

Catholic Cults Part 2

by Jim Smyrl

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Seeing past the history, growth, and current number of people involved in Catholicism is necessary to make an accurate assessment of the Catholic Church's substance. If we were to hear of a new group that claimed experience and their leader's words as equivalent in authority as the Bible, most of us would readily assign the cult nomenclature to that group. So it is with the Catholic belief system and so it must be with our assessment of the Catholic dogma.

The first mark of a cult we shall examine is "Addition" or the adding of extra biblical sources as equivalent to Scriptural authority. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) presents 3 sources of authority: Bible, Tradition, and the teaching ministry of the church or Magisterium. Referring to Tradition the CCC states, "This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it" (CCC, no. 78). Catholics view Tradition as an authority equal to the Bible (CCC, no. 82). All the years, since February 27, 380, when Theodosius declared "Catholic Christianity" the official religion of the Roman Empire, have served as time in which monumental traditions have been incorporated into Catholicism.

Herein is one of the stumbling blocks for evangelicals. **We simply seem to be unable to see the cult characteristic of the Catholic Church**, since it has such a longstanding history. Surely, we assert, an institution that has been around so long could not possibly be a cult. In reality, since they place tradition as equal with Scripture, their longevity is merely an extended period over which mountains of tradition have been elevated above Scripture. We would have no problem assigning the cult nomenclature to a new group of people claiming to be Christian, but asserting that their experiences were equivalent in authority with Scripture.

The CCC also teaches that only the Bishops in communion with the Pope can accurately interpret both Scripture and Tradition. This is called the Magisterium or teaching ministry of the church. Such a belief is in direct opposition to Peter's assertion in I Peter 2 that all believers are a royal priesthood. I will address Papal authority in another post, but needless to say, Magisterium places the authority of man on the same level as Scripture. The CCC states that Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterium "are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others" (CCC, no. 95). Again, we would have no problem calling a group a cult if we opened the newspaper and read of a group of people that believed their leader's words were equivalent with the authority of Scripture.

On this one issue we should be convinced that no other nomenclature can be assigned to Catholicism but cult. Someone will ask, can Catholics be saved? Yes, anyone can be saved by grace through faith. There are many in Catholicism that have genuinely repented of their sins and trusted Christ alone for salvation, but have never been taught that the institution to which they are loyal bears the marks of a cult. It is one reason why Christ commanded that we make disciples, not just converts. Perhaps this series will equip you to make disciples that are loyal to Christ alone out of the many Catholic converts.