

of indulgences that led Martin Luther to nail his 95 theses to the chapel door at Wittenberg's castle, the editor/compiler of *Agony*, Michael Horton, writes, "It would not be fair, of course, to interpret the entire history and character of Roman Catholicism by this tragic fund-raising scheme...." The implication is that Rome has changed for the better, which is false. Though not sold as blatantly now, indulgences are still an important part of Catholicism's salvation.

Salvation by Works

The deviation by Catholicism from biblical Christianity goes to the heart of the faith, to salvation itself, and thus affects the eternal destiny of those who are deceived thereby. Roman Catholicism rejects salvation by faith and preaches a false gospel of works that cannot save. Salvation is not in Christ but in the Church through submission to its edicts and sacraments. The *Basic Catechism of Christian Doctrine* calls the sacraments "the chief means of our salvation."

The first of the seven sacraments is baptism, which is performed upon 98 percent of Catholics as infants. It is declared in Canon 849 to be the means "by which men and women are freed from their sins, are reborn as children of God..." The *Basic Catechism* declares that baptism "is necessary for salvation...cleanses us from original sin, makes us Christians..." Another sacrament is the Mass, which the *Catechism* declares to be "one and the same Sacrifice with that of the Cross, inasmuch as Christ... continues to offer himself...on the altar, through the ministry of his priests." Canon 904 states that "the work of redemption is continually accomplished in the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice," thus denying Christ's triumphant "It is finished!"

A Flickering Candle

Let me remind you of Latimer's last words, spoken through the flames to his companion who was bound to the same stake: "Be of good courage, master Ridley...for we shall by God's grace this day light such a 'candle' in England as I pray shall never go out!" Tragically, the "candle" lit by hundreds of thousands of faithful martyrs, if not already out, is barely flickering and in danger of being snuffed completely. Paul Crouch, head of the largest Christian TV worldwide network, demeans the martyrs by calling the issues they died for mere semantics; and he makes a mockery of the Reformers by declaring orthodox the heresies that sparked the Reformation.

Lovingly Confront and Inform

Those who believe Rome's lies and follow her gospel of works for salvation are lost. Failing to recognize this fact, many evangelical leaders and cult experts have themselves been deceived by Rome and need to be confronted and informed. How tragic to assume that Catholics are Christians who merely have some peripheral beliefs and practices that seem peculiar to Protestants but which will not prevent them from being saved. A false gospel is a false gospel, and it damns those who believe it, whether preached by Mormonism or Catholicism. A cult is a cult. Roman Catholics, like the members of other cults, need to be treated with compassion, warned of cultic lies, and presented with the true gospel which alone can save them.

If you are concerned about the growing cooperation between Catholic organizations and major evangelical ministries such as InterVarsity, Campus Crusade For Christ, Youth With A Mission, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Chuck Colson's Prison Fellowship, Paul Crouch's TBN, Pat Robertson's CBN, etc., please write to them and ask where they stand on this critical issue.

The questions could be: 1) What is your organization's position regarding Catholic doctrines? 2) What is your position regarding organizational participation with Catholics in matters of world evangelization? 3) Are you presently either officially or unofficially involved with any Catholic lay or clerical groups or organizations? If so, on what basis...and to what end?

—Dave Hunt
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In the book, A Woman Rides the Beast, Dave Hunt presents a view of the Roman Catholic Church from an historical and biblical perspective.

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A Cult is a Cult

The evangelical church today is being seduced as never in its history. It faces a danger so grave that, although we have discussed this problem before, it must be addressed again with new insight and vigor. If evangelicals succumb to the seduction (as they increasingly are doing), then their gospel witness will be submerged in confusion and could eventually be lost—a tragic and new dimension to the apostasy from which the church and the world will never recover. Most astonishing and alarming is the fact that (with few exceptions) evangelical leaders and *even the major cult watchers* refuse to acknowledge this threat. We are therefore compelled to address the subject once again with renewed concern.

An Incredible Partnership

For decades evangelicals have diligently and faithfully attempted to identify, analyze and warn the church against *cults*. Included in the standard list are Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Science, Unity School of Christianity, Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church, etc. Yet the most seductive, dangerous and largest cult (many times larger than all of the rest combined) is not included in the list! Most cult experts refuse to identify this horrendous cult as such! Instead, they accept it as "Christian."

Worst of all, this cult (which preaches a *false gospel* that is sending hundreds of millions into a Christless eternity) is now embraced as a partner in "evangelizing the world" by many groups which preach the biblical gospel. Major denominations, such as the Anglican and the Episcopalian church, are involved in merger talks with this cult. Representatives from the Assemblies of God have been engaged in "fruitful dialogue" with this cult, whose members are now widely perceived as born-again Christians. As a consequence, the evangelical church faces an unprecedented crisis that threatens its very survival.

The above is a severe, solemn and devastating charge to make—a charge we have documented in the past and in support of which additional evidence will now be given. I challenge any church leader to public debate who declares that this assertion is false. If proven wrong, I will publicly repent. But if this accusation is true, then a major shake-up in the evangelical church is required, including repentance by many of its most

highly regarded leaders. I solicit your help in providing church leaders with the facts they need to identify this cult—facts of which I myself was ignorant years ago when I, too, failed to identify the Roman Catholic Church as the cult it is.

Repudiating the Reformation

What is a *cult*? In his book *Rise of the Cults*, Walter Martin defined cultism as “...any major deviation from orthodox Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith.” Though unmentioned by Martin, Roman Catholicism is undeniably a “major deviation from orthodox Christianity” on *many* “cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith,” and thus, by his own definition, a cult. *Recognition of this fact ignited the Reformation! To deny that Roman Catholicism is a cult is to repudiate the Reformation and mock the more than 1 million martyrs who died at Rome’s hands as though they gave their lives for no good reason.*

But, says someone, since the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the Roman Catholic Church no longer teaches and practices what it did at the time of the Reformation. That popular idea is false. To counter the Reformation, Rome’s foremost theologians met from 1545-63 in the Council of Trent. **Its Canons and Decrees, which rejected every Reformation doctrine,** remain the standard authoritative statement of Roman Catholicism, and adherence thereto is required by Catholic catechisms. Opening Vatican II, Pope John XXIII declared, “I do accept entirely all that has been decided and declared at the Council of Trent.” Vatican II went on to reaffirm Trent’s *Canons and Decrees*. No, Rome has *not* changed since the Reformation—except superficially.

Were Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers alive today, they would denounce Roman Catholicism as the largest and most dangerous cult on earth! Yet Martin’s Christian Research Institute (like other countercult groups) refuses to classify it as a cult. In the above book Martin emphasized that the five major cults at that time had “a following *exceeding 8.5 million persons...*” Yet he overlooked Roman Catholicism’s *hundreds* of millions!

Infallibility, Exclusivity and Blind Submission

Answers to Cultists at Your Door presents another example. Its authors, the Passantinos, are described as “experts in cult research [who] have spent years in counter-cult ministry” (outside back cover of *Witch Hunt*). They include such marks of a cult as the claim that it “is the only organization on earth that is following God’s will” and that its leader is “uniquely chosen by God to lead God’s people” and that it alone “offer(s) the Bible’s ‘true’ interpretation on all matters.”

Again, the Roman Catholic church fully fits the criteria. It claims to be the only true church; that its pope is uniquely chosen to lead all of God’s people; and that *only* its hierarchy can interpret scripture. Yet the Passantinos, like most other “cult experts,” fail to include Roman Catholicism as a cult, though it meets all their own tests!

Mormons must blindly obey Joseph Smith and his successors; Jews dare not question The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society; other cultists must submit to their leaders. Such authoritarianism is the primary mark of a cult. The same blind submission is required of all Catholics. Canon 212 of Catholicism’s *Code of Canon Law* requires that Catholics *must* give absolute obedience to their “sacred pastors.” Vatican II states repeatedly that *only* Catholicism’s hierarchy can interpret the Bible, and that papal pronouncements must be obeyed without question. Canon 333 (Sec. 3) declares, “There is neither appeal nor recourse against a decision or decree of the Roman Pontiff.” Vatican watchdog Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger’s recent 7,500-word “Instruction” declares that dissent about church teachings *cannot* be “justified as a matter of following one’s conscience.” No cult demands surrender of mind and conscience more arrogantly than Roman Catholicism.

Commending Catholicism

Roman Catholicism is not only left out of the list of cults by the experts, but it is explicitly approved. For example, in *Scripture Twisting*, James W. Sire, longtime editor-in-chief of InterVarsity Press, defines a cult as having “*doctrines and/or practices that contradict those of the Scriptures as interpreted by traditional Christianity as represented by the major Catholic and Protestant denominations...*” [emphasis his]. Sire makes Catholicism a standard of orthodoxy against which cults are to be judged! Yet he accuses the cults of twisting Scripture, a technique of which Rome is surely the ultimate master! Sire indicts Mormonism as a cult for adding other revelations to the Bible—but Rome has added far more new revelations to the Bible than the Mormon Church! Sire declares, “There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come”—yet that is exactly the situation in the Roman Catholic Church! How, then, does he make it the standard of orthodoxy?

Consider also *The Agony of Deceit* published by Moody. Each chapter is written by a leading evangelical about a specific false teaching within today’s church. While *Agony* mostly repeats much that was found in *The Seduction of Christianity* five years earlier, it is another voice issuing many of the same warnings, for which we are thankful. Yet it, too, whitewashes Roman Catholicism. On p. 65 it states, “Traditional Roman Catholicism...hold[s] to biblical inerrancy.” In fact

Catholicism explicitly *denies* biblical inerrancy! The next sentence does acknowledge that the “messages [of Protestantism and Catholicism] are poles apart,” but moves right on without identifying the vital differences.

Page 111 declares, “The Catholic church resisted the mounting heresies with regard to the Person of Christ, and...Protestants would continue to affirm Catholic Christology.” Again, terribly false! Catholicism’s Christology is heretical. It denies Christ’s exclusive role as mediator between God and man, making Mary “co-mediatrix”; it denies the exclusivity of His redemptive work, making Mary “co-redemptrix” (Vatican II credits Mary with a perpetual “salvific role; she continues to obtain by her constant intercession the graces we need for eternal salvation”); and it denies the sufficiency of His redemptive work, declaring that the redeemed must, in addition to Christ’s suffering for them upon the cross, suffer for their own sins here and/or in purgatory, etc. A great deal more heresy is involved in Catholic Christology, such as presenting Him as perpetually an infant or child subject to His mother, but lack of space prevents further detail. The “Christ” of Roman Catholicism is just as false as its “Mary”—as much “another Jesus” as that of Mormonism or any other cult. Let’s admit it!

Several times in *Agony* it is stated that Protestants and Catholics embrace the same apostolic creeds. This is a partially true but seriously misleading statement. The implication is that the creeds are an all-encompassing statement of biblical Christianity, which they are not. Furthermore, there is a vast difference between the meaning Catholics and Protestants attach to what the creeds say. For example, while affirming that Christ “suffered under Pontius Pilate,” Catholicism teaches that His suffering was insufficient. In addition to Christ’s suffering, we must each suffer for our sins in order to be saved. We can even suffer for others’ salvation (The Apostolic Constitution of Jan. 1, 1967, *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, #1687, urges Catholics to carry “each one his own cross in expiation of their sins and of the sins of others...assist[ing] their brothers to obtain salvation from God”)—rank heresy to Protestants. Yet *Agony* implies that Catholics mean by the creeds the same thing as Protestants—an inexcusable and deadly error in a book by eminent Christian scholars written to point out errors within the church! Though this and the other books cited above contain much that commends them, their approval of Catholicism is tragically misleading.

The false portrait of Roman Catholicism persists in *Agony*. On p. 244, after correctly condemning the sale