



**LATIN AMERICAN CATHOLICISM IN AN AGE OF RELIGIOUS  
AND POLITICAL PLURALISM: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS\***

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article identifies and proposes a framework to explain the responses of Latin America's Roman Catholic churches to a new strategic dilemma posed by religious and political pluralism. Because the church's goals of defending institutional interests, evangelizing, promoting public morality, and grounding public policy in Catholic social teaching cut across existing political cleavages, Church leaders must make strategic choices about which to emphasize in their messages to the faithful, investment of pastoral resources, and alliances. I develop a typology of Episcopal responses based on the cases of Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Mexico, and explain strategic choices by the church's capacity to mobilize civil society, its degree of religious hegemony, and the ideological orientations of Catholics. The analysis draws from 620 Episcopal documents issued since 2000.

## **RESUMEN**

Este artículo identifica y propone un marco para explicar las respuestas de las Iglesias Católicas latinoamericanas a un nuevo dilema estratégico que plantea el pluralismo religioso y político. Puesto que las metas eclesiales de defender los intereses institucionales, evangelizar, promover la moralidad pública y basar la política pública en las enseñanzas sociales católicas atraviesan los clivajes políticos existentes, los líderes de la Iglesia deben hacer elecciones estratégicas acerca de cuáles metas enfatizar en sus mensajes a los fieles, en sus inversiones de recursos pastorales y en sus alianzas. Desarrollo una tipología de respuestas episcopales basadas en los casos de Argentina, Chile, Brasil y México y explico las elecciones estratégicas de acuerdo con la capacidad de la Iglesia para movilizar a la sociedad civil, su grado de homogeneidad religiosa y las orientaciones ideológicas de los católicos. El análisis se basa en 620 documentos episcopales, emitidos desde 2000.



Fifty years ago, the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America enjoyed extraordinary influence in politics and a near monopoly on religious belief and practice: in many countries presidents and generals had to be Catholic, more than nine of every ten Latin Americans called themselves Catholic, and children received Catholic religious education in private or state schools. Today, intensifying religious competition and an advancing tide of secularism have eroded the political influence and religious and cultural hegemony of the Catholic Church, with potentially profound consequences for politics and public policy in pluralist democracies.

How has the Catholic Church responded to religious and political pluralism? After a period in which many of Latin America's Catholic churches stood with progressive sectors of their own societies against bloody dictators, several, falling back into step with a more conservative Vatican leadership, are imposing greater control over the grassroots, defending their corporate interests, and enlisting secular state authorities to enforce the social and family policy outcomes that they cannot induce through moral persuasion; in these cases the old battle lines of the secular versus the religious, liberal rights versus moral protections, and rights of women versus the defense of the family appear to be re-forming. Yet, other Catholic churches have maintained progressive positions, invited more popular participation, devoted more pastoral care to the poor and excluded, and championed the Church's social doctrine, for reasons that are not clear. The principal frameworks that for decades have guided our understanding of the shifting involvements and influence of the Roman Catholic Church on politics and society in Latin America—the institutionalist, ideational, and religious economy paradigms—did not anticipate and are now hard pressed to explain diverging responses to the challenges of religious and political pluralism in a post-Vatican II world.<sup>1</sup>

This paper refocuses scholarly attention on the contemporary Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. Its aims are to define and identify national responses to the new strategic dilemma facing the Church, propose a framework for understanding those responses, and flag the consequences of the Church's decisions for electoral politics, public policy, and the Church itself. Like the religious economy paradigm, I treat the Church as a strategic actor, but I define the Church's strategic goals more broadly. In addition to acting to defend its institutional interests, the Catholic Church also seeks to

evangelize, promote public morality, and ground public policy in Catholic social teaching. The dilemma for the Church lies in the fact that its positions on ethical and social justice issues sometimes cut across political cleavages, often forcing Church leaders to emphasize one agenda or the other.

To explain why religious hierarchies make the choices they do, I propose a framework that privileges their relationships with the civil societies within which they are embedded. I contend that where Catholic churches have lost the capacity to mobilize the faithful—where the institutional reach of the Church and the vitality of its subcultural organizations (and associational life in general) are weak—and where religious competition and/or secularization has eroded the Church's position of religious dominance, Church leaders are likely to seek strategic allies on the political right who can protect its institutional interests and promote a public policy agenda consistent with the central tenets of Church teachings. On the other hand, where religious pluralism is high and the Church must be attentive to the possibility of defection, *but* where Catholic religious and lay activists lead a dense network of civic and political associations that are reasonably autonomous from the control of religious authorities, the Catholic base has more potential leverage over its alliances and priorities. Finally, where the Church maintains a near religious monopoly *and* its networks traverse a robust associational life, the Church is better able to mobilize Catholic civil society for its ambitious programmatic agenda that aligns with politically progressive parties on the impact of market reform and with social conservatives on the right on moral issues. To illustrate these choices I focus on four exemplary cases: the Argentine and Chilean Churches, which diverged sharply in their responses to military governments and have now converged on a strategic option to emphasize public morality more vigorously than the Church's social justice message; the Brazilian Church, which has devoted considerably more attention to mobilizing the poor to use democracy to achieve social justice; and the Mexican Church, which has straddled both dimensions of Catholic doctrine.

The Church's strategic dilemma is not, of course, unique to Latin America. Building on the Latin American cases, the analysis aspires to illuminate the place of religious institutions in plural and secularizing societies more broadly. I first describe the pluralist challenges facing the Church, introduce the four modal cases, and examine

contending perspectives on the Church's responses to its strategic dilemma. In the sections that follow, I advance a framework to explain Church responses to religious and political pluralism based on the Church's capacity to mobilize its supporters to protect its corporate interests and influence the public policy agenda, and then sketch out those responses, drawing from over 620 pastoral letters, messages, declarations, and reports issued or publicized by bishops in these countries since 2000.

### **RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL PLURALISM IN LATIN AMERICA: CHALLENGES, CASES, PERSPECTIVES**

The pluralist challenges to Catholics in Latin America today are unprecedented. Although the number of seminarians and priestly ordinations have risen sharply in the past quarter century, the Church is losing its gravitational pull over the faithful.<sup>2</sup> Self-identified Protestants now comprise roughly one-fifth of the region's population, about one in ten Latin Americans identify with no religion at all, and only a clear and declining minority of the nominally Roman Catholic population practice on a regular basis.<sup>3</sup> A slim majority of Roman Catholics in the ten Latin American countries included in the latest round of the World Values Survey report that religion is very important to their lives, and just under half cite religious faith as a quality that is important to encourage children to learn at home.<sup>4</sup>

The Church has also lost its dominance over social networks. Much of the civil society in which the Church invested heavily in fostering Catholic Action, ecclesial base communities (CEBs), and other forms of lay participation is now mobilized in organizations that lie beyond the reach of ecclesiastical authority. Catholic trade unions have vanished, Christian Democratic parties are declining, and social movements are defined to a greater degree by issue area than by their religious identity. Two-thirds of Mexicans, Chileans, and Argentines believe that the Church should not influence government or how people vote in elections. Catholic lay opinion overwhelmingly rejects the notion that an abortion can ever be justified, but a significant minority believes that transgressing the Church proscriptions on homosexuality and euthanasia sometimes can be justified, and only roughly a third of Latin Americans oppose divorce in all circumstances.<sup>5</sup> If Catholics side with the Church on the issue of the sanctity of life in

the womb in surveys, moreover, they do not in practice. Across Latin America, rates of clandestine abortions are among the highest in the world.<sup>6</sup>

Religious pluralism raises special challenges for the Catholic Church in democratic regimes. State-granted privileges are harder to justify in any case when a religious monopoly erodes, but especially so in the open debate of a democratic society. Particularly endangered are state subsidies for the salaries of priests, maintenance of church buildings, and Catholic education; tax exemptions on church assets; direct public support for Catholic charities and social services; and the right to provide religious instruction in the public schools. Indeed, constitutional and ordinary legislation governing religious freedom and nondiscrimination, the religious identity of public officials, the process of registering religious institutions and their tax-exempt status, and the granting of television licenses to religious bodies have come under intense scrutiny and debate in many countries.<sup>7</sup>

Secular democracy can also threaten a moral public sphere. Politicians responsive to new demands for social and family policy reform and reproductive rights that run counter to the Church's teachings have gained office in several countries at every level of government. Amid half-empty pews and widespread disobedience among Catholics to Church teachings in their daily lives, the Church can no longer count on Catholic public officials to stand firm against legal abortion, same-sex marriage, embryonic stem cell research, the morning-after pill, and the public distribution of condoms to combat the spread of AIDS. Just when the Church could use some political friends, it appears to have fewer. Alliances forged in the crucible of dictatorship with women's movements, human rights groups, and democratic politicians have cracked. Indigenous movements from Guatemala to Chile that the Church protected from military-nationalist projects now lie outside the Church's reach, both organizationally and theologically. Moreover, at a time when a new generation of leaders in parties of the left has welcomed public debate on moral issues that their predecessors suppressed, the Church can no longer rely on declining conservative and Christian Democratic political parties to protect its interests, and it no longer supports new partisan political ventures or the repackaging of old ones.<sup>8</sup>

### The Cases

These challenges raise common dilemmas for the Catholic Church across the region. Though national episcopates share a common commitment to democratic participation, Church teaching on human life and rights, and attending to society's neediest citizens, their responses to the pluralist challenge nonetheless differ substantially from one another, if to a lesser extent than a quarter century ago when some backed the liberationist, popular Church and others consorted with dictators. The Catholic Church in Argentina, which historically relied on state support to maintain its institution and fulfill its pastoral tasks to such a degree that in the 1970s it defended the grim repression of a military regime, has reacted to an increasingly secular landscape by defending moral values amid what it defines as a moral crisis. When, for example, the Peronist health minister advanced a plan to introduce sex education in the public and private schools and distribute contraceptives to minors in 2004–05, Army chaplain Bishop Antonio Baseotto suggested the minister be thrown into the sea with a millstone around his neck—a biblical reference that for many Argentines evoked strong memories of the dictatorship's practice of dumping the bodies of drugged prisoners into the sea. When in retaliation President Kirchner cut off the salary of the Army chaplain and skipped the traditional Revolution Day Mass at the Plaza Mayor Cathedral in Buenos Aires, the entire bishops' conference harshly condemned the government's role in rising inequality.

Church leaders in Chile, who bravely opposed military authorities when Catholic politicians were exiled, bishops insulted, the faithful tortured, and the poor defected to Pentecostal competitors, changed course after redemocratization to emphasize moral issues.<sup>9</sup> While authoritarian enclaves and inequality were highly salient in the public eye in the 1990s, Church leaders retreated from politics, closed the pastoral commission (*Vicaria de la Solidaridad*) that had served as a refuge for victims of repression and their families, discouraged Chileans from pressing claims against the military for human rights abuses during the dictatorship in favor of “national reconciliation,”<sup>10</sup> and fought long and hard against the legalization of divorce. Since 2000, they have also prominently opposed the state regulation of religious schools, sex education in schools, the government provision of condoms to combat the spread of AIDS, and any liberalization of the country's abortion laws.

The Brazilian Church is different. Historically, it did not penetrate society as deeply as many of its counterparts elsewhere in Latin America, and it vied with Spiritist and African diaspora religions for the fealty of Brazil's sizeable population of color. As in Chile, when the military trampled on Brazilian society, the Catholic hierarchy spoke up forcefully for the defense of human rights and a range of popular causes such as a fair minimum wage and land for the landless. But unlike in Chile, the Brazilian Episcopate has sustained numerous social pastoral commissions serving workers, the landless, the indigenous, "marginalized women," the homeless, and those suffering from AIDS, and it has launched visible campaigns to educate voters about the electoral programs and commitments to the poor of political parties. In the late 1990s, its Pastoral Commission on Justice and Peace mobilized 60 organizations in 15 months to collect one million signatures to sponsor citizen's legislation to prohibit the practice of clientelism, a campaign that culminated in the passage of Law 9840/99 that made buying votes by a candidate for public office a crime. Bishops have kept the issues of corruption, poverty, inequality, the external debt, participation in free trade agreements, indigenous rights, agrarian reform, and rural enslavement at the forefront of the public debate.<sup>11</sup>

Catholic leaders in Mexico have staked out a distinctive response to pluralism. A constitutional reform in 1992 relaxed the sharp constitutional separation of church and state that had prohibited the Church from owning property and priests from voting since the revolution, though the clergy still could not speak about politics or proselytize for or against any political party or candidates.<sup>12</sup> Recently, however, the Church has assumed a more assertive tone on public policy than at any time in nearly a century, adopting clear and uncompromising positions on human cloning, euthanasia, in-vitro fertilization, and the national abortion law. In July 2005, Cardinal Norberto Rivera of Mexico City threatened legal action over the Health Ministry's decision to recommend making the morning-after pill available. But it also denounced the application by the pro-Catholic Fox administration of the value-added tax to food and medicine and has defended social justice and democracy, indigenous rights and culture, and the plight of Mexican migrants in the United States.

### **The Contending Perspectives**

These different episcopal postures are not well explained by the principal frameworks that have guided the study of religion and politics in Latin America. An older institutionalist tradition that viewed the Roman Catholic Church as an organization like any other with a powerful bureaucracy assumed that the Church would act to defend its interests and prerogatives in the world of politics and the affairs of state.<sup>13</sup> If true, the problem arose in explaining why Church leaders would ever challenge state authorities and side with the state's political enemies, as it did in the 1970s and 1980s.

Dissatisfied with the inability of this paradigm to explain the emergence of the popular, liberationist Church, a contending, ideational approach attributed divergent episcopal priorities and responses to authoritarian regimes to the particular understandings of faith and the Church's mission that motivated the hierarchy, clergy, and laity. During dictatorial regimes, these conceptions of faith and mission could be transformed by political struggles of the grassroots that generated new conceptions about society and the Church's role within it.<sup>14</sup> This paradigm aptly explains the Church's most recent shift to the right as following from the appointment of more conservative bishops. However, it is less persuasive in accounting for why certain ideas can prevail and guide Church responses to religious and political pluralism in some contexts but not others. The notion that the progressive Church was more vulnerable and its liberationist wing more easily reined in where its conceptions of faith and mission were not shared by bishops (as was the case in Nicaragua) as they were in Brazil may explain national differences in the short term, but if ideas alone determine the orientation of national episcopates, then the appointment of scores of like-minded bishops in the past quarter century by two more conservative pontiffs and papal nuncios should have by now produced convergent responses to the challenge of pluralism.<sup>15</sup>

The third—and perhaps most influential—perspective of recent years employs an economic paradigm of competition to explain the strategic responses of national churches. Like the institutionalist paradigm, it sees the Church's corporate interests as paramount, but identifies those practically exclusively in terms of institutional maintenance: the overarching goal is to maximize its membership at the lowest cost. According to the religious economy thesis, once the religious market was deregulated and

the state-imposed and protected religious monopoly of the Catholic Church ended, unsurprisingly the Church lost millions of nominal adherents to Pentecostal competitors who supplied a religious product better suited to consumer demand.<sup>16</sup> Perennially short of priests to administer parishes that were too few, large, and far between, the Catholic Church could not meet its competition in poor neighborhoods and rural areas. In a seminal work, Anthony Gill contended that under dictatorships where the Church was threatened by such competition, its leaders took progressive theological and political stances in defiance of authoritarian regimes and chose to emphasize economic and social justice for the rural and urban poor who historically had received only weak pastoral care.<sup>17</sup> Where there was little fear of losing parishioners to other denominations, on the other hand, Church leaders slipped into easy, historic alliances with wealthy, conservative elites that could support the Church and its organization financially, and did not criticize state authorities that protected the Church's corporate interests in exchange for its silence on human rights abuses. Thus the Church opposed the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, but it acquiesced to an even more brutal one in Argentina.

In a democratic polity, Gill contends, Church incentives are inverted. Still unable to meet competition and now lacking resources once proffered by international donors to fight authoritarian regimes, state protection and support become all the more valuable, the costs of criticizing government rise, and Church leaders seek accommodation with elites.<sup>18</sup> The logic of religious competition and resource scarcity should thus produce a uniform pattern of retrenchment from popular causes, yet such an assumption is problematic empirically: some relatively weak Catholic churches facing low levels of competition, such as those in Argentina, have confronted governments, while others facing severe competition, such as those in Brazil, have retained progressive postures. Moreover, theoretically, there is no intrinsic reason why the resource constraint under democracy should be hard and inelastic; in democratic regimes, other, nonfinancial resources may be effective substitutes for international aid, especially if the Church's goals are broader than merely maintaining buildings and membership rolls.

## **FRAMING THE CHURCH'S STRATEGIC OPTIONS IN PLURAL DEMOCRACIES**

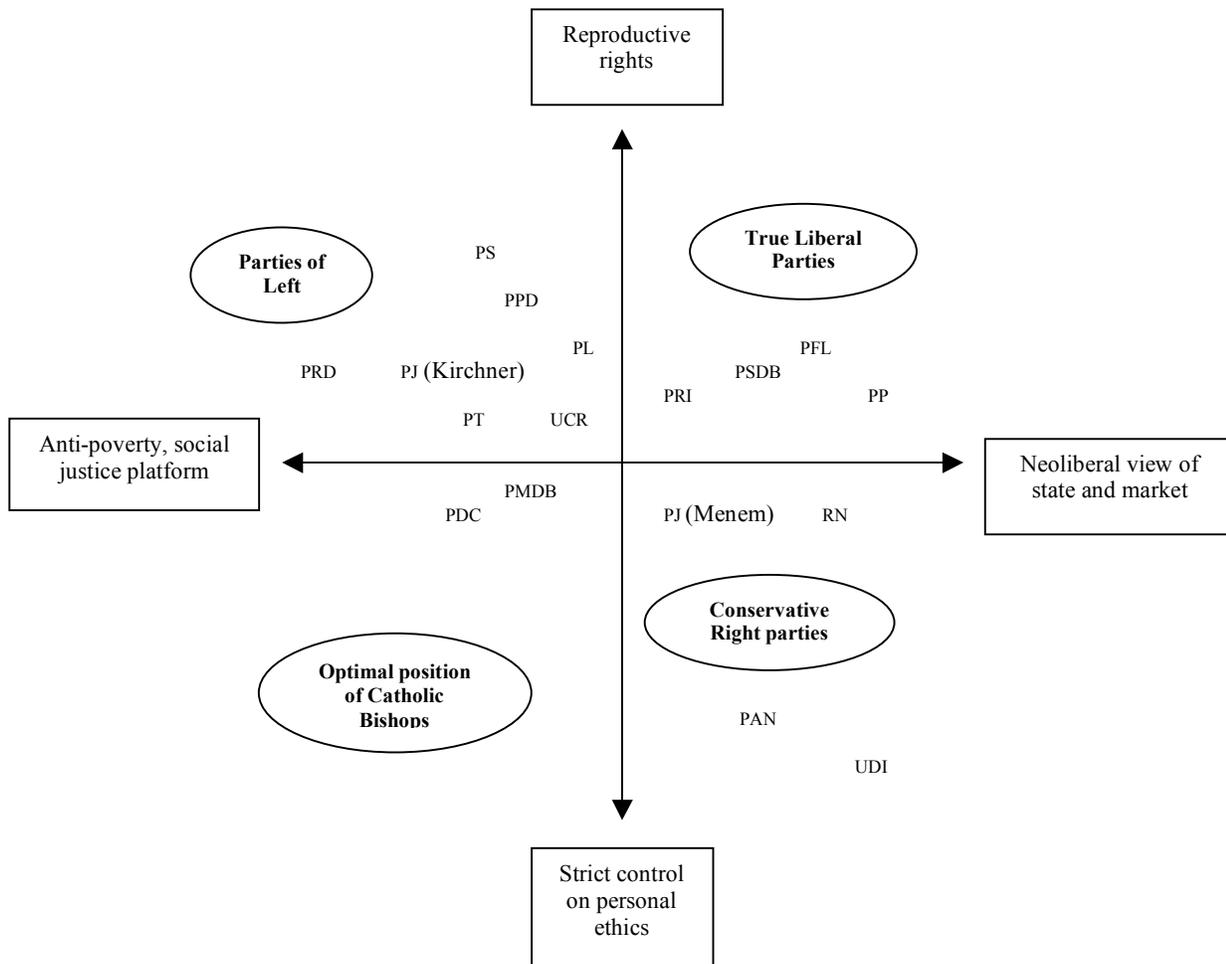
I begin from the premise that these frameworks have failed to predict divergent Church responses to the challenges of pluralism because they have not updated the Church's understanding of its mission, and they do not fully elucidate the nature of the dilemma facing the Church. Defending its corporate interests—maintaining the status of Catholicism as the dominant religion, keeping the flock, gaining public support for the web of schools and charitable organizations that educate, socialize, and care for Catholics, and staying financially solvent—are undoubtedly of paramount concern to the upper clergy. But the Church has other core goals. In 1992, the Latin American Catholic Bishops Conference (CELAM) embraced Pope John Paul II's "new evangelization project" to evangelize culture, deepen Church influence over civil society, and organize the public sphere on the principles of faith.<sup>19</sup> This ambitious project to influence public space and law, which rejected his predecessor's surrender to the inevitability of secularization and relegating religion to the private sphere, necessarily requires that the Church adopt positions on questions of public morality and social justice and mobilize the faithful for political action. Thus, a second, crucial goal is to maintain morality in the public sphere, protect human rights, and influence public policy on the family and issues of life and death; a third is to advance the Church's social doctrine—to reduce material poverty and achieve social justice and peace. Indeed, the pontificate of John Paul II championed the causes of just compensation for labor, land for the tiller, and universal access to health and education as vigorously as it defended Church teachings on personal morality and the traditional family.

The dilemma for the Church arises from the fact that in democratic regimes, these goals cannot easily be pursued simultaneously. To influence public policy, the Church needs allies in government. Yet, the Church's positions on state protection for the poor and for life and public morality do not map easily onto existing political space and do not comfortably match most partisan options (Figure 1). On a traditional left-right continuum on state intervention in the economy, the Church leans strongly toward an equitable distribution of income and land and government provision of social welfare—often

contesting neoliberal economic reforms and property rights for generating higher rates of unemployment, depressing wages, dismantling safety nets, and exacerbating inequality.

**FIGURE 1**

**The Ideological Axes of Political-Religious Competition and the Church's Strategic Dilemma**



**Party Key:**  
 PAN: National Action Party (Mexico)  
 PDC: Christian Democratic Party (Chile)  
 PFL: Party of the Liberal Front (Brazil)  
 PJ: Peronist Party (Argentina)  
 PL: Liberal Party (Brazil)  
 PMDB: Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement  
 PP: Progress Party (Brazil)  
 PPD: Party for Democracy (Chile)  
 PRD: Party of the Democratic Revolution (Mexico)  
 PRI: Institutional Revolutionary Party (Mexico)  
 PS: Socialist Party (Chile)  
 PSDB: Party of Brazilian Social Democracy  
 PT: Workers' Party (Brazil)  
 RN: National Renovation (Chile)  
 UCR: Radical Civil Union (Argentina)  
 UDI: Independent Democratic Union (Chile)

But on a second, rights-morality axis, it opposes any relaxation of moral codes that would allow the public provision of sex education and contraception, or any liberalization of legislation governing matters of life and death that contradict the Church's moral doctrine. The Church thus finds itself relatively isolated in the lower-left quadrant of Figure 1; most parties that are willing to defend the Church's institutional interests and preferred moral policies do not espouse economic policies consistent with the Church's social justice agenda, and vice versa.

In these circumstances, the Church must choose not *what* its position will be on the major issues of the day, on which all episcopates essentially agree, but *which aspects* of Catholic moral and social doctrine it will emphasize in messages to the faithful, pastoral letters, and pastoral commissions. It may propose to advance principles of social justice by renewing religious commitments, or by launching public campaigns to extend rights. It may ally with government elites, oppose them, or maintain a low profile and adhere to political neutrality. The remainder of this paper is dedicated to explaining when national Catholic churches will defend corporate interests, advocate for a moral public sphere, or promote peace and denounce social and economic injustice, and the nature of the alliances they will strike to advance their public policy agendas. I assume a status-quo bias in favor of protecting corporate interests, and following papal direction. But a strong, mobilized base may potentially move Church leaders to prioritize social justice, just as a weak and disorganized one might tempt Church leaders to deemphasize social justice in order to promote its less popular moral agenda or protect its own interests. Specifically, I contend that the strategic calculations of national Church leaders are initially shaped by their capacity to mobilize civil society, a valuable and underappreciated resource that in a democracy can compensate for the loss of rich benefactors and friends in high places. How forcefully the Church intervenes, in what arenas, and whether it addresses its messages to voters or politicians will be further influenced by the degree of religious hegemony it enjoys, the ideological orientations of the Catholic grassroots, and the nature and degree of political risk the Church faces. The ideological orientations of mass publics matter to religious hierarchies because in a democracy, Church leaders contemplating intervention in the public debate on particular issues must take into consideration how

much support they have or opposition they will face from Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

### **Mobilizing Society**

The Church's ability to mobilize its rank and file for political action depends on the density of voluntary associations and the degree to which membership in secular civic and religious associations overlaps. The intuition is that if lay and religious Catholic activists are present in human rights, women's, and youth groups, as well as in political parties and community associations, they will infuse these organizations with Catholic principles and spread Church influence beyond the orbit of regular churchgoers. Indeed, comparative research confirms that members of churches are generally far more likely to belong to other civic and especially political associations than people who are not, and that religiosity has a "powerfully positive effect" on formal associational memberships.<sup>20</sup>

The density and overlap in secular and religious civic associations is in part a result of the actions of dictators and Church leaders during the experience of authoritarianism. In the half dozen countries (including Argentina) in which national episcopates abandoned civil society to dictators determined to squash labor unions and autonomous associations and remand people to their private lives, social capital was destroyed and religious networks severely weakened. With 27 percent of respondents to the World Values Survey claiming membership in any political, civic, or class organization, Argentine civil society was in fact the least densely organized of the four countries. It was also the least penetrated by Church members, as only 15 percent of trade union, professional association, and political party members also belonged to religious organizations (see Table 1). Where, on the other hand, Catholic churches provided sanctuary to inchoate civic, human rights, and religious associations, they gained an advantage but not a guarantee that once the veil of repression was lifted, religious leadership of civil society organizations would continue. In Chile, activists who were not really tied to the Church vacated the religious orbit when political space was opened for secular associations, and civil society became estranged from the Church that had sheltered it. Today a mere nine percent of Chilean Catholics donate one percent of their salaries to the Church, and in a sweeping study of social movements in the late 1990s, not

**TABLE 1**

**Summary of Variables**

	Memberships in civil society <sup>a</sup> (a)	Overlapping memberships <sup>b</sup> (b)	<i>Capacity to mobilize</i> <sup>c</sup> (a x b)	Competition (% self-identified Roman Catholics) <sup>d</sup>	Secularism (% that practice at least once a week) <sup>e</sup>	<i>Religious hegemony</i> <sup>f</sup> (d x e)	Mean left-right self-identification <sup>g</sup>	Percent favoring radical change of society <sup>h</sup>
Argentina	27	15	Low	79	24	Low	6.11	3
Chile	47	23	Medium	54	38	Medium	5.48	7
Brazil	49	38	High	70	36	Medium	5.94	21
Mexico	49	39	High	74	62	High	6.75	16

<sup>a</sup> Total membership in three civic (social welfare for the elderly, youth work, and health), six political (political parties; local community action; human rights, environmental, and women's groups; and the peace movement), and two class organizations (labor unions and professional associations), as reported in the 2000 round of the World Values Surveys for Argentina, Chile, and Mexico. The Brazilian figure is derived from the 1990 World Values Surveys, as these questions were not asked in Brazil in the 2000 round.

<sup>b</sup> Percent of members of trade unions, professional associations, and political parties who also belong to church organizations in Argentina, Chile, and Mexico, as reported in 2000 round of World Values Surveys, and who also work for a religiously based charitable association in Brazil, as reported in the 2002 Brazilian National Election Study. (Comparable data on overlapping memberships in civic and other political associations are not available for Brazil.)

<sup>c</sup> Classification scheme based on multiplying memberships in civil society by factor of overlapping memberships (Argentina =4, Chile = 11, Brazil = 19, and Mexico = 19).

<sup>d</sup> World Values Surveys, 2000 round.

<sup>e</sup> World Values Surveys, 2000 round.

<sup>f</sup> Classification scheme based on multiplying percentage of self-identified Roman Catholics by the percentage that self-report attendance at religious services once a week or more.

<sup>g</sup> Based on location on left-right ideological spectrum in 2000 round of World Values Surveys (where 1 equals far left and 10 far right), significantly correlated with position on abortion, income equality, and government responsibility at .01 level in all four countries.

<sup>h</sup> Percentage of self-identified Catholics who responded "Our society must be radically changed by revolutionary action" to the question "On this card are three basic kinds of attitudes concerning the society we live in. Please choose the one which best describes your own opinion." (Other options included "Our society must be gradually improved by reform," and "Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces.")

one mention was made of any Church linkages to labor unions, professional guilds, student organizations, and environmental movements.<sup>21</sup> In 2000, 47 percent of Chileans reported belonging to one or more civic, political, and class organizations, but just 23 percent of members of union, parties, and professional associations also belonged to churches.

In Brazil, by contrast, lay Catholics in left politics who participated intensively in CEBs and worked with pastoral commissions during the dictatorship—whose activism had a religious foundation and whose alliances with Church leaders were based on shared aspirations and visions, not mere political expedience—did not leave the Church after redemocratization, enabling a dense web of interlocking religious and secular civic organizations to survive. Today Brazil's civil society is one of the most vigorous in all of Latin America. In 1990, 49 percent of respondents to the World Values Survey claimed membership in a civic, political, or class organization, and in 1993, 40 percent of women and 31 percent of men reported belonging to a CEB. In that same survey, 28 claimed to belong to at least one voluntary association, 18 to two, and 20 to three or more.<sup>22</sup> There is strong reason to believe that membership in civil society associations grew in the 1990s. In 2002, membership in trade unions and professional associations was reported at 19 and 13 percent, respectively (up from 6 and 5 percent in 1990).<sup>23</sup> There is also evidence of a high degree of cross-fertilization of religious and civic associations. Thirty-eight percent of members of unions, parties, and professional associations also worked for religious charitable organizations, and a "significant part of the leadership" of the Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST) is reported to have originated in the youth pastorals of the Catholic Church."<sup>24</sup> In Mexico, where the Church worked with human rights groups through the 1980s and 1990s to oppose corruption, push for fair elections and institutions to guarantee them, and advance democratization, a space for religious activism in politics and society has been preserved, as in Brazil. In 2000, 49 percent of survey respondents reported belonging to at least one organization; especially vibrant were local community action groups, human rights, women's, environmental, and peace movement associations. The rate of overlapping membership in class associations and parties (39 percent) was also higher than in Argentina and Chile. Catholic Church members in Mexico also dominated local community action groups and human rights groups (comprising two-

thirds of total membership), as well as women's groups, the peace movement, and health care organizations (with nearly 60 percent of the membership).

Thus in Argentina and Chile, political, class, and civic associations are not penetrated by Catholic activists, and the Church's capacity to mobilize Catholic civil society is weak to moderate. In Mexico and Brazil, civil society is more densely organized and, more importantly, organized by religious workers, and the Church is better able potentially to mobilize civil society—but for what?

### **Religious Hegemony and Political Orientation**

In democratic times when Catholic politicians are more responsive to constituents than to bishops, the Church's strategic options are influenced not merely by strength in the ranks but also by the degree of religious hegemony they enjoy and the political and ideological orientation of Catholic (and other) voters. Taking two measures of religious hegemony—the percentage of the population that self-identify as Roman Catholics, and the percentage that participate in religious services at least once a week—religious hegemony is lowest in Chile, where only 54 of the population is nominally Catholic, and highest in Mexico, where Protestant competition is weaker and society less secular; 62 percent of Mexicans report attending religious services at least once a week. I have classified Argentina, where religious competition and rates of religious practice are low, and Brazil, where competition is greater and religiosity moderate, as cases of medium hegemony.

Where hegemony is contested, what ordinary Catholics believe matters more for the direction the Church takes. In all four countries Catholic respondents to the World Values Survey were strongly opposed to abortion and moderately so to homosexuality and euthanasia, but they are less persuaded about the moral perils of sex education, divorce, and contraception.<sup>25</sup> In Argentina, over four-fifths of respondents in one poll thought it was important to teach sex education in the schools—and most did not think the Church should speak up on the issue.<sup>26</sup> In Chile, the legalization of divorce was supported by three-fourths of the population and nearly half of Catholics.<sup>27</sup> In Brazil, only around 10 percent of Catholics welcomed the Church's imposition of its moral vision on the faithful in the areas of family planning, second marriages, and

contraception.<sup>28</sup> Catholics also tend to favor greater income equality; greater government ownership of business and industry; the state taking more responsibility to provide for people; and changing society radically or through gradual reform. These views on questions of fundamental social justice are important because Latin American voters identify economic and social issues such as unemployment, poverty, economic crisis, personal security, and access to health and education as more salient than moral ones. In twelve major Latin American countries from 2001 to 2004, moral issues were not named by survey respondents among the five most important problems facing the country in a single one.<sup>29</sup> Voting their pocketbooks, Catholic electors do not uniformly identify with political parties such as the Mexican National Action Party (PAN) that defend the institutional interests of the Church and align fairly closely on moral issues to the positions of the upper clergy, and more significantly, they do not uniformly oppose parties that do not.<sup>30</sup> In Chile, despite the fading of the religious cleavage and the efforts of the parties of the right to court the religious vote and the support of religious leaders on moral issues, self-identified Catholics still express more affinity with the centrist Christian Democratic Party and its coalition partners on the left than the parties of the right.<sup>31</sup>

In ideological terms, Chilean Catholics place themselves significantly farther to the political left (with a mean response of 5.48 on the standard left-right scale) than respondents in the other countries, and Mexicans farther to the right (6.75). The mean scores of Brazilians (5.94) and Argentines (6.11) are not statistically significantly different, but 27 percent of Brazilians identified themselves on the left (from one to four), compared to 12 percent in Argentina, and 28 percent of Brazilians expressed an affinity with the Workers' Party.<sup>32</sup> Brazilian and Mexican Catholics were more open to changing society radically through revolutionary action (21 and 16 percent, respectively) than Chileans and Argentines (7 and 3 percent, respectively).<sup>33</sup>

Now we are ready to map national Church responses to the contemporary strategic dilemma. On the left-hand side of Figure 2, where mobilizing capacity is low, Church leaders tend to rely on conservative political elites to protect the Church's corporate interests and restore moral authority and the principles of faith to the public sphere. If necessary, they will forfeit or deemphasize their own social justice agenda. In

these societies, Catholic voters tend to be oriented toward the left, but the ideological self-placement of Catholics matters less in determining Church positions and influence than levels of religious hegemony and whether parties in power are friends or foes of the Church. In Chile, where society is increasingly secular and plural, Catholic Church leaders refrain from attacking politicians sympathetic to Church privileges and moral doctrine, as well as those who are not, a position I call “*defensive moralism*.” On the other hand, in Argentina—where, even though they may have little capacity to mobilize the faithful, they benefit from less competition, and fewer potential votes might be lost by catering to Church demands—Church leaders may assume a stance of “*pro-active moralism*,” attacking incumbent politicians who are permissive on moral issues, hoping either to raise the electoral costs of defying the Church or to dislodge them from office.

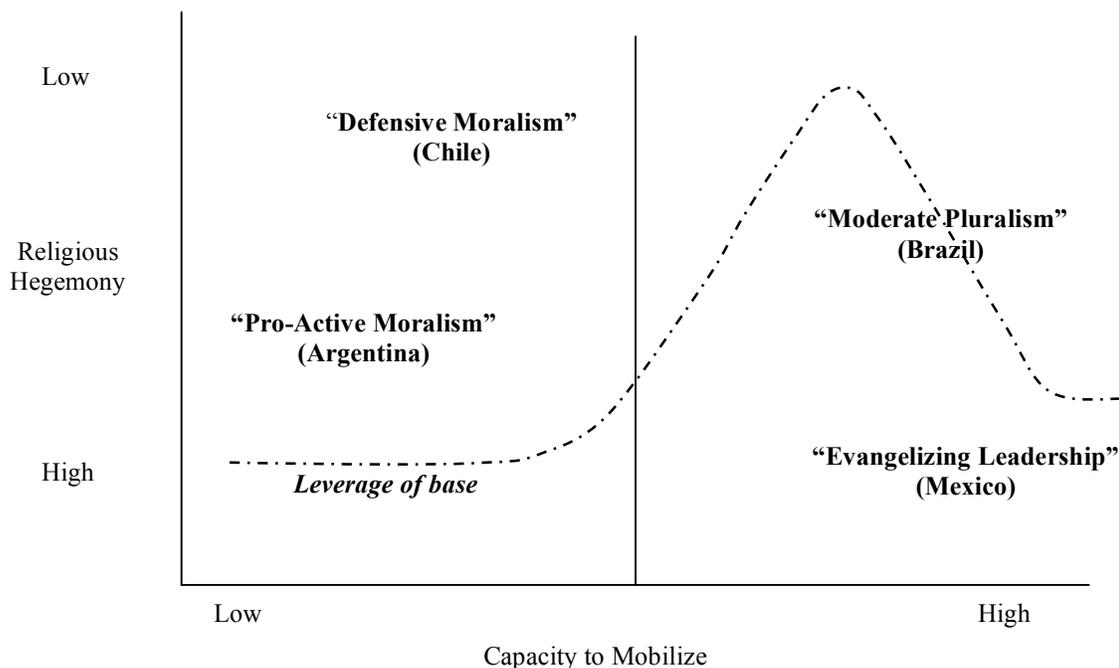
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FIGURE 2

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Church Strategic Responses

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On the right-hand side of Figure 2, civil society is more densely organized and connected to the Church. If religious hegemony is low, the leverage of the grassroots is greater and where the Catholic electorate is located matters more. In Brazil, where

Catholic grassroots opinion leans leftward and wants to move in a more progressive direction, it can pull the Church along with it toward a “*moderate pluralism*.” Church leaders are reluctant to identify too closely with conservative elites, causes, and parties to achieve their moral and institutional goals, and instead support minimum wage hikes, peasant land struggles, and the cultural, economic, and political rights of indigenous peoples. On the other hand, in Mexico, where religious hegemony is high and the ideological orientations of the Catholic grassroots are more conservative and conform more closely to those of ecclesiastical authorities, the Church has a greater opportunity to provide “*evangelizing leadership*” in society. The intuition here is that vibrant churches with close bonds with civil society, sufficient resources, minimal constraints from the laity, and little to fear from religious competitors and secularism can afford to reject political alliances with conservative elites in which they play the role of junior partner. They may press their own agendas and straddle the difficult political space on ethical doctrines and social teaching.

Each of these strategies carries consequences for the Church’s relationship with its followers and its influence over public policy. If the Church allies with elites to defend its institutional interests and promote its moral agenda, this will accelerate the trend toward religious defection, shrink the Church’s base in society, and ultimately erode further its potential influence, especially if conservative parties can mobilize voters without Church help and thus avoid alienating secular and Protestant voters by allying too closely with religious leaders. Conversely, where the Church maintains strong links with well-organized grassroots groups, faces little competition, and has a base that is more closely aligned with the full array of Church doctrine’s bargaining positions, it will enjoy maximum advantage to influence public policy and speak out accordingly. Where the Church’s political alliances are more varied and it is embedded in a plural civil society, the Church, and democracy, will reflect that pluralism. Next, I apply the framework to the four cases.

### **BISHOPS RESPOND: PATTERNS AND EVIDENCE**

All Catholic bishops, without exception, forcefully uphold Church teaching on human life from conception to natural death. Each bishops’ conference stridently opposes

embryonic stem cell research and any form of human cloning, the availability of the morning-after-pill, any form of assisted suicide, and abortion under any and all circumstances. All heeded the Vatican's call to form pastoral commissions for migrants, support indigenous rights and land struggles, condemn poverty and inequality, and denounce the neoliberal economic model. All claim to be strictly nonpartisan, embrace democracy, and affirm the importance of informed electoral participation and honest politicians who govern transparently. All agree that state-supported religious education is necessary to guarantee genuine pluralism and the fundamental rights of parents to direct their children's education under the principle of subsidiarity. Nonetheless, each establishes its own priorities in choosing the subjects of pastoral letters, allocating scarce resources to social pastoral commissions, and guiding the faithful in their daily lives and at election time. Some, moreover, are more willing than others to clash with governments.

To classify the orientation of these four national churches according to the emphasis they placed on institutional interests, moral issues, and Catholic social doctrine in the past five years, I analyzed a total of over 620 official and unofficial documents, studies, messages, homilies, and interviews of bishops publicized on the websites of their episcopal conferences from 2000–05. I separated traditional religious messages and routine personnel appointments from those directed explicitly to the defense of corporate interests, and pronouncements on social and economic justice from those extolling the virtues of democratic participation and world peace (see Appendix). Because the universe of these documents is not entirely comparable—some conferences post homilies and messages on religious themes by individual bishops, whereas others give more weight to official documents and studies and reflections on salient public issues—and Catholic bishops do not always set their own agenda but tend to react to public policy issues of the day, we cannot necessarily draw meaningful inferences from the simple proportion of documents addressed to one theme or the other. Thus I pay special attention to the contents of official documents (e.g., pastoral letters and conference declarations), and whether messages issued by individual bishops conform to, or dissent from, the rest of the episcopate.

### **Pro-Active and Defensive Moralism: Argentina and Chile**

The upper clergy in Argentina have spoken out on moral issues and worked to protect Church subsidies and privileges. In the wake of the collapse in 2001 of the economy, the Convertibility Plan, and the Radical government, and the rise of the anti-neoliberal, Kirchner wing of the Peronist party, the Church might have plausibly aligned with an angry civil society around issues of unemployment, inequality, and an antiglobalization agenda. The Church did participate “not without apprehension” in the national Roundtable of Argentine Dialogue in 2002, but its advocacy of social justice was muted. While the bishops denounced neoliberalism, they did so for the deleterious impact that the laws of the market and profit incentives had on undermining the value of work and encouraging tax evasion and political corruption. Poverty and exclusion were viewed as symptoms of, and following from, a moral crisis, which two key pastoral documents identified as rooted in a “secularist cultural dimension” that carries ideologies of moral relativism with respect to the “the concepts of marriage and the family, certain perceptions of gender, and new models of relationship between the sexes.”<sup>34</sup> They especially condemned the media for publicizing violence and destroying the family. Though they decried social exclusion and upheld the rights to shelter, employment, education, health, and of indigenous peoples, they only condemned inequality once the Kirchner administration proposed introducing sex education in public and private schools.<sup>35</sup> In the two-year cycle from 2004 to 2005, of two dozen bishops making pronouncements, only one retired bishop, Miguel Hesayne of Viedma, spoke out on what could be construed to be a social justice agenda. Most episcopal messages promoted evangelization, warned of a crisis of values, and specifically opposed the legalization of abortion in cases of rape and assisted reproduction.

Chile’s bishops, bereft of grassroots support and facing two consecutive agnostic Socialist presidents, also prioritized the Church’s corporate interests and emphasized its moral agenda. Church leaders condemned President Lagos, the Concertación, and Catholic politicians who made possible the 2004 Marriage (divorce) Law, the morning-after-pill, and the Lagos government’s anti-AIDS campaign that distributed condoms as expensive, potentially ineffective, encouraging of sexual promiscuity, and aimed at undermining Church moral authority. They even opposed a Ministry of Education

regulation requiring all schools to provide access and services to pregnant girls on the grounds that it constituted state interference in religious education. The most significant pastoral letter of this period celebrates the family, and warns of the potential burden that falling birth rates will place on the nation's pension system.<sup>36</sup> In a set of coordinated Independence Day messages in 2004 and 2005, bishops gave thanks for economic prosperity, good copper prices, and a new health law. Only 11 percent of messages in 2004 focused on social justice issues, compared with 22 percent that addressed moral and cultural issues, and those that spoke about equality focused on equality of opportunity. Three-fifths addressed institutional issues, not the least because the Chilean Church was wracked by its own sexual abuse scandal in 2004. On the relatively few occasions it spoke out on politics, its predominant message to Catholics was that democratic pluralism could not fail to recognize natural, moral principles; along with human rights for ethnic and religious minorities, opportunities for youth, fair wages, and the reduction of inequality, Chilean bishops identified as issues of overriding importance the dignity of life from conception, the benefit of families founded in the union of a man and a woman, and support for biological maternity.<sup>37</sup>

### **Moderate Pluralism: Brazil**

In a densely organized civil society with intense religious competition and a left-leaning Catholic electorate such as Brazil, the national episcopate may speak out on moral issues but is constrained from straying too far from its social justice commitments. In more than five dozen statements, the Conference of Brazilian Catholic Bishops (CNBB) roundly criticized the Biosecurity Law legalizing embryonic stem cell research and the legalization of abortion in cases of anencephaly. Yet, in contrast with the bitter campaigns waged by bishops in Argentina and Chile to stop the distribution of condoms in schools, in 2003 Brazilian bishops—though disagreeing with the government's program to do the same—applauded the motives behind it, and four months later even had to clarify that on no occasion did anyone official representing the CNBB affirm that condoms were the “lesser of two evils.”<sup>38</sup>

The Brazilian bishops most sharply distinguished themselves from other Conferences in their political messages and campaigns. Whereas other episcopates

instructed voters to support politicians who respect life above all else, Brazilian bishops emphasized a politician's honesty, competence, and commitment to the poor. During the 2002 presidential and 2004 municipal election campaigns, Brazilian bishops urged Catholics not to sell their votes but to back candidates committed to the Church's social doctrine. They aimed through the "Your vote does not have a price, it has consequences" campaign and "Faith and Politics" groups to promote programmatic political parties, make government transparent and accountable by monitoring public officials and holding them accountable, and foster pro-poor public policies. Bishops prepared voters for the 2004 municipal elections by publicizing the functions of mayors and city councilors, and identifying the issues on which voters should familiarize themselves with the candidates' positions.

CNBB statements sounding a social justice theme were also more forceful and specific than those of other episcopates. In 2005 the bishops recalled their decades-long commitments to indigenous rights, agrarian reform, and workers' causes. Indeed, the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) played a key role in documenting violence against landless peasants seeking redress and to organize. Bishops traced the Lula government's agrarian reform plan and Zero Hunger project to their own Campaign to Overcome Misery and Hunger, and they celebrated the decision of the Lula government to cede to 16,000 Indians the right to their traditional lands in Roraima. In contrast to the single message of one Chilean bishop on May Day, the Brazilian bishops as a conference seized upon the labor holiday to denounce labor flexibilization laws and gender-based and racially discriminatory hiring and wage policies, and to remember those who had died for "the conquests achieved after years of struggle."<sup>39</sup> And unlike the Independence Day messages of the Argentine and Chilean bishops, the CNBB issued a Power Point message for the September 7, 2005 Independence Day celebrations that featured snapshots of the "Cry of the Excluded" campaign. With not a word devoted to moral issues, the message issued a "cry for radical reform in the political system," signaled the need for party loyalty and for a "participatory and deliberative democracy" with "popular participation via social movements, unions, social pastorals, and political parties," and decried the income-concentrating and employment-reducing effects of globalization, as well as the transformation of relations between labor and capital.

Brazilian bishops also confidently assumed they could mobilize society. In laying out its campaign to stop embryonic stem cell research, the secretary-general of the CNBB wrote, “It is important that deputies feel that the votes of their constituents are at stake, and that the Church has a great capacity to mobilize society when dealing with vital questions.”<sup>40</sup> A lengthy Church document issued for the 2002 electoral campaign included not merely a full list of priority themes—the eradication of hunger, respect for economic and social rights for all, and sustainable development—but also a blueprint for action for clergy and laity in CEBs and Faith and Politics groups to raise political consciousness among voters.<sup>41</sup> Following a campaign similar to the one that passed Law 9840/99, the officers of the CNBB recently put the Church squarely behind pending legislation to simplify the procedures for holding popular referenda under Article 14 of the Constitution.

### **Evangelizing Leadership: Mexico**

Compared to Brazil, the Mexican hierarchy places more emphasis on the Church’s moral agenda, but also criticizes the pro-Church government when it betrays Catholic social doctrine. Mexican bishops joined all Latin American episcopates in condemning a “culture of death,” euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, and abortion. Going well beyond any messages from Brazilian bishops, they denounced contraception and in-vitro fertilization, and, reminding the faithful that marriage was indissoluble, repeated that Church officials could not remarry those divorced by civil law.

Yet, as might be expected of leaders of a church with deep roots in society, Mexican bishops also spoke out in meaningful ways on democracy and social justice. For decades, the Mexican Church decried the excessive concentration of authority in the federal executive branch, party/government control of the electoral process, and the abuse of power by the PRI.<sup>42</sup> Of 55 episcopal documents issued from 2000 to 2005, nearly twice as many (15) related to the Church’s social doctrine than to moral themes (8), and another 12 addressed explicitly political themes extolling peace and democratic elections and values (the remainder were on themes related either to institutional interests or traditional religious messages). Unlike in Argentina and Chile, the Mexican hierarchy not only exhorted Mexicans to vote, and not to sell their votes, but it also instructed them to

be well informed about the positions of candidates and parties on various economic, social, and moral questions of the day, and that their Christian faith obligated them to work for a just society. But unlike in Brazil, it also reminded them that, in conscience, Catholic citizens should not vote for politicians that do not respect the dignity of human life, marriage, the family, and the true common good.<sup>43</sup>

Mexican bishops paid more than lip service to indigenous issues; they addressed the ongoing crisis in Chiapas, and on the occasion of the beatification of Juan Diego Cuauhtlatotzin, the Indian visited by the Virgin of Guadalupe, promoted indigenous rights and culture. They also condemned increases in the minimum wage as too small and proposals to legalize gambling as injurious to the poor. The Church was so confident of its standing in society that in 2004 bishops argued, in contravention of nearly a century of custom and law, that in order to fulfill its spiritual mission the Church should “promote religious education in various settings, lend spiritual assistance to public sector health and readjustment centers, and have a greater presence in the media.”<sup>44</sup> In 2005 leading bishops in Mexico, alone among the episcopates, called for new institutional structures to better serve the people, and were self-critical about disparities in priest/parishioner ratios.<sup>45</sup>

### **CONCLUSIONS: FROM MOBILIZATION TO INFLUENCE IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY**

Finding itself in danger of losing not only the flock, but also a distinctively Catholic social and political sphere, the Latin American Catholic Church has been challenged to mount a defense against religious and political pluralism. This article has argued that in democracies in which the Church’s public policy agendas compete in political space, the solution to their national strategic dilemmas of which issues to emphasize and how to do so follow from their ability to mobilize their bases in civil society, religious hegemony, and the orientation of voters. In Argentina and Chile, the inability of national churches to mobilize a diminishing Catholic civil society has led their episcopates to prioritize moral issues. But in Brazil, the hierarchy maintains pastoral commissions to defend the economic and social rights of the poor, and it has denounced public sector corruption as vocally as it has legal abortion and embryonic stem cell

research. In Mexico, where Catholic opinion also endorses the Church's moral positions to a greater degree, the hierarchy have more aggressively reminded Catholic voters and politicians of their duties to protect life above all else.

My argument has important implications for electoral politics, public policy, and the Church itself. Future electoral cleavages will depend on whether politics is defined by two separate axes of social justice and moral issues or if these collapse into one issue dimension; Church actions could tip the balance. Public policy outcomes, too, are likely to be heavily influenced by the capacity of the Church to influence the public debate. To date, the Church has lost several battles over such "soft" moral issues as the availability of the morning-after pill and embryonic stem cell research, but the outcome of the coming battles to liberalize abortion is not so clear. Clearly more research will be needed on the outcomes of not only legislation governing bioethical issues and women's rights, but also the court decisions, health ministry regulations, and enforcement of the law in provincial and municipal governments—in these and other countries.

This argument also has forward implications for both the Church's membership base and its capacity to provide evangelizing leadership. I have claimed that the more vulnerable the Church and the more it finds itself losing the battle for culture and political space, the more likely it will be tempted to ally with politically conservative elites on the right to protect its corporate interests and implement its moral agenda. The strategy of forming alliances with state actors to protect its corporate interests is more expedient than the one of building support from below. Yet, in the long run, such a strategy can be detrimental to the institution and cost it influence in shaping the terms of the public debate. The Church stands a better chance of exercising leadership on an array of issues where it can mobilize a Catholic civil society. If it can rely on its own social networks and voters, it will have more latitude to cross traditional, left-right boundaries and address issues of its choice in the public arena, to champion social justice and public morality, and to formulate a genuinely Catholic response to pluralism.

## APPENDIX

## Document Summary

	Argentina	Chile	Brazil	Mexico	Total
Official documents (2000–05)	39	56 <sup>a</sup>	25	55	175
Bishops' homilies and messages <sup>b</sup>	103	148			
Other		67 <sup>c</sup>	128 <sup>d</sup>		
Total	142	271	153	55	621

Sources: Argentina, official documents: <http://www.cea.org.ar/06-voz/documencea/index.htm>; bishops' messages: [http://www.cea.org.ar/06-voz/mensajesobispos/index\\_2005.htm](http://www.cea.org.ar/06-voz/mensajesobispos/index_2005.htm); and homilies: [http://www.prensa-cea.com.ar/la\\_voz\\_de\\_los\\_pastores.htm](http://www.prensa-cea.com.ar/la_voz_de_los_pastores.htm). Chile, all documents: <http://www.episcopado.cl/>. Brazil, official declarations: <http://www.cnbb.org.br/index.php?op=pagina&subop=154>; analyses, messages and reports on politics and bioethics, <http://www.cnbb.org.br/index.php?op=menu&subop=11&sublinha=01>; Mexico, official documents: <http://www.cem.org.mx/doctos/cem/index.htm>.

<sup>a</sup> Includes 25 collective statements, 24 messages issued by the conference president, and 7 by the secretary-general in 2004 and 2005.

<sup>b</sup> 2004–05.

<sup>c</sup> Includes documents from press offices, pastoral commissions, diocesan departments, and religious groups and lay movements, 2004–05.

<sup>d</sup> Includes 24 documents on the theme of “Church and politics” and 61 on “Church and bioethics” from the Vatican and other conferences, working documents of pastoral commissions, and unofficial reports by medical, educational, and legal professionals, and 43 general “analyses of the current situation” by lay authors, 2000–05.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Notable exceptions are Daniel Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Carol Ann Drogus and Hannah Stewart-Gambino, *Activist Faith: Grassroots Women in Democratic Brazil and Chile* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005); and Edward L. Cleary and Timothy J. Steigenga, eds., *Resurgent Voices in Latin America: Indigenous Peoples, Political Mobilization, and Religious Change* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Between 1975 and 2000, the number of seminarians rose by 80 percent and diocesan priestly ordinations by 57 percent. Brian T. Froehle and Mary L. Gautier, *Global Catholicism: Portrait of a World Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), pp. 35–38.

<sup>3</sup> The true scale of decline is hard to gauge. In Chile, the percentage of Catholics in greater Santiago that practiced fell from 33.2 in 1958 to 18.5 in 1998. Carla Lehmann, “Chile: ¿Un País Católico?” *Puntos de Referencia* No. 249 (Santiago: Centro de Estudios Públicos, 2001). Yet, historians contend that during the centuries of Christendom when concordats with the state guaranteed the Church’s religious monopoly, Catholic religious hegemony may have been illusory. Failing to create an indigenous priesthood and only weakly penetrating rural areas, slave populations, and indigenous societies, the Church depended on wealthy landowners and urban elites, religious practice was low among the poor, and local doctrines bore scant resemblance to the real thing. R. Andrew Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America’s New Religious Economy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Inglehart, Miguel Basáñez, Jaime Díez-Medrano, Loek Halman, and Ruud Luijkx, *Human Beliefs and Values: A Cross-Cultural Sourcebook Based on the 1999–2002 Values Surveys* (Mexico: Siglo XXI, 2004). The ten countries are Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

<sup>5</sup> As reported in the 2000 round of the World Values Survey.

<sup>6</sup> Based on the numbers of women hospitalized due to complications from clandestine procedures, the Alan Guttmacher Institute estimates that from 1989 to 1991, 4,000,000 abortions were performed across Latin America, terminating 35 percent of pregnancies in Chile, 31 in Brazil, 30 in Peru, 28 in the Dominican Republic, 26 in Colombia, and 17 in Mexico. Data retrieved on 2/16/2005 from [www.agi-usa.org/pubs/ib.12.htm](http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/ib.12.htm).

<sup>7</sup> See the essays in Paul E. Sigmund, ed., *Religious Freedom and Evangelization in Latin America: The Challenge of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Scott Mainwaring, “The Transformation and Decline of Christian Democracy in Latin America,” in Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, eds., *Christian Democracy in Latin America: Electoral Competition and Regime Conflict* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 377–78.

<sup>9</sup> William M. Lies, *Counting Sheep: Religious Socialization, Competition, and Chilean Politics* (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Maria Angélica Cruz, *Iglesia, represión y memoria: El caso Chileno* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> CNBB/Instituto Nacional de Pastoral, *Presença Pública da Igreja* (São Paulo: Paulinas, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Roderic Ai Camp, *Crossing Swords: Politics and Religion in Mexico* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 31–34; José Luis Soberanes Fernández, “The New Legislation on Religious Freedom in Mexico,” pp. 129–138 in Sigmund, ed., *Religious Freedom and Evangelization*.

<sup>13</sup> The classic work on the subject is Ivan Vallier, *Catholicism, Social Control, and Modernization in Latin America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970).

<sup>14</sup> Scott Mainwaring, *The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil, 1916–1985* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), pp. 12, 15; Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde, “The Progressive Church in Latin America: An Interpretation,” in Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde, eds., *The Progressive Church in Latin America* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

<sup>15</sup> Mainwaring and Wilde, *Progressive Church*, pp. 19–21.

<sup>16</sup> Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits*; Joshua Prokopy and Christian Smith, “Introduction,” in Christian Smith and Joshua Prokopy, eds., *Latin American Religion in Motion* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 6–7; Roberto J. Blancarte, “Popular Religion, Catholicism and Socioreligious Dissent in Latin America: Facing the Modernity Paradigm,” *International Sociology* 15, 4 (2000), pp. 596–97; Alison Brysk, “From Civil Society to Collective Action: The Politics of Religion in Ecuador,” in Cleary and Steigenga, eds., *Resurgent Voices in Latin America*, pp. 25–42.

<sup>17</sup> Anthony Gill, *Rendering Unto Caesar: The Catholic Church and the State in Latin America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177–78, 184.

<sup>19</sup> José-Maria Ghio, “The Latin American Church and the Papacy of Wojtyła,” in Douglas A. Chalmers, Maria do Carmo Campello de Souza, and Atilio A. Boron, eds., *The Right and Democracy in Latin America* (New York: Praeger, 1992), pp. 185–87, 195.

<sup>20</sup> Peter J. McDonough, Doh C. Shin, and José Alvaro Moisés, “Democratization and Participation: Comparing Spain, Brazil, and Korea,” *Journal of Politics* 60, 4 (1998), pp. 925, 938–40.

<sup>21</sup> Gonzalo de la Maza E., “Los movimientos sociales en la democratización de Chile,” in Paul Drake and Iván Jaksic, eds., *El Modelo Chile: Democracia y desarrollo en los noventa* (Santiago: LOM, 1999), pp. 377–406.

<sup>22</sup> McDonough, Shin, and Moisés, “Democratization and Participation,” pp. 925, 938.

<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, questions about membership in these organizations were not repeated in the 2000 round of the World Values Survey in Brazil. Data from 2002 are from the Brazilian National Election Study of that year.

<sup>24</sup> Luiz Alberto Gomez de Souza, “Roman Catholic Church and the Experience of Democracy in Latin America,” paper presented to the conference “Contemporary Catholicism, Religious Pluralism, and Democracy in Latin America,” Kellogg Institute, University of Notre Dame, March 31–April 1, 2005, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Though 67 percent of Catholic Argentines and 76 percent of Catholic Brazilians believed abortion was never justifiable, only 49 and 61 percent, respectively, thought the same of euthanasia and 39 and 55 percent, of homosexuality.

<sup>26</sup> “De eso sí se habla,” *Página/12*, November 13, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Centro de Estudios Públicos, “Tema Especial: La Mujer Chilena Hoy: Trabajo, Familia, y Valores,” No. 237 (August 1995).

<sup>28</sup> Katia Maria Cabral Medeiros, “Orientações ético-religiosas,” in Luiz Alberto Gomez de Souza and Silvia Regina Alves Fernandes, eds., *Desafios do catolicismo na cidade: Pesquisa en regiões metropolitanas brasileiras* (Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo: CERIS/Paulus, 2002), pp. 201–47.

<sup>29</sup> Argentina (Ipsos-Mora y Araujo, 2003); Bolivia (Encuestas & Estudios, 2003); Brazil (IBOPE, OPP 570, December 2002); Chile (Centro de Estudios Públicos, Estudio Nacional de Opinión Pública No. 14, December 2001–January 2002); Colombia (*Revista Semana*, January 2, 2004); Costa Rica (Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, 2002); El Salvador (IUDOP, “Evaluación del país a finales de 2003 y perspectivas electorales para 2004: Encuesta de opinión pública,” Boletín de prensa 38, No. 4, 2003); Guatemala (ASIES, Democratic Indicators Monitoring System Project, October 2001); Mexico (Consulta Mitofsky, “XIII Evaluación del Presidente Vicente Fox, Encuesta Nacional de Vivienda,” February 2004);

Peru (Grupo de Opinión Pública de la Universidad de Lima, Estudio 209, Barómetro, December 2003); Uruguay (Cifra/González, Raga y Asociados, 2004); Venezuela (Alfredo Keller y Asociados, “Condiciones del Escenario Político de Venezuela: En base a los resultados de la encuesta nacional y de los focus groups de Agosto 2003).

<sup>30</sup> In the 2000 election, Catholics evenly split their votes between the PAN and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Beatriz Magaloni and Alejandro Moreno, “Catching All Souls: The Partido Acción Nacional and the Politics of Religion in Mexico,” in Mainwaring and Scully, eds., *Christian Democracy in Latin America*, pp. 247–72. In Argentina, where neither party today defends Church interests, 38 percent of Catholics in 2000 favored the Peronists and 39 percent the Alianza, made up of Frepaso and the Radicals.

<sup>31</sup> According to Mariano Torcal and Scott Mainwaring, “The Political Recrafting of Social Bases of Party Competition: Chile, 1973–95,” *British Journal of Political Science* 33 (2003), pp. 65–66, 74, religiosity, which was so important in the 1960s, no longer predicted party preference between the PDC (Christian Democratic Party) and the Left. In the aggregate, however, in 2000 24 percent of Chilean Catholics responding to the World Values Survey identified with the Christian Democrats, 15 percent with the Party for Democracy, and 9 percent with the Socialist Party. In contrast, only 12 percent favored the rightist Independent Democratic Union and 10 percent the National Renovation, despite the overtures of Joaquín Lavín, a member of Opus Dei, who in the presidential race of 2000 aggressively wooed the Catholic religious vote, and Sebastián Piñera, who in 2006 courted CNBB leaders and attempted to steal the Christian Democratic mantle of “Christian Humanism.” “Secretario General de la CECh recibió a Sebastián Piñera,” *Prensa CECh*, December 27, 2005.

<sup>32</sup> There is strong reason to believe that the most active and committed Catholics are heavily represented in this group, as members of CEBs vote for the PT in greater numbers than other Catholics. Antônio Flávio Pierucci and Reginaldo Prandi, “Religiões e Voto: A Eleição Presidencial de 1994,” *Opinião Pública* 3, 1 (1994), p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> World Values Survey, 2000.

<sup>34</sup> “Navega Mar Adentro,” May 31, 2003 and “Necesitamos ser Nación,” May 15, 2004. (Sources for all episcopal documents cited may be found in the Appendix.)

<sup>35</sup> See the Pastoral Letter, “Una Luz para Reconstruir la Nación,” November 11, 2005.

<sup>36</sup> “Matrimonio y Familia, una buena noticia para la Humanidad,” November 25, 2005.

<sup>37</sup> “Una Democracia Con Valores,” December 14, 2005.

<sup>38</sup> “Nota da CNBB sobre o programa de distribuição de preservativos nas escolas,” August 28, 2003, and “Declaração da Presidência da CNBB sobre a ‘Carta aberta’ do Programa Nacional de DST e AIDS, do Ministério da Saúde,” December 9, 2003.

<sup>39</sup> “Mensagem da CNBB para o dia 1 de maio,” May 1, 2005.

<sup>40</sup> “Carta da CNBB aos Bispos sobre a votação do Projeto de Biossegurança,” March 1, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> “Eleições 2002: Propostas para Reflexão,” November 27–30, 2001.

<sup>42</sup> Camp, *Crossing Swords*, p. 292.

<sup>43</sup> “La democracia no se puede dar sin ti,” May 2, 2000; “Sobre el entorno político del momento,” June 19, 2000; and “Votemos con responsabilidad,” March 25, 2003.

<sup>44</sup> “Mensaje del episcopado mexicano al termino de su LXXVII Asamblea Plenaria,” April 23, 2004. This declaration was followed up in 2005 with a push to be allowed to teach religion in schools and to own broadcasting licenses (*Latin American Regional Report: Mexico and NAFTA*, August 2005).

<sup>45</sup> “No habrá un mundo nuevo sin hombres nuevos,” July 4, 2005, and “Mensaje final de la LXXX Asamblea de la CEM,” November 11, 2005.