

An Evangelical Assessment of the Roman Catholic Gospel

Is the Roman Catholic Gospel the biblical Gospel? In the 2005 book *Is the Reformation Over?* Noll and Nystrom argued that “evangelicals can embrace at least two-thirds” of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Later, they admit that when the Catechism speaks of Christ, it interweaves him to the Church to the point of making them one, which is unacceptable for evangelicals who consider the exaltation of a created reality an instance of idolatry. So, on the one hand, there is an apparent “common orthodoxy” presumably based on a common understanding of the Gospel; on the other, there is a profound difference on the meaning of its basic words (e.g. Christ, the church, grace, faith, salvation, etc.). So the question remains: is the Roman Catholic Gospel the “same” or “another” Gospel? The talk will explore the contours of the Gospel as they emerge from the long tradition of the Roman Catholic Church but especially from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) up to Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel, 2013). The talk will also provide an evangelical assessment of the Roman Catholic Gospel as far as its biblical foundations and apologetic significance are concerned.

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I. Introduction: Yes or No to the Gospel? (2 Corinthians 1:18-22)

A. The Gospel of the Yes

B. The Gospel of the Yes and No

II. Looking Superficially at the Roman Catholic Gospel: The Atomistic View

A. The Common Ground: Nicene Christianity

B. The Epistemological Issue: Whose Authority?

C. The Soteriological Issue: How are we Saved?

D. The Ecclesiological Issue: Which Church?

III. Digging Deeper: The Systemic View

A. The Nature-Grace Interdependence

B. The Christ-Church Interconnection

C. The Imperial Structure

D. The Catholicity Project

E. The Catholic Eucharist: The Sum of It All

IV. Maintaining the “Yes” alone to the Gospel

A. A Different Overarching Motif: Creation-Sin-Redemption

B. A Different Framework: Grace Alone and Faith Alone

C. A Different Vision: For God against Idolatry

Suggested Readings:

L. De Chirico, *Evangelical Theological Perspectives on Post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang 2003).

L. De Chirico, *The Blurring of Time Distinctions in Roman Catholicism*, “Themelios” 29:2 (2004) pp. 40-46.

G.R. Allison, *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice. An Evangelical Assessment* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).