

Thesis

Although the Society of Jesus has been praised for its liberalizing tendencies, the Jesuits must be viewed as a symptom rather than a cure of the politicization of the Catholic Church begotten at the Council of Chalcedon, a mortal, irreversible, and self-inflicted wound. The Jesuits are thus slowly dying along with the Catholic Church despite the 2013 elevation of a Jesuit, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, to the papacy as Pope Francis.

Outline

Introduction

I. Pope Francis (First Jesuit Pope)

- A. Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio (Jesuit) ascended to Pope Francis in 2013.
- B. Papacy is the first for a member of the Society of Jesus.
- C. Members take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience but also vow not to seek offices of honor or prestige—thus, Bergoglio's elevation was a surprise to many.
- D. Supporters claimed that Jesuits may accept such offices if they are asked as "obedient priests," but this is circular because, as an obedient Jesuit, he should have refused.
- E. Jesuits have been praised for their "liberalizing tendencies."
- F. Jesuits are a symptom, not a cure, of the politicization of the Catholic Church begun at Chalcedon;

II. The Pope's "Marines"

- A. Jesuits are sometimes referred to as the "pope's marines."
- B. Jesuits swear a particular allegiance to the pontiff.
- C. To their credit, agree to accept religious orders anywhere in the world—even in extreme conditions.
- D. "shock troops" of the Counter-Reformation.

III. History of the Society of Jesus

- A. Founded in 1534 by the Spaniard St. Ignatius of Loyola, officially established by the papacy in 1540.
- B. Jesuits are the most significant Catholic order: 20,000 Jesuits (three-quarters of them priests) in more than 100 countries.
- C. The first Jesuits were first preachers, convent reformers, and missionaries, but in 1548 opened their first college intended for lay students at Messina in Sicily.¹
 1. Instant success and petitions for more Jesuit colleges flowed into Rome from most of the cities of Catholic Europe.²
 2. Quickly, education became the main Jesuit ministry.
 - a) By 1579 the Jesuits were operating 144 colleges (most admitted students between twelve and twenty) in Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

¹ Marquette University, "About the Jesuits // Faith at Marquette // Marquette University," Marquette.edu, 2021, <https://www.marquette.edu/faith/about-the-jesuits>.

² Marquette University, "About the Jesuits // Faith at Marquette // Marquette University," Marquette.edu, 2021, <https://www.marquette.edu/faith/about-the-jesuits>.

- b) By 1749 the Jesuits were staffing 669 colleges and 235 seminaries worldwide.³
- D. Enforcement of the Council of Trent was in the hands of newly established religious orders, primarily the Society of Jesus.
 - 1. Unlike the Benedictine monks or Franciscan and Dominican friars, the Jesuits swore special obedience to the pope and were specifically dedicated to reconstructing church life and teaching in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation
 - 2. “shock troops” of the Counter-Reformation.
- E. Live by the Sword, Die by the Sword
 - 1. By the 18th century, Jesuits had become so influential in European courts that Pope Clement XIV moved to suppress the order, officially dissolving the Society of Jesus in 1773.
 - a) Intense pressure from the royal courts of Portugal, France, and Spain, who saw the Jesuits as a political threat due to their power and influence.
 - b) Pope Clement XIV issued a papal brief called "*Dominus ac Redemptor*" which officially suppressed the Jesuit order, forcing them to renounce their vows and go into exile.
 - c) The Jesuit order was later restored by Pope Pius VII in 1814.
 - 2. In the 1970s and '80s, Jesuit priests in Latin America were instrumental in promulgating liberation theology, which interprets Jesus' teachings as aimed at redressing economic, political, and social repression.
 - a) Pope John Paul II and his successor, Benedict XVI, discouraged the movement
 - b) In 2007, the Vatican's doctrinal office criticized the "erroneous or dangerous" writings of Spanish Jesuit scholar Jon Sobrino, saying they "may cause harm to the faithful."
 - c) When many priests, Jesuits, were gravitating toward the progressive liberation theology movement, Cardinal Bergoglio insisted on a more traditional reading of Ignatian spirituality mandating that Jesuits continue to staff parishes and act as chaplains rather than moving into 'base communities' and engaging in political activism.⁴

IV. The Jesuit Slavers of Georgetown University

- A. Jesuits, who ran Georgetown University, sold more than 272 enslaved people in 1838 to save the school from financial ruin.
 - 1. Sold the enslaved people from five of their Maryland plantations to plantation owners in the Deep South. The sale was one of the most significant documented slave sales of the time.

³ Marquette University, “About the Jesuits // Faith at Marquette // Marquette University,” Marquette.edu, 2021, <https://www.marquette.edu/faith/about-the-jesuits>.

⁴ John L Allen, “Profile: New Pope, Jesuit Bergoglio, Was Runner-up in 2005 Conclave,” National Catholic Reporter, 2022, <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/profile-new-pope-jesuit-bergoglio-was-runner-2005-conclave>.

2. Known as the "GU272", enslaved people included men, women, children, and infants. Nearly half were under the age of 18. Some had lived on the plantations for generations.
- B. The story was lost to history until 2004, when Patricia Bayonne-Johnson discovered it while researching her family tree.
- C. In 2017, Georgetown and the Jesuits apologized for the sale.
 1. In 2019, Georgetown announced preferential admissions for descendants of enslaved people. The Jesuits also announced millions in funding for racial reconciliation and education programs.

V. The Legacy of Chalcedon

- A. Mark A. Noll, in *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity* (2000),⁵ declared the Council of Chalcedon, 451 CE, a “threefold triumph.” I have argued in “Alexandrian and Antiochene Christologies and the Faith Choice” (Connelly 2024) that it was only the Roman Catholic Church that triumphed at Chalcedon—that its mandate was a purely political victory, one that “crushed” the tangential, mystical, essentially Eastern approach to the apprehension of faith mysteries advocated by the Alexandrians.⁶ I continue that argument here and explore Chalcedon’s long-term effects on the reach, power, and authority of the Roman Catholic Church.
- B. The politicization of theology by the Catholic Church begotten at Chalcedon grew through the Middle Ages along with the Church’s political power, leading to the Great Schism of 1054 CE when the Church lost many of its Eastern European adherents.⁷ Politics continued to define the Catholic Church’s canon through the Reformation, despite Martin Luther’s putting the Church on notice with his ninety-five theses posted on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, in 1517 CE. The Church ignored Luther’s warning and, consequently, lost “significant portions” of the population in Northern Europe, particularly in Germany, Switzerland, and parts of Scandinavia, to Protestantism.⁸
- C. Today, the Catholic Church’s “flock” continues to decline, with more and more adherents rejecting the Church’s ill-obtained ‘authority’ to arbitrate spiritual truth first usurped at Chalcedon. The Catholic Church will likely bleed out because this self-inflicted wound is fatal and irreversible. Once it has spoken *ex-cathedra*, the Church can’t change its mind. God doesn’t change His mind.
- D. First, it’s worth noting that the practical political effect of Chalcedon was the deposition and excommunication of the Catholic patriarch of Alexandria, Dioscorus, for upholding his predecessor, St. Cyril’s *miaphysitism*, the

⁵ Mark A. Noll, *Turning Points: Decisive Moments in the History of Christianity*, Baker Academic, 2000.

⁶ Thomas P. Connelly, Jr., “Alexandrian and Antiochene Christologies and the Faith Choice,” Google Docs, last modified November 6, 2024, accessed November 8, 2024.

⁷ “East-West Schism | Summary, History, & Effects,” Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified July 20, 1998, accessed November 8, 2024.

⁸ “Reformation | Causes & Effects | Britannica,” Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified 2024, accessed November 8, 2024.

Christological perspective that both the human and the divine natures of Jesus Christ are equally present in his person—in one single nature—through the mystery of the Incarnation (the heresy was called *monophysitism* and its adherents known as *Monophysites*). Chalcedon decreed that Christ had two “perfect” natures, which I have argued was without rational basis.⁹ Either way, philosophically split hairs shouldn’t warrant excommunication, which makes the Church’s true motive at Chalcedon crystal clear: consolidation of political power. The fact that the council additionally issued *twenty-seven* “disciplinary” canons governing church authority and administration¹⁰ removes all doubt.

- E. With the *Henotikon*, Byzantine Emperor Zeno, in 482 CE, attempted to reconcile the Chalcedonian Christians with the Monophysites by omitting any explicit reference to Christ's two distinct natures, which then led to the "Acacian Schism" wherein Pope Felix III excommunicated the Patriarch of Constantinople, Acacius, sparking the ultimate split between the Eastern and Western churches.¹¹
- F. By the (middle) Middle Ages, the Catholic Church, having excommunicated everyone who disagreed with it, had become the ultimate authority in people’s lives, defining culture, law, and morality across Europe, irrespective of secular political authority.¹² But the Eastern churches, whose perspective was silenced at Chalcedon, never stopped believing in the *mystery* of Christ’s nature. Thus, Chalcedon hilariously led to The Pope of Rome (West) and the Patriarch of Constantinople (East) *excommunicating each other* in 1054. This (not so) “great schism” created the distinction between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches that remains today.¹³
- G. The Roman Catholic Church is still in decline. Since 1970, weekly church attendance among Catholics has dropped from 55% to 20%, the number of priests declined from 59,000 to 35,000, and the number of people who left Catholicism increased from under 2 million in 1975 to over 30 million in 2018.¹⁴ When theology is dictated solely by self-interested politics, those seeking inspiration, enlightenment, and spiritual satisfaction from religion are turned off and turned away. That is the true “lesson” of Chalcedon, and the Catholic Church was too self-important to realize it. Now, it is paying the price.

⁹ Thomas P. Connelly, Jr., “Alexandrian and Antiochene Christologies and the Faith Choice,” Google Docs, last modified November 6, 2024, accessed November 8, 2024.

¹⁰ “The Council of Chalcedon 451 A.D.,” PapalEncyclicals.net, accessed November 8, 2024.

¹¹ Michael Goodyear, “Emperor Zeno,” World History Encyclopedia, last modified June 18, 2018, accessed November 8, 2024.

¹² Jaroslav Jan Pelikan and Lawrence Cunningham, “Roman Catholicism | Definition, Religion, Beliefs, History, & Facts,” Encyclopedia Britannica, last modified July 26, 1999, accessed November 8, 2024.

¹³ “The Split of 1054 between the Orthodox and Catholics,” CatholicBridge.com, last modified 2024, accessed November 8, 2024.

¹⁴ “Phenomenon of Decreasing Christian Affiliation in the Western World,” Wikipedia.org (Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., July 30, 2018), last modified July 30, 2018, accessed November 8, 2024.

Conclusion

Although the Catholic Order of the Society of Jesus has been praised for its liberalizing tendencies, it must be viewed as a symptom rather than a cure of the politicization of the Catholic Church begun at Chalcedon, its self-professed core values themselves subject to the whim of political and material expediency. Despite the elevation of one of their own to the papacy in Francis, it is an order in decline along with the greater Catholic Church in a world that demands a more direct spiritual line to God and increasingly rejects papal hypocrisy and the authority of the Church along with it.

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Professor: I will update the Bibliography with the footnoted sources that I use. I did not have time to reformat all of them. My apologies.