

February 12, 2013, Tuesday Late Edition - Final
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NEWS ANALYSIS; THE POPE RESIGNS: A Turbulent Tenure for a Quiet Scholar

By LAURIE GOODSTEIN

When [Benedict XVI](#) became pope eight years ago at the age of 78, many Roman Catholic scholars predicted that he would be a caretaker. He would keep the ship sailing in the same direction as his beloved predecessor, John Paul II. And as the rare theologian who knew how to write for a broad audience, Benedict would keep the crew inspired and the sails billowing.

If written words alone could keep the church on course, Benedict would likely be viewed as a solid success. His encyclicals on love and charity and his three books on the life of Jesus were widely praised for their clarity and contribution to Catholic teaching.

But when it came to the major challenges facing the church in the real world, Benedict often appeared to carom from one crisis to the next.

He inadvertently insulted Muslims on an early trip to Germany, which resulted in riots across the Islamic world and the murder of an Italian nun in Somalia. He welcomed back a breakaway bishop who had just recorded an interview denying the facts of the Holocaust. He told reporters on the papal plane winging toward Africa that condoms had helped spread AIDS.

When the clerical sexual abuse scandal spread across Europe and exploded at Benedict's door in 2010, Benedict met with abuse survivors and oversaw the development of new church policies to prevent abuse. But he was denounced by survivors and their advocates for never moving to discipline bishops who were caught in the cover-up.

Among the cardinals expected to vote in the conclave to elect the next pope is Roger M. Mahony of Los Angeles, whose decades of mishandling sexual abusers in the priesthood was recently exposed by the court-ordered release of thousands of internal church documents.

Even Pope Benedict's attempt to reach out with a pastoral letter to the church in Ireland, worn down by revelations of widespread clergy sexual abuse, left many there infuriated when he appeared to blame the nation's spiritual disillusionment on the Irish Catholics themselves.

"It's been the tin-ear papacy," said Christopher M. Bellitto, chairman and associate professor of history at [Kean University](#) in Union, N.J., who studies the papacy. "It's been a very small, introverted papacy because that's who he is. The pope is an introvert."

One of the defining moments, Dr. Bellitto said, was the speech Pope Benedict gave in September 2006 at Regensburg University in Germany, in which he quoted the words of a medieval Byzantine emperor speaking of Islam: "Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached."

Dr. Bellitto said: "Every professor in the universe knew exactly what he was doing, which was to start a lecture with something provocative and work off of that. But it didn't play out that way."

Pope Benedict later apologized for the reaction, explaining that the totality of his address was intended as "an invitation to frank and sincere dialogue, with mutual respect," with the Muslim world.

He followed that up by coming out in favor of admitting Turkey to the European Union, a reversal of his previous position. He later visited Turkey and prayed at the Blue Mosque in Istanbul alongside the head mufti, a significant gesture that helped to calm the waters.

Benedict's biggest challenge was to set a course for a church that is still divided over the meaning and legacy of the Second [Vatican](#) Council in the 1960s, which opened the door to modern reforms.

The council resulted in changes like empowering lay people in parish life, celebrating the Mass in the local vernacular language rather than in Latin, and allowing nuns to expand their mission beyond working in church schools and hospitals.

To many Catholic traditionalists, Benedict is a hero who has reeled in the excesses of Vatican II, by promoting “the reform of the reform.”

He expanded the use of the Latin Mass used before Vatican II. And he pushed the English-speaking Catholic churches to adopt a liturgy translation more faithful to the original Latin — a change that many priests protested was awkward and alienating, but which has gradually taken hold.

In keeping with his previous post as head of the church’s doctrinal office, Benedict used his papacy to discipline those who questioned church teaching.

He presided over two investigations of American nuns. He oversaw the censure of theologians and the removal of Bishop William Morris in Australia, who had written a pastoral letter raising the possibility of women and married priests. In 2012, he excommunicated the Rev. Roy Bourgeois, an American priest who blessed a woman in what the church considered an illicit ordination ceremony.

Monsignor Kevin W. Irwin, a professor of liturgy and former dean of the school of theology at the Catholic University of America, who is currently teaching in Rome, said: “This is a theologian who wants to be clear about what the church teaches. Some would regard that as being less open to change, and less open to other possible ways of knowing theology, but this is a highly trained German professor who brought that skill of clarity to all of his writing.”

But liberal Catholics from the church’s social justice wing could not help but feel that Benedict was intolerant of the church’s left wing and overly solicitous of the right.

That criticism peaked after the pope lifted the excommunication of four schismatic ultraconservative bishops from the breakaway Society of St. Pius X, who reject the reforms of Vatican II.

It became one of the low points of Benedict’s papacy when it was discovered that one of the schismatic bishops had denied the scope of the Holocaust in an interview available on the Internet.

Robert Mickens, the Vatican correspondent for [The Tablet](#), a Catholic weekly

published in London, said of Benedict: “He leaves the church even further divided. He’s alienated the majority of Catholics, maybe not the bishops and cardinals who, because they’re in the hierarchy, support and reinforce what the pope says. But run-of-the-mill Catholics feel that the church is probably not going in the right direction, and they feel the division more now than they did eight years ago.”

In the last year, the Vatican became entangled in a scandal that led to the arrest of the pope’s personal butler for leaking documents to a journalist who then published an exposé. Many church analysts said the Vatican bureaucracy was paralyzed, the church’s ship was adrift.

So when the pope shocked the world on Monday with his resignation announcement, his supporters and detractors alike almost universally hailed the move as a moment of grace, sounding almost relieved to see the end of what has been a very turbulent journey.

March 14, 2013, Thursday Late Edition - Final
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Desk: Foreign Desk **Length:** 1398 words

A New Pope, From the Americas

By LAURIE GOODSTEIN

ROME — The surprise selection on Wednesday of an Argentine, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, as the new pope shifted the gravity of the [Roman Catholic Church](#) from Europe to Latin America in one fell swoop, and served as an emphatic salute to the growing power of Latinos across the Americas.

The new pope took the name Francis and is the 266th pontiff of the church. He is the first pope from Latin America, and the first member of the Jesuit order to lead the church.

“I would like to thank you for your embrace,” the new pope, dressed in white, said in

Italian from the balcony on St. Peter's Basilica as thousands cheered joyously below. "My brother cardinals have chosen one who is from far away, but here I am."

The selection electrified Latinos from Los Angeles to Buenos Aires, and raised the hopes especially of those in Latin America, where 4 of every 10 of the world's Catholics now live.

But the choice also may provide a strategic boost to the church in the United States, where its following would have lost ground in recent decades were it not for the influx of Latino immigrants, who have increasingly asserted themselves as a cultural and political force, and played a critical role in President Obama's re-election.

The significance of the choice was not lost on church leaders. "It's been more than 500 years since the first evangelization, and this is the first time that there is a pope from Latin America," said Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles, who is originally from Mexico.

"It's a huge role that we never had before," he said.

The new pope, known for his simple, pastoral ways and his connection to the poor, is in some ways a contrast to his predecessor, Benedict XVI, an aloof theologian who resigned the office — the first pope to do so in 598 years — saying he no longer felt up to the rigors of the job.

But Francis shares Benedict's core doctrinal positions and is not considered likely to push changes in positions like the church's ban on the ordination of women as priests or its strict opposition to abortion and gay marriage.

The choice of Francis, who is 76, also defied some predictions that the 115 cardinals would opt for a young pope who could energize the church at a time when it faces a shortage of priests, growing competition from evangelical churches in the Southern Hemisphere, a sexual abuse crisis that has undermined the church's moral authority in the West and difficulties governing the Vatican itself.

Pope Francis spoke by telephone with Benedict, now known as pope emeritus, on Wednesday evening, said a Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi. He

called it, “an act of great significance and pastorality” that Francis’ first act as pope was to offer a prayer for his predecessor.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York told reporters he had heard that Francis would visit Benedict soon, although the Vatican did not include the visit on the new pope’s schedule for this week. Italian news media reported that the visit would take place in the next few days and would be televised.

Mr. Obama was among the first world leaders to congratulate Francis in a message that emphasized the pope’s humble roots and New World origins.

“As the first pope from the Americas,” the president said, “his selection also speaks to the strength and vitality of a region that is increasingly shaping our world, and alongside millions of Hispanic Americans, those of us in the United States share the joy of this historic day.”

The cardinals could have chosen a pope from a country in Africa or Asia where Catholic converts are plentiful and the church is vibrant. Instead, they selected a cardinal from Argentina, to the surprise of even those who had hoped for a non-European.

“An Argentine! I can’t believe it,” said Gaston Aquino, a seminarian from Argentina standing in the packed crowd in St. Peter’s Square in Rome as the name of the new pope was announced from the balcony above. “Bergoglio, pope!” he marveled. “I think it will mean great joy” for Argentina.

Catholics in the United States are holding steady at about a quarter of the population, and about one-third of those are Latinos. In Latin America, the church is confronting many of the same cultural and political battles as it is in Europe and the United States: a rise in acceptance of gay relationships, abortion and birth control, and a growing tide of people abandoning the church and professing no religion.

The Rev. Luis Calero, a Jesuit priest and professor of anthropology at Santa Clara University in California who studies the church in Central and South America said: “A lot of Catholics are leaving the Catholic church in Latin America to go to evangelical and Pentecostal churches. They no longer find a home in Catholic Christianity.

“Going to a traditional parish is no longer fulfilling to them because the parish is impersonal,” he said. “It tends to not have a sense of community that is uplifting.”

Father Calero said the next pope might be able to turn the situation around if he could respond to what he said were the most pressing problems: poverty, pluralism and the shortage of priests because of the church’s requirement of clerical celibacy.

The choice of Cardinal Bergoglio at least initially appeared to be celebrated across the continent. There had been faint hope in Mexico that the next pope would be Cardinal José Francisco Robles Ortega, the archbishop of Guadalajara, who was mentioned in Italian newspapers in the past week as a candidate gaining steam.

But many Mexican were joyous nonetheless, with newspapers playing up the historical turn of a Latin American assuming the throne of Peter.

“It fills us with joy because he is close to the Latin American people,” Msgr. Eugenio Lira, the secretary general of the Mexican Conference of Bishops, told reporters. “He could be sensitive to economic conditions and the suffering, joys and hope of people in these lands.”

The choice also points to challenges faced by the church in some parts of Latin America, like Portuguese-speaking Brazil, the country with the world’s largest concentration of Catholics, where evangelical churches have made big inroads in recent decades. In Argentina itself, a nation historically seen as more Europeanized than its neighbors, the church is grappling with a declining number of Catholics who regularly attend mass.

Cardinal Dolan said in an interview after the conclave that “Catholic is part of their DNA” in Argentina. With Cardinal Bergoglio as pope, he said, “think of the electricity that is going to send.”

But he said that country of origin was not the main factor for the cardinals who elected him.

“Most cardinals just want to choose the right man,” he said. The pope should be a

good pastor, governor and communicator. “He fills those bills. Where he comes from is gravy. And we’ve got a lot of good gravy.”

Enrique Krauze, a Mexican historian and political analyst, said there would be an expectation in Latin America for a pope from the region to promote democracy and human rights.

“If the church plays a role in favor of democracy and human rights as it played in Chile during the Pinochet regime, then the pope will be a factor in civic progress in these countries,” he said. “If the church takes up the banner of freedom it would be a great benefit in this continent that is the reservoir of Catholicism in the world.”

Outside St. Matthew Catholic School in West Phoenix, where she had gone to pick up her children, Deana Silva, 27, said, “I didn’t really connect with the other pope,” but “Papa Francisco,” or Pope Francis, “is different.” He is “more like us, you know, Latino,” Ms. Silva said.

Her mother, Donna Reyes, 46, said she was “very excited.” “We had been watching and waiting,” said Ms. Reyes, whose parents were immigrants from Mexico. “There are a lot of us Latinos in the Catholic Church. It was nice that the Church finally recognized it.”

As the children lined up to leave school, someone said a prayer and made an announcement about Lent over the loudspeakers, then, in Spanish, greeted the new pope, “el primer Papa de las Americas,” the first pope from the Americas.

Reporting was contributed by Rachel Donadio, Gaia Pianigiani and Daniel J. Wakin from Vatican City; Elisabetta Povoledo from Rome; Jennifer Medina from Los Angeles; Fernanda Santos from Phoenix; and Randal C. Archibold from Mexico City.

July 21, 2013, Sunday Late Edition - Final
Section A Page 1

Desk: National Desk **Length:** 1650 words

Some Mormons Search the Web And Find Doubt

By LAURIE GOODSTEIN

In the small but cohesive Mormon community where he grew up, Hans Mattsson was a solid believer and a pillar of the church. He followed his father and grandfather into church leadership and finally became an “area authority” overseeing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout Europe.

When fellow believers in Sweden first began coming to him with information from the Internet that contradicted the church’s history and teachings, he dismissed it as “anti-Mormon propaganda,” the whisperings of Lucifer. He asked his superiors for help in responding to the members’ doubts, and when they seemed to only sidestep the questions, Mr. Mattsson began his own investigation.

But when he discovered credible evidence that the church’s founder, Joseph Smith, was a polygamist and that the [Book of Mormon](#) and other scriptures were rife with historical anomalies, Mr. Mattsson said he felt that the foundation on which he had built his life began to crumble.

Around the world and in the United States, where the faith was founded, the [Mormon Church](#) is grappling with a wave of doubt and disillusionment among members who encountered information on the Internet that sabotaged what they were taught about their faith, according to interviews with dozens of Mormons and those who study the church.

“I felt like I had an earthquake under my feet,” said Mr. Mattsson, now an emeritus area authority. “Everything I’d been taught, everything I’d been proud to preach about and witness about just crumbled under my feet. It was such a terrible psychological and nearly physical disturbance.”

Mr. Mattsson’s decision to go public with his disaffection, in a church whose top

leaders commonly deliberate in private, is a sign that the church faces serious challenges not just from outside but also from skeptics inside.

[Greg Prince](#), a Mormon historian and businessman in Washington who has held local leadership positions in the church, shares Mr. Mattsson's doubts. "Consider a Catholic cardinal suddenly going to the media and saying about his own church, 'I don't buy a lot of this stuff,'" Mr. Prince said. "That's the level we're talking about here."

He said of Mr. Mattsson, "He is, as far as I know, the highest-ranking church official who has gone public with deep concerns, who has had a faith crisis and come forward to say he's going to talk about it because maybe that will help us all to resolve it."

Every faith has its skeptics and detractors, but the Mormon Church's history creates special challenges. The church was born in America only 183 years ago, and its founder and prophet, Joseph Smith, and his disciples left behind reams of papers that still exist, documenting their work, exposing their warts and sometimes contradicting one another.

"The Roman Catholic Church has had 2,000 years to work through the hiccups in its history," said [Terry L. Givens](#), a professor of English, literature and religion at the University of Richmond and a Mormon believer. "Mormonism is still an adolescent religion."

Mr. Givens and his wife, Fiona, recently presented what they called "Crucible of Doubt" sessions for questioning Mormons in England, Scotland and Ireland. Hundreds attended each event.

"Sometimes they are just this side of leaving, and sometimes they are simply faithful members who are looking for clarity and understanding to add to their faith," said Mr. Givens, who hosted a similar discussion in July in Provo, Utah, and has others planned in the United States. The church is not sponsoring the sessions, Mr. Givens said, but local bishops give their permission.

Eric Hawkins, a church spokesman, said that "every church faces this challenge," adding, "The answer is not to try to silence critics, but to provide as much information and as much support as possible to those who may be affected." Mr.

Hawkins also said the Mormon Church, which counts 14 million members worldwide, added about one million members every three years.

But Mr. Mattsson and others say the disillusionment is infecting the church's best and brightest. A [survey of more than 3,300 Mormon disbelievers](#), released last year, found that more than half of the men and four in 10 of the women had served in leadership positions in the church.

Many said they had suffered broken relationships with their parents, spouses and children as a result of their disbelief. The study was conducted by John Dehlin, a Ph.D. student in psychology at Utah State University and the founder of "[Mormon Stories](#)," a podcast of interviews with scholars and church members, many critical toward the church.

Some church leaders are well aware of the doubters in their midst. [Elder Jeffrey R. Holland](#), who serves in the church's Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (the governing body just below the three-member First Presidency), said in April while addressing the church's semiannual general conference in Salt Lake City: "Please don't hyperventilate if from time to time issues arise that need to be examined, understood and resolved. They do, and they will."

Mr. Mattsson served as a young missionary in England; his wife, Birgitta, is a convert. They raised their five children in the Mormon Church in Sweden, which dates to the 1850s and has about 9,000 members.

He and his twin brother, Leif, both rose through the ranks of leadership, and in 2000, Hans Mattsson became the first Swede ever to be named an area authority. (He served until 2005, when he had heart surgery.) During the week he worked in technology marketing, and on the weekends he traveled widely throughout Europe, preaching and organizing the believers.

"I was just in a bubble, and we felt so happy," Mr. Mattsson said.

The first doubts filtered up to him from members who had turned to the Internet to research a Sunday school talk. There are dozens of Web sites other than the Mormons' own that present critical views of the faith.

The questions were things like:

- Why does the church always portray Joseph Smith translating the Book of Mormon from golden plates, when witnesses described him looking down into a hat at a “peep stone,” a rock that he believed helped him find buried treasure?

- Why were black men excluded from the priesthood from the mid-1800s until 1978?

- Why did Smith claim that the Book of Abraham, a core scripture, was a translation of ancient writings from the Hebrew patriarch Abraham, when Egyptologists now identify the papyrus that Smith used in the translation as a common funerary scroll that has nothing to do with Abraham?

- Is it true that Smith took dozens of wives, some as young as 14 and some already wed to other Mormon leaders, to the great pain of his first wife, Emma?

About that last question, Mr. Mattsson said, “That was kind of shocking.”

Mr. Mattsson said he sought the help of the church’s highest authorities. He said a senior apostle came to Sweden at his request and told a meeting of Mormons that he had a manuscript in his briefcase that, once it was published, would prove all the doubters wrong. But Mr. Mattsson said the promised text never appeared, and when he asked the apostle about it, he was told it was impertinent to ask.

(Mr. Mattsson refused to identify the apostle, but others said it was [Elder L. Tom Perry](#), a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Elder Perry, now 91, confirmed through a church spokesman that he did visit a branch in Sweden with skeptical members, but said he recalled satisfying their questions with a letter written by the church’s history department.)

That encounter is what really set off Mr. Mattsson’s doubts. He began reading everything he could. He listened to the “Mormon Stories” podcasts. And he read “[Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling](#),” a biography by Richard Lyman Bushman, a historian at Columbia University and a prominent Mormon.

Mr. Bushman said in a telephone interview: “You would be amazed at the number of Mormons who don’t think Joseph Smith practiced polygamy. It just wasn’t talked about. It was never mentioned in church periodicals. That was policy.”

In the last 10 or 15 years, he said, “the church has come to realize that transparency and candor and historical accuracy are really the only way to go.” The church has released seven volumes of the papers of Joseph Smith and published an essay on one of the most shameful events in church history, the [Mountain Meadows massacre](#), in which church leaders plotted the slaughter of people in a wagon train in 1857.

But the church has not actively disseminated most of these documents, so when members come across them on Web sites or in books, Mr. Bushman said, “it’s just excruciating.”

“Sometimes people are furious because they feel they haven’t been told the truth growing up,” he said. “They feel like they were tricked or betrayed.”

Mr. Mattsson said that when he started sharing what he had learned with other Mormons in Sweden, the stake president (who oversees a cluster of congregations) told him not to talk about it to any members, even his wife and children. He did not obey: “I said to them, why are you afraid for the truth?”

He organized a discussion group in Sweden, and more than 600 participated, he said. In 2010, the church sent two of its top historians, [Elder Marlin K. Jensen](#) and [Richard E. Turley Jr.](#) to allay the Swedes’ concerns. They had a remarkably frank and sometimes testy exchange, especially about Smith and polygamy.

The Mattssons have tried other churches, but they are still attached to their Mormon faith. A few weeks ago, they moved to Spain for health reasons, they said. They left behind some family members who are unhappy with Mr. Mattsson’s decision to grant interviews to The New York Times and to the “Mormon Stories” podcast.

“I don’t want to hurt the church,” Mr. Mattsson said. “I just want the truth.”

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