www.globalpulsemagazine.com/preview/keeping-secrets/1197>.

⁶⁴ On this point, see Elise Harris, "Is a Springtime of Leadership Blooming for Women in the Vatican," *Catholic News Agency*, April 18, 2015, <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/is-a-springtime-of-leadership-blooming-for-women-in-the-vatican-30844/>.

⁶⁵ Of the top 571 diocesan key posts in the 197 US dioceses, 32 percent are filled by women, as compared with 18 percent in Congress and 5 percent of Fortune 500 CFOs. Nevertheless, 35 dioceses still have no women in these posts; many of these are run by bishops more closely allied with the ethos of Pope John Paul II and/or Pope Benedict XVI. Data is taken from Michael O'Loughlin, "Most US Dioceses Have Women in Key Posts, But Some Have None," *Crux*, May 14, 2015, <http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/14/women-us-catholic-dioceses-leadership-data/>.

⁶⁶ In his General Audience of April 28, 2015, Pope Francis stated: "Why is it expected that women must earn less than men? No! They have the same rights. The disparity is a pure scandal" (<http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/francis-firmly-backs-equal-pay-women-citing-christian-radical-equality>).

⁶⁷ See Emily McFarlan Miller, "Cupich Names Woman to New COO Role in Chicago Archdiocese," *Chicago Sun Times*, April 30, 2015, <http://chicago.suntimes.com/news/7/71/566203/cupich-names-woman-new-coo-role-archdiocese-chicago>.

The Synods on the Family: October 2014 and October 2015

In terms of sustained media attention, clearly the two Synods on the Family would capture first place. Similarly, in the academy a good deal of scholarly reflection has been devoted to these meetings, so I will not attempt even a brief summary here.⁶⁸ In terms of my overarching thesis that the Francis Effect's primary focus is on the gospel as the healing message that should guide the church, let me briefly point out a few aspects of the recent October synods that can further support this thesis.

First, one can underscore the emphasis that the 2014 *Instrumentum Laboris*⁶⁹ gives to *listening*, which was then further underscored in the *Relatio post Disceptationem*⁷⁰ (the midsynodal *relatio* or report) in order to provide the organizing framework "Listen, Judge, and Act." This tripartite schema was explicitly attacked in the second week of the Extraordinary Synod in the *circuli minores* discussion in the group chaired by Cardinal Burke, which argued that "Listen" should be scrapped and replaced with the "clearer" and more active "See," and then should move decisively to "Judge" and "Act." The October 2015 Synod, however, has retained the schema beginning with "Listen," and this certainly represents not just a shift in vocabulary but in culture as well.

Another example of the Francis Effect came directly from the pope himself in his opening address, in which he explicitly called for openness or *parrhesia*,

⁶⁸ I have analyzed the synods in depth in two public lectures: "Re-Reading the Roman Tea Leaves on the Synods on the Family," <https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/BretzkeSynodOnTheFamilyWadeLecture.pptx> (PowerPoint slides), <https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/BretzkeSynodOnTheFamilyWadeLectureScript.pdf> (script); "Life Matters: Reflections on the Extraordinary Synod on the Family," <https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/BretzkeSynodOnTheFamilyBCTalk.pptx> (PowerPoint slides), <https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/BretzkeSynodOnTheFamilyBCTalkScript.pdf> (script). For a video of the October 2014 lecture, see <http://www.bc.edu/schools/stm/edevnts/CampusEvents/PastLectures/2014/10-28-2014.html>.

⁶⁹ See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20140626_instrumentum-laboris-familia_en.html.

⁷⁰ The working language of the report was Italian. There was criticism of the first English translation, which seemed to be too positive regarding gay and lesbian issues, so that translation was replaced by what clearly is a "dynamic un-equivalence" translation (e.g., removing from the Italian the term *dei partners* and replacing it with *these persons*). Unfortunately, this inferior translation remains the most accessible version: <http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/13/0751/03037.html>. The various translation issues are treated briefly in my two synod presentations (see note 68).

the Greek term meaning “to speak candidly or boldly, without fear.”⁷¹ This also represented a cultural change of some significance, allowing for what in Italian is called a *confronto Americano*, literally, an “American-style confrontation.” Americans would retranslate this as a “frank discussion,” seen as an important and necessary step toward arriving at consensus on controversial issues. But in the ecclesial culture of Italy this *confronto Americano* is usually seen as a type of *brutta figura* (literally, “ugly figure”) to be avoided at all costs.

There was obviously plenty of *parrhesia* before, during, and after the Extraordinary Synod, and not just in the well-reported debates over the possibility of admitting divorced and remarried Catholics to Communion. Even having this discussion represents a profound cultural shift in the church that would have been utterly unimaginable in virtually any previous pontificate.⁷² Perhaps the most revealing example of both paradigm shift and culture clash came not in the discussion of Communion but almost as an aside in the speech given by two of the invited lay participants, Romano and Mavis Pirola from Australia, who recounted the following:

For example, the Church constantly faces the tension of upholding the truth while expressing compassion and mercy. Families face this tension all the time. Take homosexuality as an example. Friends of ours were planning their Christmas family gathering when their gay son said he wanted to bring his partner home too. They fully believed in the Church’s teachings and they knew their grandchildren would see them welcome the son and his partner into the family. Their response could be summed up in three [sic] words, “He is our son.” What a model of evangelization for parishes as they respond to similar situations in their neighborhood! It is a practical example of what the *Instrumentum laboris* says concerning the Church’s teaching role and its main mission to let the world know of God’s love.⁷³

Strong applause broke out in the synod *aula*. But one person who sat on his hands, Cardinal Burke, quickly took to the airwaves, deploring the “aggressive

⁷¹ For an English translation of the pope’s October 6, 2014, Italian address, see http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141006_padri-sinodali.html.

⁷² In this same vein, Peter Steinfels proposes that the 2014 “*parrēsia* openness” might be carried over in the October 2015 Synod to include a fuller discussion of the church’s teaching on contraception, which certainly would hardly have been imaginable, or even possible, before. See Steinfels, “Contraception and Honesty: A Proposal for the Next Synod,” *Commonweal Magazine*, May 14, 2015, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/contraception-honesty-o>.

⁷³ For the full text, see <http://www.we-are-church.org/413/index.php/activities/synod-on-the-family-2014/340-mr-and-mrs-pirola-s-address-to-the-synod-on-the-family-6-october-2014>.

homosexual agenda” present in society today and then addressing the Pirolas’ anecdote with these words:

If homosexual relations are intrinsically disordered, which indeed they are—reason teaches us that and also our faith—then, what would it mean to grandchildren to have present at a family gathering a family member who is living [in] a disordered relationship with another person? We wouldn’t, if it were another kind of relationship—something that was profoundly disordered and harmful—we wouldn’t expose our children to that relationship, to the direct experience of it. And neither should we do it in the context of a family member who not only suffers from same-sex attraction, but who has chosen to live out that attraction, to act upon it, committing acts which are always and everywhere wrong, evil.⁷⁴

Besides grievous scandal, Burke continued, a misguided “acceptance” of the gay son and his partner by the family would ultimately harm further the son himself, who was engaged in a lifestyle directly repugnant both to the natural law as well as Scripture and constant church teaching. This incident highlights a goodly number of clashing fundamental values and root paradigms that lead people to applaud one party and deplore the other, and undoubtedly the October 2015 Synod will provide additional examples of how these cultural concepts are played out in the concrete.

Mercy in the Papal Triple *Munera: Docendi, Gubernandi, and Sanctificandi*

Much more can be said on each of these topics, but I save the best for last as one of the most important aspects of the Francis Effect: the message of mercy. Vatican II’s *Lumen Gentium* §25 lists “character, frequency, and manner” as the three principal criteria in helping the faithful determine the proper *obsequium religiosum* to give to teachings of the ordinary magisterium, that is, that which is *not* defined as infallible, irreformable, and calling for the assent of belief.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ This interview, given to Life-Site News on October 9, 2014, can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MOfho3wGi4&list=UUYImiD9LodMycenfBy2aloQ>.

⁷⁵ “His [the pope’s] mind and will in the matter [of the teaching] may be known either from the *character* of the documents, from his *frequent repetition* of the same doctrine, or from his *manner* of speaking” (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium]*, November 21, 1964, §25 [emphasis added], http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html).

Theologically, “mercy” certainly is a core message of the gospel, and many would argue an essential characteristic of God as well.⁷⁶ Therefore, it ranks very high in the “character” criterion, and arguably much higher than some of the other neuralgic issues that are frequently denounced, such as the “grave evils” of masturbation, artificial contraception, in vitro fertilization, and so on.⁷⁷ While no one, apart from some in the ultra right wing of the church, would directly contest “mercy” in public, it nevertheless seems clear that many would not like to utter a profound “Amen” to Jesus’ words that God desires mercy and not sacrifice.⁷⁸

There is likewise no possible doubt of satisfying the “frequency” criterion, as “mercy” and related themes occupy Pope Francis’ exercise of the *munus docendi* on virtually a daily basis. He truly lives his episcopal motto, *miserando atque eligendo* (lowly but chosen),⁷⁹ and has consistently stayed more on the message of mercy than probably any other of the many themes he has covered in his various homilies, allocutions, and other writings.⁸⁰

While it would be both unexpected and unnecessary to present “mercy” as *de fide definita* exercised in the extraordinary magisterium, instituting the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, with its corresponding papal Bull of

⁷⁶ E.g., Cardinal Walter Kasper’s *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life*, trans. William Madges (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), which Pope Francis acknowledges as having done him much good.

⁷⁷ This terminology and list come from Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone’s original proposal (February 4, 2015) of language for faculty contracts and handbook for teachers in the San Francisco high schools under his direct supervision, a proposal that proved controversial (http://www.catholic-sf.org/printer_friendly.php?id=63175). The archbishop later released a revised preamble to the faculty handbook that is quite different in both tone and content (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BoYiEphdTy4XeU1Zc1ZZSHpVS2M/view?usp=sharing>).

⁷⁸ One example comes from the blog of John Zuhlsdorf (“Fr. Z”), in which he criticizes the pope’s failures to expand on the spiritual work of mercy of “admonishing the sinner” (<http://wdtprs.com/blog/2015/04/a-curious-lacuna-in-misericordiae-vultus-the-bull-for-the-holy-year-of-mercy/>). Regrettably this is not a solitary voice crying in the wilderness; some seminarians I know likewise have criticized “hyper-mercy” in the sacrament of reconciliation.

⁷⁹ Pope Francis prefers this translation of the Latin, which is a reference taken from the homilies of the Venerable Bede on the call of the tax collector in Matthew’s Gospel; it speaks of God’s mercy in choosing him as bishop and then pope.

⁸⁰ For example, see his homily (for Monday, March 23, 2015) based on the readings of Susanna in the book of Daniel and the woman caught in adultery in John’s Gospel: http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/03/23/pope_%E2%80%9Cwhere_there_is_no_mercy_there_is_no_justice%E2%80%9D/1131468. See also his allocution to priests, exhorting them always to treat penitents with mercy, and not to deny the sacraments to people: <http://cnstopstories.com/2015/04/27/no-boring-homilies-pope-tells-new-priests-at-ordination/>.

Indiction (*Misericordiae Vultus*),⁸¹ would be nearly the highest “manner” available in the papal magisterium, and one in which Pope Francis has joined his *munus docendi* to the *munus sanctificandi*, which could also be interpreted as an exercise of the *munus gubernandi*.

The bull is also the best sustained reflection to date on Pope Francis’ understanding of the critical importance of mercy in the economy of salvation and the mission of the church.⁸² While it merits much fuller discussion, consider this one key passage: “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love” (§10). Clearly Pope Francis’ message of mercy is not only one of the principal effects of his papacy so far, but also clearly satisfies three criteria for calling for a sincere religious respect of both the intellect and will on the part of all Catholics, starting with the ordained members of the church, who have been charged in a special way with this mission of mercy.

Resistance to the Francis Effect

For every action there is an equal opposite reaction, as Isaac Newton taught, and not even a pope is exempt from this law of (human) nature. Once again, at least a book could be written, this time outlining the growing resistance to and rejection of the Francis Effect in some conservative corners of the church community.⁸³ Some, like Bishop Thomas Tobin of

⁸¹ See note 26. For an explanation of the significance of this Jubilee, see Archbishop Rino Fisichella, “Non grandi raduni, ma autentico spirito evangelico,” *Famiglia Christiana*, March 14, 2015, <http://www.famigliacristiana.it/articolo/fisichella.aspx>. Fisichella has been given the task of organizing the practical aspects of the Jubilee Year.

⁸² For a brief overview, see Joshua McElwee, “Proclaiming Jubilee, Francis Envisions Non-Judging, Non-Condemning Church,” *National Catholic Reporter*, April 11, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/proclaiming-jubilee-francis-envisions-non-judging-non-condemning-church>.

⁸³ A very “pro-Francis” view of the pope and his adversaries can be seen in the interview with the reputed ghostwriter of *Evangelii Gaudium*, Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernandez, rector of the Catholic University of Argentina, in the centrist Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* (May 10, 2015), saying that despite strong resistance to the pope there simply is “no going back” (for an English translation, see <http://www.globalpulse.com/news/no-turning-back/1220>). For a negative view, likewise in *Corriere della Sera*, focusing on conservative quarters in the Italian church, see Massimo Franco, “Un Papa troppo ‘severo’: Il 20 per cento dei vescovi è con lui” (A Pope Too “Severe”: 20 Percent of the Bishops Are with Him), May 20, 2015, <http://roma.corriere>.

Providence, Rhode Island, have been breathtakingly frank in their remarks about Pope Francis after the Extraordinary Synod: "Pope Francis is fond of 'creating a mess.' Mission accomplished."⁸⁴ Others, like Cardinal Burke's protégé Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, seem not to have gotten the full memo on priorities and policies that are currently endorsed by the Holy Father. This can be seen in a number of policy "priorities" in terms of "Catholic identity." As Robert Mickens observed, even events such as the "March for Life," which logically ought to include as "life issues" other social concerns beyond abortion and euthanasia, did not give these concerns much traction with many of the power brokers in the previous pontificates.⁸⁵ Michael Sean Winters makes a similar point vis-à-vis the American bishops and their perceived priorities: for example, why do we not have a

[it/notizie/cronaca/15_maggio_20/papa-tropo-severo-solo-20-cento-vescovi-lui-8e2d05c4-feb3-11e4-ab35-8ecb73a305fb.shtml](http://notizie/cronaca/15_maggio_20/papa-tropo-severo-solo-20-cento-vescovi-lui-8e2d05c4-feb3-11e4-ab35-8ecb73a305fb.shtml) (for an English translation, see http://www.corriere.it/english/15_maggio_20/pope-seen-as-too-strict-6b18254c-fee9-11e4-ab35-8ecb73a305fb.shtml). Franco's article was countered by Cardinal Agostino Vallini, the vicar of Rome, in an interview with Angelo Zema, "Il cardinale Vallini: 'Papa Francesco non è isolato'" (Cardinal Vallini: "Pope Francis Is Not Isolated"), *Roma Sette*, May 18, 2015, <http://www.romasette.it/il-cardinale-vallini-papa-francesco-non-e-isolato/>. Vallini's interview was criticized in turn by Robert Mickens in his weekly "Letter from Rome," *Commonweal Magazine*, May 20, 2015, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/letter-rome-31>.

⁸⁴ Bishop Thomas Tobin, "From Bishop Tobin: Random Thoughts about the Synod on the Family," October 21, 2014, <http://www.diocesepvd.org/from-bishop-tobin-random-thoughts-about-the-synod-on-the-family/>.

⁸⁵ See Robert Mickens' May 11, 2015, *National Catholic Reporter* column, "Merciless Zealots in Defense of Life and Truth," in which he observes that the May 10, 2015, Rome "March for Life" had the personal participation of Cardinal Raymond Burke, in addition to the official backing of six Vatican officials, including Cardinals Angelo Amato (Congregation for the Causes of Saints), Marc Ouellet (Bishops), and Zenon Grocholewski (retired), as well as Archbishops Vincenzo Paglia (Pontifical Council for the Family) and Zygmunt Zimowski (health care). "But like many groups that identify as pro-life in the United States," Mickens noted, "numerous organizations that joined the Italian march were clearly not pro-life at all, at least not in the broad sense. The slogans they displayed on banners or sang in protest-like chants added up to saying no to three things and three things alone: abortion, euthanasia, and same-sex marriage....One would have looked in vain for even a single sign calling for an end to the death penalty. And unless the sun was just too blinding to see them, there were no banners to ban the bomb or protest placards to put an end to war. As for outcries against the immorally lucrative international arms trade that continues to stoke the 'piecemeal' Third World War, as Pope Francis calls it, none could be heard" (<http://ncronline.org/blogs/roman-observer/merciless-zealots-defense-life-and-truth#.VVEcYE8nxIM.twitter>).

“Fortnight against Poverty” along with the much ballyhooed “Fortnight for Freedom”?⁸⁶

Part of the resistance is due no doubt to the diminishment of power and influence of those who clearly held sway in the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.⁸⁷ However, the “sour grapes” phenomenon accompanying any significant regime change cannot account for the depth and energy of those bent on fighting any and all change attributed to the new pope.

The controversy over the possible change of discipline concerning admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments may be the most “high profile” example, but it is hardly a solitary instance. The combined anti-Francis Effect shows in a different way the truth of my thesis regarding how the core dynamics of fundamental values and root paradigms function in contested areas of church dogma, discipline, mores, and even morality in the exercise of the *munus docendi* and *munus gubernandi*. Using O’Malley’s four cultures taxonomy, we might analyze resistance to the Francis Effect in terms of a preference for culture two (the academic) over culture three (the rhetorical). Attractive as this hypothesis may seem at first glance, it is insufficient in accounting for the depth and the breadth of the increasingly vitriolic, polarizing discourse coming from those who used to pride themselves on being on the front lines in the papal shock troops.

The issue is more profoundly about truth claims contained in these various fundamental values. “Catholic beliefs are not simply a matter of opinion; they are a matter of fact,” asserted Reverend Dwight Longenecker in a recent blog post entitled “Why Same-Sex ‘Marriage’ Is Impossible for Catholics.”⁸⁸ Clearly Pope Francis’ oft-repeated line “Who am I to judge?” cannot credibly be extended to signal a forthcoming change in church dogma on same-sex relationships, much less to advance the possibility of

⁸⁶ See Michael Sean Winters, “Douthat, Poverty, and Partisanship,” *National Catholic Reporter*, May 18, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/douthat-poverty-partisanship>.

⁸⁷ *Mutatis mutandis*, Michael Gerson’s observations on the decline of formal religious affiliation in the United States can be applied to this segment of the church: “One option, clearly, is for conservative Christians to imagine themselves as an aggrieved and repressed remnant. This attitude is expressed as stridency, but it is really the fear of lost social position. America, once viewed as the New Israel, becomes the new Babylon. The church engages the world to diagnose decadence and defend its own rights” (“The End of Casual Christianity,” *Washington Post*, May 25, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-end-of-casual-christianity/2015/05/25/75e6b06c-009f-11e5-833c-a2de05b6b2a4_story.html).

⁸⁸ Dwight Longenecker, “Why Same-Sex Marriage Is Impossible for Catholics,” *National Catholic Register*, April 29, 2015, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/why-same-sex-marriage-is-impossible-for-catholics/>.

Catholic sacramental acceptance of same-sex unions.⁸⁹ But what probably discomfits some in the church is the pope's unwillingness to use the term "facts" in speaking of Catholic beliefs. Here we have a key clash of cultural paradigms. Father Longenecker goes on to "explain":

Catholic teaching is a unified, coherent, and consistent body of thought that encompasses not only religious beliefs and behaviors, but also includes history, anthropology, political and economic theory, sexuality, cosmology, and ecology. In other words, what we believe about God and humanity touches everything....A sacramental marriage is between one man and one woman for life, and we can't change it any more than we can say the grass is purple or the sky is green. We can't change the content of the sacrament because that's the way things are. The fundamental definition of marriage between one man and one woman was established from the beginning of the human race and validated by Jesus Christ and established as a sacrament for our salvation. Catholic beliefs are not simply a matter of opinion; they are a matter of fact. Even if we want to, we can't change the essentials of the sacrament of marriage—not because we can't change our beliefs, but because we can't change facts.⁹⁰

Challenges and Opportunities for the Future

In conclusion, what are some brief takeaways from our all-too-rapid consideration of the effect Pope Francis has had on the church since his election? A key part of the Francis Effect is that a thousand flowers are beginning to bloom. Voices once quite muted and moderates long out of power have emerged clearly in both the religious and the secular spheres. Taking a cue no doubt from Pope Francis' "Who am I to judge?" some hierarchs on both sides of the ideological spectrum have begun to express themselves in terms unthinkable in the previous pontificates.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Episcopal reaction to the run-up to the Irish referendum on same-sex marriage likewise showed a bit of the Francis Effect. While all the bishops publicly reiterated support for Catholic teaching, a couple of them made headlines, unimaginable in a John Paul II or Benedict papacy. Saying that while they personally would vote no on allowing same-sex civil marriage, Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry acknowledged that Catholics could in good conscience support the measure, and Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin that it was not the place of the bishops to dictate how people must vote. See <http://www.churchmilitant.com/news/article/irish-bishop-catholics-can-back-gay-marriage-in-good-conscience> and <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/archbishop-declines-to-tell-catholics-how-to-vote-in-referendum-1.2218795>. Of course, these statements were quickly and sharply condemned by conservative watchdogs.

⁹⁰ Longenecker, "Why Same-Sex Marriage Is Impossible for Catholics."

⁹¹ There has been an increasing number of examples of a "hermeneutic of suspicion" (some bordering on conspiracy theories). E.g., in reaction to a theological symposium

While the Synods on the Family have dominated these discussions, there are other examples, such as the cultural paradigm shift in process seen in both the lead-up and the aftermath of the Irish referendum on same-sex marriage that was approved by an overwhelming 62 percent of the high-turnout electorate on May 22, 2015.⁹² While the Irish hierarchy clearly opposed the measure in voting no on the ballot question, there was comparatively little stridency in their public pronouncements, and two bishops even went on public record as saying that individual Catholics could in good conscience vote for the measure. Many Irish priests publicly parted company with the official party line, saying they were voting for the referendum, while some poll watchers estimate that roughly one-third of the Irish clergy voted yes. Reminiscent of the speech given at the 2014 Extraordinary Synod by the Pirolas regarding family acceptance of a gay son, a video by an elderly couple, Brigid and Paddy Whyte, in support of the Irish referendum, went viral.⁹³

held in May 2015 at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome: "European 'Progressive' Bishops Planning Synod Coup: Secret Meeting in Rome on Monday," *Rorate Caeli*, May 22, 2015, <http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2015/05/breaking-european-progressive-bishops.html>; Edward Pentin, "List of Participants Who Attended Gregorian 'Shadow Council,'" *National Catholic Register*, May 27, 2015, <http://m.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/list-of-participants-who-attended-gregorian-shadow-synod#.VWgCYM9Vikq>. A silver lining was suggested by Sandro Magister, who found the "defection" of some German bishops to be a hopeful sign: "Synod: The Battle of Germany," <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1351056?eng=y>. Nevertheless, spokespersons for some of the participants said there was no attempt to change doctrine or undermine the church; see Cindy Wooden, "Study Day on Synod Did Not Aim to Change Doctrine, Spokesman Says," *National Catholic Reporter*, May 27, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/study-day-synod-did-not-aim-change-doctrine-spokesman-says>. Pentin published a copy of the Study Day program, which shows the range of the discussion (<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/secret-study-day-invitation-and-program/>).

⁹² See Sarah MacDonald's balanced postelection assessment, "Ireland's Approval of Same-Sex Marriage a 'Reality Check' for Catholic Church," *National Catholic Reporter*, May 26, 2015, <http://ncronline.org/news/global/irelands-approval-same-sex-marriage-reality-check-catholic-church>.

⁹³ Hanna Ingber, "For One Irish Couple, Backing Gay Marriage Is a Matter of Family Values," *New York Times*, May 23, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/23/world/europe/for-one-irish-couple-backing-gay-marriage-is-a-matter-of-family-values.html> (the article contains a link to the video itself). Like the Pirolas, the Whytes indicated they were faithful, observant Catholics, married nearly fifty years, but they felt they could no longer in good conscience support a position that denied marriage equality to individuals such as their gay son. In this case, as with the Pirolas, Cardinal Burke weighed in negatively, but he was not seconded by the president of the Irish bishops' conference, Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh, who urged respectful debate and discussion; see <http://www>.

After the vote, the bishop with perhaps the greatest credibility of the greatly beleaguered Irish hierarchy, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, said this to reporters:

The Church has to find a new language which will be understood and heard by people.... We have to see how is it that the Church's teaching on marriage and family is not being received even within its own flock.... There's a growing gap between Irish young people and the Church and there's a growing gap between the culture of Ireland that's developing and the Church.⁹⁴

Bishop Juan Vicente Córdoba offers another example. Speaking at a conference about gay marriage and adoption hosted by the local University of Los Andes, he asserted that “no one chooses to be gay or straight” and then said that homosexuality is not a sin: “Sin is something else. It's not respecting the dignity of others. Not loving God and our neighbors as we love ourselves, not feeding the hungry, not giving water to the thirsty.” The bishop declared that it is far more important for Columbians “to have dignity, a proper health system, and food for all, rather than talking about whether they're gay or straight.”⁹⁵

catholicherald.co.uk/news/2015/06/03/irish-church-leader-distances-himself-from-cardinal-burkes-comments-on-marriage-referendum/. Cardinal Kasper also struck a moderate tone, expressing respect for the democratic process of the Irish referendum; see <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/gay-unions-now-central-to-synod-agenda-after-irish-vote-cardinal-kasper>.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Conor Barrins and Robin Millard, “Church Unnerved by Ireland's Huge ‘Yes’ to Gay Marriage,” *Yahoo News*, May 24, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/church-reels-irelands-huge-yes-gay-marriage-005218265.html>. Besides Cardinal Burke's negative comments, perhaps the strongest official condemnation of the Irish referendum came from Cardinal Pietro Parolin, prefect of the Holy See's Secretariat of State, who pronounced the vote a “defeat for humanity,” but also explicitly echoed Archbishop Martin's words: “The Church will have to take this reality on board in the sense of a renewed and strengthened evangelisation” (<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/vatican-calls-irish-referendum-a-defeat-for-humanity-1.2226957>).

⁹⁵ Reported by Inés San Martín, “Colombian Bishop Floats Idea of Gay Apostle, Lesbian Mary Magdalene,” *Cruce*, May 15, 2015, <http://www.cruce.com/church/2015/05/15/colombian-bishop-floats-idea-of-gay-apostle-lesbian-mary-magdalene-says-no-one-chooses-to-be-gay-or-straight/>. Córdoba's remarks are particularly noteworthy, as he studied psychology and theology at the Institute of Psychology of the Pontifical Gregorian University, whose professors strongly held that homosexuality was a profound disorder that was *not* a constitutional orientation, and that views to the contrary were just due to the “gay lobby” among American psychologists, who succeeded in declassifying homosexuality as a mental disorder in the 1973 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental*

Thus, while indeed many would still say “Amen!” to this *gaudium magnum*,⁹⁶ it is also now distressingly clear that significant portions of the Catholic community do not, or no longer, share in this great joy.⁹⁷ One part of most disquieting revelations of the pulse-taking in the wake of the Francis Effect is the level of acrimony that has surfaced. Not only those judged to be “too liberal,” such as Cardinal Kasper, but even the pope himself is increasingly subjected to a level of critique that could only be classified morally as calumny and slander.⁹⁸ The most visible church figure doing his best to counter what he considers the most dangerous evils of the Francis Effect would be Cardinal Burke. Most will be fairly well acquainted with the main thrust of his frequent interviews, homilies, and assorted *obiter dicta*. Troubling as these are, there is at least one helpful contribution Cardinal Burke and others are making to the world of theological discourse: the recasting of the understanding of the primacy of conscience. Until the papacy of Francis, many conservatives, such as the moral philosopher German Grisez,⁹⁹ pundit George Weigel, and Australian Cardinal George Pell, held such a strong *Roma locuta, causa finita* view of even the “noninfallible”

Disorders. It was not entirely surprising that the reaction was swift and furious, and Bishop Córdoba had to “clarify” his remarks and reiterate his support for Catholic teaching (<http://www.cruznnow.com/church/2015/05/16/colombian-bishop-apologizes-for-gay-apostle-remarks/>).

⁹⁶ Examination of the “Francis Effect” certainly has not been confined to the religious press. In the mainstream secular press the pope has enjoyed consistently positive assessments; see, e.g., Timothy Egan, “Pope Francis and the Art of Joy,” *New York Times*, May 15, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/15/opinion/pope-francis-and-the-art-of-joy.html>.

⁹⁷ Consider, for example, the recent “slip” of Msgr. Nunzio Galantino, the general secretary for the Italian Bishops Conference, during one of its meetings: “Quando la Chiesa era cattolica e la messa era in latino...” (when the Church was Catholic and the Mass was in Latin...). However, Galantino in general has shown himself more open than many to pastoral solutions to various questions such as irregular marriages, married priests, and the like. This quote was seized upon by Antonio Scocci in a very good illustration of one cultural view of the church that finds increasing discomfort with the “Bergoglio effect”; see Scocci’s “Effeto Bergoglio in Irlanda: La Messa e’ finita” (Bergoglio Effect in Ireland: The Mass Has Ended), <http://www.antoniosocci.com/effetto-bergoglio-in-irlanda-la-messa-e-finita/>; an uneven English translation can be found at <https://from-rome.wordpress.com/2015/05/24/the-bergoglio-effect-in-ireland-the-mass-has-ended/>.

⁹⁸ On the definitions of these terms, see James T. Bretzke, SJ, *A Handbook of Roman Catholic Moral Terms* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 25–26, 219. See also the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §§2477–79.

⁹⁹ Cf. Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 1, *Christian Moral Principles* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983): “Catholics ought to conform their consciences to her teaching in every question, every detail, every respect” (566); “Our submission to the Church’s teaching is not submission to mere human opinions, but to the very word of God” (570).

teachings of the so-called ordinary magisterium that it seemed that if the pope had addressed an issue, the matter was closed.¹⁰⁰

We now see the outlines of at least a theoretical position from the right wing that allows dissent from church positions with which they might fundamentally disagree. Of course, in all fairness, Catholics on the other side of the ideological divide had come to a similar conclusion a few generations earlier. It may be that the October 2015 Synod will lift up again the position held firmly from the time of Thomas Aquinas through Vatican II and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, that we are required always to follow our conscience—presuming, of course, that we have taken sufficient care both to form and inform it.¹⁰¹

The church remains a very human institution, which means it is necessarily a cultural and political organization as well. And so it should surprise none of us to see evidence of “lobbying” and “spin” in various corners. Hopefully Rahner’s notion of “global pre-scientific convictions,” fleshed out in terms of cultural fundamental values and root paradigms, may provide another methodology for analyzing what is occurring in the church today. In theory, at least, virtually everyone can admit that human knowledge is always limited, and so it is not only “possible” but indeed probable that our individual and corporate views on any given issue will be culturally conditioned and paradigm dependent. Acknowledging this epistemological fact may lay a key foundation stone to build a bridge to cross over the conflicts that impede the spread of the gospel. This seems to be what Pope Francis was trying to do in his closing discourse at the October 2014 Synod.¹⁰²

Here too both Saint Ignatius of Loyola’s “Presupposition” in the *Spiritual Exercises*¹⁰³ and Saint Augustine’s guidelines for discernment may provide at

¹⁰⁰ For an essay lamenting the impact of the “Francis Effect” on the authority of the magisterium to “bind consciences,” see Fr. Linus Clovis, “The ‘Francis Effect’ Is Silencing Catholic Bishops, Priests, and Laity,” <https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/the-so-called-francis-effect-is-silencing-catholic-bishops-priests-and-lait>.

¹⁰¹ See especially Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern world* (*Gaudium et Spes*), §16, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §1790. I develop the church’s teaching and tradition on conscience more fully in *A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 109–43.

¹⁰² For an imperfect English translation, see <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-address-to-the-synod-fathers>.

¹⁰³ *Spiritual Exercises* §22: “In order that both he who is giving the Spiritual Exercises, and he who is receiving them, may more help and benefit themselves, let it be presupposed that every good Christian is to be more ready to save his neighbor’s proposition than to condemn it. If he cannot save it, let him inquire how he means it; and if he means it

least partial antidotes to the perennial problem of *odium theologicum* that are worth recalling here: “*In fide, unitas; in dubiis, libertas; in omnibus, caritas*” (In matters of faith, unity; in matters of doubt, liberty; in all things, charity).¹⁰⁴

To quote Bishop Tobin of Providence again: “Relax, God is still in charge.”¹⁰⁵

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The Reach and Limits of the Francis Effect: A Response to James T. Bretzke, SJ

Many people sense that Pope Francis is doing something new. Not only theologians, but ordinary Catholics, people of other faiths, and secular observers are listening to this pope in a new way because he seems different from previous popes. Some argue that though Francis’ tone is distinct, much of what he is saying and doing was said and done by his predecessors. Others warn that while the new tone may be encouraging, moral norms (especially those related to sex, marriage, and gender) have not changed. James Bretzke does a great service by amassing large amounts of data to show that the “Francis Effect” or difference is both substantive and real.

According to Bretzke, while Popes John Paul II and Benedict saw secularism as the problem and called Catholics to trust in the authoritative teachings of the institutional church, Francis sees the church as a field hospital that embodies the love and mercy of the gospel by going out to heal those wounded by poverty, consumerism, violence, and isolation. In my brief response, I would like to affirm Bretzke’s main thesis by highlighting some of the evidence he presents for the Francis Effect, argue that the limits of the effect are evident in Pope Francis’ remarks and actions on gender, and suggest

badly, let him correct him with charity. If that is not enough, let him seek all the suitable means to bring him to mean it well, and save himself” (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/seil/seilo6.htm>).

¹⁰⁴ For an illuminating discourse on the path to unity, see Pope Francis’ message for the Day of Christian Unity held in Phoenix, May 23, 2015, at <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-sends-greetings-for-us-christian-unity-event>.

¹⁰⁵ Tobin, “Random Thoughts.”

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