

would say it must be both—and (that is, we must follow their exegesis if we follow their conclusions), but Bray reminds us of the limitations the fathers labored under and the better exegetical tools we have at our disposal today. Even so, we have much to learn from the fathers' approach. Bray does a fine job sketching the culture of the fathers and the complexities of their thought. This would not be the only book one needs to read on patristic biblical interpretation, but it will find a place as a simple, nontechnical overview.

Though they were not Bray's main focus, some of his passing assessments are unpersuasive. For example, he states that the Gospels are translations and seems to suggest the need to get behind the Gospels to determine original Aramaic words (23–24). But surely, the Gospels as we have them are the inspired texts, and though we may be curious as to what (or whether) Aramaic terms lie behind the text, the texts as we have them are the objects of our study. Furthermore, it is not altogether clear that the codex was preferred over the scroll for convenience (26); scholarship remains divided on the “why” of the codex's adoption among early Christians.

This is not a book that provides exhaustive, detailed discussions of the issues. It is a primer. But therein lies the beauty of a concise book like this one, which is designed to help open up the sometimes strange world of the church fathers to readers today. Yet we should not stop with what Bray himself says; we should read the sources ourselves—especially the Source they sought to explain.

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Leonardo De Chirico. *Same Words, Different Worlds: Do Roman Catholics and Evangelicals Believe the Same Gospel?* London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2021.

If our theology is partly biography, it is not difficult to understand why evangelicals in traditionally Protestant countries look at Roman Catholicism differently from those who come from Latin culture. Our experience does not come from books or distant friends. We were born in Roman Catholic families, and many of our friends still consider themselves Catholics. Why, then, are evangelicals and Catholics closer in the United States of America, Great Britain, and Central and Northern Europe while there is such confrontation in Latin America, Spain, and Italy? The answer you usually hear from evangelicals who have not been Catholic before is that Roman Catholicism is different in every country. Leonardo De Chirico has another

explanation. In this book, he shows how Roman Catholics use the same words as Protestants, but with different meanings.

For many conservative Protestants, Rome's image is that of a traditional, stable, authoritative institution with an aura of doctrinal and moral integrity. It is viewed as a haven in the turmoil of our day, a bulwark against liberal and secularizing forces. They realize that there are differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, but they also see many differences between them and most evangelicals today. The vocabulary of Nicaea is the same: God the Father, Jesus Christ, salvation, Holy Spirit, the virgin Mary, a holy apostolic church, baptism, and remission of sins. The words are the same, but do they have the same meaning? There is an apparent common orthodoxy rooted in the ancient Trinitarian and christological creeds, but as the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure suggested concerning general linguistics, there is a distinction between language and words. The latter are not free-floating items but receive their meaning in the context of the system in which they are used.

In the first chapter of this book, De Chirico sketches several common views that are increasingly adopted in the ecumenical understanding of what is at stake between evangelicals and Catholics today. The second and third chapters examine some key common terms. The fourth considers Catholic theology as a coherent, all-encompassing system with two major features: the continuity and interdependence of the nature–grace and Christ–church interconnections. In the line of the late Barthian Italian theologian Vittorio Subilia and the Spanish Reformed Baptist Francisco Lacueva, De Chirico thinks the main difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism is in ecclesiology because, as the Second Vatican Council says, there is an ongoing incarnation of Jesus Christ in the church. Many evangelicals understand the historical problem of the capacity of nature and matter to objectify grace in natural theology, but not many are aware of the centrality of the Christ–church interconnection in Catholic theology.

As with the Spanish theologian José Grau and the Welsh preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones, De Chirico thinks Roman Catholicism is not so much a denial of the truth as an addition to it that becomes a departure from it. The question is not what Catholics and evangelicals have in common but what Catholics add to what Evangelicals believe. The key to understanding De Chirico's or Greg Allison's way of looking at Roman Catholicism is to understand its systemic approach. Most evangelical assessments of Catholic theology and practice have focused almost exclusively on comparing agreements and differences between the two positions in an isolated, disconnected way. Most crucial Protestant books about Rome have an atomistic approach

to Catholic doctrines. Topics such as transubstantiation, purgatory, the immaculate conception of Mary, and the apostolic succession are described and critiqued as separate, unrelated beliefs. De Chirico convincingly demonstrates that Catholicism is unified but not uniform.

Contemporary Catholic theology embraces Augustinianism and semi-Augustinianism, liberation theology and conservative Opus Dei theology, and inclusivism and exclusivism; the integration of divergent elements has always characterized historical Catholic theology. As Grau and Subilia showed, there is an “and–and” approach rather than the Protestant “either–or” approach. For De Chirico and Lacueva, “the incarnational principle” is the normative pattern for the way God manifests his grace in this world. Grace must be embodied in a tangible way. The interdependence of nature–grace is based on the interconnection of Christ–church. This is a very attractive approach for those looking for the core difference between evangelicals and Catholics: it lies in the doctrine of the church.

The question for many of us is whether it is possible to define Roman Catholicism. Can you capture the heart of the Roman Catholic worldview in a short description? Obviously, Roman Catholicism is an extremely rich and complex universe. The best minds of contemporary Catholicism have tried to analyze what is essential to being Catholic. Think of Karl Adam (1929), Romano Guardini (1924), Henri de Lubac (1938), Hans Urs von Balthazar (1978), and Walter Kasper (2012). This is a key question as part of De Chirico’s main concern of knowing whether Roman Catholics and evangelicals believe the same gospel. Most evangelicals will doubt that it is our task to discuss the nature of Roman Catholicism when we live in a secular society. In these times of ecumenical correctness, no one wants to be critical of any church or religion. However, dialogue is best served by transparency and honesty.

Why bother with questions of words in times like these? First, it is a global issue. Wherever you go in the world—North and South, East, and West—you will find people who call themselves Catholics. Roman Catholicism is by far the largest religious family within Christendom and the biggest religious organization on the planet. The pope is a global figure who attracts a lot of attention from the media. Second, it is still a theological issue. In the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation recovered and reaffirmed the biblical gospel, and Roman Catholicism stood against these truths and condemned those who embraced them. In Latin countries, they killed them! However, after the Second Vatican Council, Rome has somewhat changed. Its posture is different: the tone is friendlier, and the lines are blurred. However, we know Roman Catholicism is still not committed to Scripture alone, Christ

alone, or faith alone. Its devotion is not dedicated to God alone. The Roman Catholic gospel is different from the biblical one. If the dogmatic system of Rome, its institutional structure and devotional practices, have departed from the truth of the biblical gospel, how can we consider the Roman Catholic church “one denomination among others”?

The Argentinian Pope Francis incarnates the catholicity of Vatican II—open to dialogue, merciful, pleasing—but without paying a dogmatic, theological, or spiritual price. Rome speaks all languages: evangelical, ecumenical, interreligious, secular, and traditional. Evangelicals speak in translated English, shaped by American culture for conservative morality in favor of right-wing politics. It is no wonder Roman Catholicism is considered less binary and more universal. It seems to draw close to everyone without moving, to reach out to everyone without going very far. It recalls Giuseppe Tomasi Di Lampedusa’s book and Luchino Visconti’s 1963 film *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*) based on it: everything must change for everything to remain the same.

Cardinal Walter Kasper is aware that the pope is often perceived as attuned to the liberal spirit: strong on social issues, relaxed in doctrine, and wishing to include anyone at all costs. However, Kasper disagrees with this assessment and suggests that Francis is not a liberal but a radical. He goes to the etymological sense of the Latin word *radix*, root, or originating principle. Words confuse us, you see. The pope is challenging the church to be radical in the sense of rediscovering the roots of the gospel, which for him are joy, mission, frugality, solidarity with the poor, freedom from legalism, and collegiality. Kasper argues that the pope’s tendency is not to run after the political correctness of Western liberalism but to call all Christians to recover the living source of their faith, the roots of the Christian life. What can you say against him?

De Chirico’s book shows us how much we misunderstand Roman Catholicism. The pope encourages us to move beyond the usual polarizations between liberals and conservatives by introducing a third category, that of radicals. However, we see beyond his words. He appears to be radical on certain issues and much less so on others. He is radical on poverty but silent on the massive financial power of his church. He sounds radical on mercy but never mentions sin and divine judgment of all sinners outside of Christ. He is radical in denouncing the tragedies of unethical capitalism but seems to be much less outspoken toward immoral deviations in personal sexual life. In other words, his radicalism is somewhat selective. He is playing with words!

In a certain sense, the Protestant Reformation was a radical movement.

It was motivated by an aspiration to go *ad fontes*, back to the Bible, the word of God. It was aimed at recovering the radical gospel of *solus Christus* and *sola gratia*. Leonardo De Chirico and I were part of the third International Consultation of the Catholic Church with the World Evangelical Alliance (2009–2016) after the dialogue on mission led by John Stott (1977–1984) and the consultation led by the Reformed theologians George Vandervelde and Paul Schrotenboer (1993–2002). We both believe that dialogue must be pursued at all levels: theological dialogue with the Vatican but also with Catholic priests and intellectuals and discussions with our Catholic neighbors, colleagues, and family members. The differences that exist, no matter how deep, do not impede a friendly conversation about what really matters in our lives. When we point to the biblical meaning of the words, we trust in the work of the Holy Spirit, who calls women and men to return to the God who speaks through his word. He manifests himself in the person and work of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit when we understand his words. In them are eternal life.

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