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Francis I and the conservative modesty

Bruno Lima Rocha

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Jorge Mario Bergoglio comes from within the working class amidst the splendor and belligerent Buenos Aires of the '30s. He is the son of an Italian Piedmontese immigrant couple, his father was a railman and his mother worked at home. Unlike most of his countrymen, he shared parts of popular culture, but not the values of organized labor at the time. Not by a long way had his education been crossed either by the ideas of the left or of Peronism. Hence in Argentina, even now at the height of “papamania” (“pope-mania”), the most famous fan of San Lorenzo de Almagro football club is seen both as a conservative and a man of the people.

Sworn pope, Francis I is executing the maneuver that Norberto Bobbio called “renewal for conservation”. It is a mandatory part of the manual of any analyst or scholar of politics and seeks to enlist cadres to inject new blood into such an ancient institution, intending to keep it alive. Nothing too bad if it had not been a sick institution, in the words of Bergoglio, published on the front page of Noticias magazine – a weekly Argentine opposition publication – signed by one of his authorized bi-

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ographers. The July 20 edition leaves no room for doubt. The pontiff will try to strengthen the identity of the Church as devoted to the humble, but it will be far from Liberation Theology and ecumenism.

The pope's speech may seem transformative, but it mirrors the reflection of the internal disputes in the Roman Curia. The Vatican State may, like any institution, be insulated, becoming an end in itself, making its hierarchy richer and more powerful and not attending to the alleged means and proposals. Because of this inner sickness Francisco proclaimed, "I did not bring gold but the message of Christ". It is common for governments to take over part of the State to serve the interests of the dominant class allied to the economic agents and authorized representatives of the time. In the case of the Vatican the ruling elite and dominant class are synonymous and it is against this summit and its rather commendable practices that Bergoglio is struggling.

In the late '80s, Karol Wojtyla's visits to Latin America fought Liberation Theology and its ecumenical practices and socializing activities. During the 70's and 80's, the progressive wing of the Catholic Church directly supported guerrillas in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala and Colombia. Nowadays, the Argentine priest is more modest. In 2013, the first Latin American pope attends to a domestic agenda, fighting opulence within the Church and recruiting young people to its faith. Proponents of Catholicism should be debating their church's taboo themes instead of just being content with a minimally correct pope, although conservative. Societies in this part of the world advanced in every way. The Roman Church, Francis I's institution, no.