"We elected you to make reforms, not to smash everything!" Thus is Cardinal Leonardi Sandri, a fellow Argentinian and a supporter of Pope Francis at the conclave of 2013, reliably reported to have shouted at Pope Francis behind closed doors in the Vatican. Sandri would be one of a number of Bergoglian partisans at the conclave who are now said to be experiencing "buyer's remorse," as documented most recently in the explosive best-seller *The Dictator Pope*.

Much of what the pseudonymous author, Marcantonio Colonna, presents is already widely known. His chief accomplishment is the skillful weaving together of a coherent narrative of the rise to power of the obscure Argentinian Jesuit who is now trying to turn the Church upside down. Moreover, what we already know is supplemented by new or forgotten details that bring an already disturbing picture into alarmingly sharp focus.

First of all, *The Dictator Pope* accomplishes the urgent task of removing the mask from a public relations creation—the simple, humble, merciful, reformist Pope, always close to the people—and revealing the real man behind the mask: "arrogant, dismissive of people, prodigal of bad language and notorious for furious outbursts of temper which are known to everyone from the cardinals to the chauffeurs." The book provides a most revealing and entirely credible psychological history of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who climbed the ecclesial ladder by adopting expedient positions, surrounding himself with compliant mediocrities, eliminating anyone who could pose a challenge, and exacting revenge on perceived foes.

St. Gallen's Pope

The book also provides a succinct summary of how the neo-Modernist cabal known as the St. Gallen's Group launched Cardinal Bergoglio on his trajectory toward the papacy, how he knew very well the direction in which he was headed and agreed with the project of electing him, and how he is now relentlessly carrying out the agenda of those who helped him ascend to the Chair of Peter.

To the already known existence of the St. Gallen "mafia," which labored to engineer Bergoglio's election at the conclave of 2005, Colonna adds important details. For example, that the core of this group of ecclesial subversives (Cardinals Martini, Lehmann and Kasper from Germany, Bačkis from Lithuania, van Luyn from Netherlands, Danneels from Brussels, and Murphy O'Connor from London) "met in the so-called Villa Nazareth in Rome, the home of Cardinal Silvestrini, who was then no longer eligible to vote" in order to "discuss in secret a tactic of how to avoid the election of Joseph Ratzinger." Also noted is that this "mafia," which involved cardinals and bishops "too many to name," met every year from 1996 until the conclave at which, despite their efforts, Bergoglio's candidacy failed and Ratzinger was

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elected.

A prime example of what is new in Colonna's account is a clear exposition—the first I have seen—of each step of Bergoglio's evolution from a moderate conservative to the neo-Modernist progressive deemed an ideal candidate to achieve the aim of the St. Gallen conspiracy: i.e., "a drastic reform of the Church, much more modern and current, with Jorge Bergoglio, Pope Francis, as its head." The essence of Bergoglio's transformation is shown to consist of a kind of ecclesiastical Peronism, which combines movements to both the "left" and the "right," seeming friendship followed by sudden betrayal, and a *faux* populist, "ostentatious piety"—all as expedient for gaining, increasing and perpetuating power, but always with an overall liberal drift.

Although the St. Gallen Group's formal meetings ended in 2006, notes Colonna, "there can be no doubt that their influence continued into 2013." Citing Edward Pentin and others, Colonna traces the emergence of "Team Bergoglio" from the group's core members. Chief among the team was the late Cardinal Martini, a veritable mentor to Bergoglio. This notorious dissenter from *Humanae Vitae* had by the time of his death in 2012 already "mapped out the policies which were to be put forward by the liberals in the two Synods on the Family in 2014 and 2015, and which were later incorporated, in a more ambiguous fashion, in Pope Francis's exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*…" It was Martini who first ventured the theme of "tenderness" (read: moral laxity) that immediately became a major theme of the Bergoglian pontificate and the two rigged Synods, leading to the predetermined outcome in *Amoris Laetitia*.

"Great Reformer" Fairy Tale

In the Chapter entitled "Reform? What Reform?" Colonna provides an impressive systematic demonstration of the utter failure of the endlessly trumpeted reforms Francis was supposed to accomplish: financial transparency, the reduction of the Vatican bureaucracy, rooting out the "homosexual lobby" and "zero tolerance" of predation of young boys by homosexual priests. Colonna shows beyond reasonable doubt that after four years of Francis every problem area is not only still existent but vastly worse. Vatican corruption is deeper and the Vatican Secretariat of State more powerful than ever before. Moreover, every start at true reform in these areas under Benedict XVI has not only been undone but reversed under Francis. In short, "Francis the Great Reformer" is a fairy tale.

Here Colonna provides the valuable insight that the entrenched members of the Curia are not at all "conservative," but rather dangerously progressive in keeping with the liberalization of the Curia under Paul VI and the ascendancy of the Secretary of State

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according to the "reforms" of Cardinal Villot during Paul's reign. He writes:

> "It is an out-of-date notion that the Curia consists of conservatives whose aim is to preserve papal power and who oppose liberal reforms. It would have been true, if we refer back to the historical sketch given earlier, of the regime which Cardinal Canali ran in the 1950s, and which Cardinal Ottaviani tried to maintain after him; but Ottaviani was comprehensively thrown over by Pope Paul VI. Instead, Paul VI brought in as Secretary of State a French prelate from outside the Curia, Jean-Marie Villot (1969-79). Villot introduced a regime which might be called bureaucratic on the French model but which was certainly not conservatively papalist, *and the old establishment was disestablished for ever.*"

That assessment is quite in keeping with Father Gruner's groundbreaking analysis, in light of the Message of Fatima, of the problem of the Secretary of State's post-Vatican II dominance over the Church.

Sinister Synods

Chapter 4, entitled "Beating a New (Crooked) Path," details the already amply documented rigging of what I have called "the Phony Synod" or the "Synod of Doom." This chapter is most useful as a succinct chronicle of this travesty, and it contains key facts many have forgotten, including this one: "By ordering the retention of paragraphs 52, 53 and 55 [in the Final Report of Synod 2014], Pope Francis himself ensured that the 'Kasper proposal' [to admit the divorced-and- "remarried" to Holy Communion] would remain on the agenda of the Ordinary Synod [in 2015], *despite being rejected by the fathers of the Extraordinary Synod*."

In other words, the entire synodal process was a sham that disguised what Francis wanted from the beginning and what he was going to achieve no matter what the Synod decided: the disaster provoked by *Amoris Laetitia*, for which the "Synod on the Family" was merely the elaborate wrapping for a poison pill.

Merciless "Mercy"

Chapter 5, entitled "Mercy, Mercy," shows just how merciless Francis is when it comes to eliminating whoever or whatever stands in the way of his progressivist vision and the maintenance of his own power. Here the ruthless destruction of the Franciscan Friars of

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the Immaculate (FFI) and the crippling of the Sisters of the Immaculate are detailed. A telling fact is here provided: Shortly after Cardinal Burke upheld the Sisters' appeal from the lawless attempt to impose a liberalizing commission upon them without any grounds, Francis removed him as head of the Apostolic Signatura and demoted him to the ceremonial position of spiritual advisor to the Sovereign Order of the Knights of Malta.

As to the Knights, Colonna provides the clearest account I have read of how and why Francis trampled on the Order's sovereignty following revelation of the condom distribution scandal, including details of the financial motives involved in the sacking of Festing and the reinstatement of Boeslager, with the astonishing result that "the man suspected of flouting the Church's moral teaching was rewarded, and the superior who had tried to discipline him lost his office." The whole affair, as Colonna concludes, was "an episode in which the considerations of power and financial control were to the fore and morality was in slight regard." The Pope of the poor, it seems, goes with the money.

A Soviet-style Vatican

Perhaps the most powerful chapter in the book is the last one, "Kremlin Santa Marta," wherein Colonna chronicles the manner in which Francis has used the power of the papacy to obtain "payback" from perceived enemies during his rise to the top while establishing a network of surveillance, intimidation and retaliation in order to suppress all resistance to "the regime that [he] conducts from this stronghold… in which the expectations of reform have been dashed and have been replaced by a chaotic insecurity." The targeted resistance includes not only the four "dubia Cardinals" but also prominent members of the lay faithful who have objected to the catastrophic results of *Amoris Laetitia*.

As Colonna observes, under Francis "The control of the Secretariat of State over the rest of the Curia has become more absolute than ever. And everyone, from cardinals to *monsignori*, is kept in a state of permanent nerves by the naggings, the brusque public criticisms, the sackings and the covert undermining that are the hallmark of the new regime."

Here one reads of such matters as the sacking of every member of the Congregation for Divine Worship save Cardinal Sarah, the public humiliation of Sarah by Francis, the purging and emasculation of the John Paul II Institute on Marriage and Family and the Pontifical Academy for Life, the bugging of Vatican offices, cars and private residences, the suspected wiretapping of phones, and the violent outbursts of papal temper the world is never allowed to see. Colonna notes the observation by Damian Thompson, early on in what can rightly be called the Bergoglian Debacle, that "Francis doesn't have to stand for re-election by the Conclave. Which, believe me, is lucky for him, because after the misery and nonsense of the

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past couple of years he'd be eliminated in the first ballot."

"An Unrelieved Failure"

In sum, Colonna concludes, what Thompson observes is "a truth that few in the Curia would doubt; they have woken up to the fact that the election of 'The Great Reformer' in 2013 has had the effect of putting them under an old-style Argentinian dictatorship, with all its methods.

In the first months, inspired by Francis's public-relations antics, the nickname for their reverend master among the Vatican clergy was 'Toto the Clown'. They have now realised that they underestimated him, and the current nickname is 'Ming', after the cruel emperor in the Flash Gordon comics. One cardinal has remarked: 'In the Vatican, everybody fears Pope Francis; nobody respects him, from Cardinal Parolin down.' Fear is the dominant note in the Curia under Francis's rule, together with mutual mistrust."

Speaking of Francis' decidedly counterproductive forays into geopolitics, Colonna acidly, but quite fairly, writes that this Pope "is a clever politician – the cleverest to occupy the papal throne for centuries, well able to run rings round unsuspecting churchmen like Cardinals Burke, Sarah and Müller – but as a world statesman he is out of his league. So he is as a ruler of the Catholic Church, which requires higher talents than those of a Peronist party boss."

The end result, Colonna maintains—and with good grounds—is that "the People's Pope is being deserted by the people [attendance at his audiences has plummeted since 2013]. Mass attendance has also been falling in Italy, and it seems in the rest of the world. Francis's pontificate, which was expected to revivify the Church, after four years of hype is proving an unrelieved failure."

An "Unprecedented Blunder"

In the closing lines of the book, Colonna laments what he calls "the unprecedented blunder committed by the cardinals in 2013 in electing such a man as Jorge Bergoglio… a complete loose cannon aboard St. Peter's Bark." He expresses the hope that the next Pope will be:

> "a man of established repute in the Church, and above all known as a man of God and not a politician; a man whose priorities are the spiritual treasures he is called to guard; a man who teaches doctrine openly and not in ambiguous back-

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> room deals; a man who will be a sincere reformer and will not ally himself with the corrupt in a bid to control the Church. It is for the cardinals to do the right thing in their consciences and leave the rest in the hands of God."

Colonna even goes so far as to declare: "And let us pray that, rare as is the freak of nature that has been unintentionally sprung on the See of Peter, it may be equally long before another such catastrophe is again visited on the Catholic Church."

Has such a withering, book-length indictment of a reigning Pope, and on so many grounds, ever been written? I doubt it. And yet, as no less than EWTN's Robert Royal has concluded: "About 90 percent of it is simply incontrovertible, and cannot help but clarify who Francis is and what he's about." Indeed, as the recognition of what Francis is and what he is about spreads ever more widely into the Catholic mainstream, we now see even a figure as resolutely "normalist" as Philip Lawler announcing the imminent publication of his own indictment, sensationally entitled *Lost Shepherd: How Pope Francis is Misleading His Flock*.

Only Our Lady Can Spare Us

The Dictator Pope, for whose pseudonymous author Francis's Vatican apparatus is now hunting (there is reportedly a list of six prime "suspects"), may well be seen as a landmark in Church history in the midst of a turbulent and destructive pontificate the likes of which the Church has never before witnessed. This is the kind of book that could end the career of a wayward politician by thoroughly discrediting him in the public mind and even providing grounds for his impeachment. But as the subject is a Pope—albeit a Pope who seems intent on being precisely a politician—the Church is not so easily relieved of the threat the Franciscan pontificate indubitably poses to the ecclesial commonwealth. For no one on earth may judge a Roman Pontiff in the sense of passing a juridical sentence against him and removing him from office.

Yet, if nothing else, the author provides confirmation of the growing intuition among the Catholic faithful that there is something terribly amiss with this Pope and his intentions for the Church. Forewarned is forearmed against what is almost certainly coming next, and from which it now seems only the miraculous intercession of Our Lady of Fatima can spare us.

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