
The fruit of a Ph.D. dissertation at King’s College, London, this book provides an important contribution to the current discussions between evangelicals and the Roman Catholic Church. A couple of reasons prompted the writing of this book. First, many evangelicals have recognized the importance of Vatican II for modern Catholic theology. Seeing this importance, many have set out to try and understand if and what major changes have occurred. Second, the author notes that more recently formal talks between certain evan-
gelicals and Catholics have taken place willingly; evangelicals and Catholics are also stumbling upon each other while defending the same moral causes. For these reasons, the author maps out and critiques evangelical attempts to interact with post–Vatican II Roman Catholicism and to present a constructive way forward in dialogue.

Chapter 1 has a necessary, and stimulating, foundational hypothesis about what constitutes evangelical theology. It goes a long way to establishing a working definition of the movement and allows it to speak with one voice. Noting the dizzying array of evangelical denominations and parachurch organizations, such a contribution is very helpful. Even without the rest of the book, this chapter is worth reading.

The rest of the first half of the book sets out to survey evangelical thought on Catholicism. De Chirico has chosen the writings of six distinguished evangelical theologians (Gerrit C. Berkouwer, Cornelius Van Til, David Wells, Donald Bloesch, Herbert Carson, and John Stott) as representative of the evangelical community. To these individual theologians is added the contribution of the World Evangelical Fellowship and a pair of Evangelical–Roman Catholic Common Statements (Evangelicals and Catholics Together and The Gift of Salvation). Each of these writings is carefully examined and critiqued. Also, many other evangelical writers are noted along with these central writings (one can find John Bolt and Albert Wolters on several pages!).

In the second half of the book, De Chirico attempts to outline a critical appraisal of evangelical perspectives on Catholicism thus far and to provide a working hermeneutic and theological evaluation of Catholicism. His central critique is that to this point evangelicals have been too atomistic in their thinking about Catholicism. Criticising Catholicism on individual points of doctrine is shown to be unproductive in dialogue and for a real understanding of Catholicism. Much more helpful is a systemic view of Catholicism. In order to really “address the fundamental structures of Roman Catholicism and therefore to engage in constructive ecumenical interaction,” one must have a good understanding of the overall worldview. Such an approach is provided in the thought of Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper’s Lectures on Calvinism, despite some minor problems, provide a method of viewing that does not focus on individual phenomena but views the entire system.

Foundational to the Catholic system for De Chirico are not their takes on individual doctrines (e.g., justification or Mariology) but the relationship of nature and grace and the mediatorial role of the Church. Indeed, much of the evangelical critique on individual doctrines fails to note these much more global issues surrounding individual doctrines. De Chirico supports Charles Hodge’s comment that much of the difference between Protestants and Romanists depends on the decision of the question: What is the church? Far from flattening the differences between evangelicals and Catholics, De Chirico notes that the most important differences between the two are not at the level of individual doctrines but total worldview.
In sum, the book is an excellent contribution to the process of *constructive* evangelical-Roman Catholic dialogue and critique but also to all those interested in applied Neo-Calvinist thinking.

—Jason Zuidema