

YOUR WORD IS TRUTH: A Project of Evangelicals and Catholics Together.
Charles Colson and Richard Neuhaus, editors. Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing
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Reviewed by Johan D.Tangelder.

"This is a time of opportunity - and, if of opportunity then of responsibility - for Evangelicals and Catholics together in a way that helps prepare the world for the coming of Him to whom belongs the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen." The renowned Evangelical Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus, a prominent conservative RC scholar, editor *First Things*, and prolific author, suggest Evangelicals and the RC contend together for a culture of life that will protect the unborn, the aged, the handicapped, and others whom some deem too expendable. They believe that our historical circumstance makes our common witness increasingly urgent. And they point to the core issue: the conflict between militantly secular naturalism on the one side, and, on the other, a Biblical understanding of reality as the object of God's creating and redeeming work. Furthermore, they argue that Abraham Kuyper's Stone Lectures at Princeton laid a solid foundation for speaking out together on the vital issues of life. Kuyper claimed that when we understand Christianity also as a worldview, we "might be enabled once more to take our stand by the side of Romanism in opposition to modern pantheism."

In their search for meaningful cooperation, without papering over historical differences, a group of Evangelical and Catholics Together (ECT), an unofficial initiative, discuss their theological rift. In fact, they declare: "We resolutely reject any thought of getting around such differences." Their first project was the publication in 1994 of the much discussed statement, *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium*. The second, *The Gift of Salvation* was published in 1998. It focussed on the meaning of salvation and especially the doctrine justification. The third project resulted in the book, *Your Word is Truth*, the product of intense and extended scholarly deliberation. Each one of its chapters, written by a distinguished Evangelical or RC theologian, stands on its own as a valuable contribution to the understanding of the relationship between Scripture and tradition. The next ETC project is the study of the RC and evangelical Protestant understanding of "the communion of saints."

One of the main problems Protestants have with the RC discernment of Scripture is the lack of a critical Scriptural principle to separate the gospel from the rank growth of traditions. Evangelicals profess to rely solely on Sola Scriptura, or the Bible alone, as their foundation for theology rather than on the twin pillars of Scripture and tradition, as in RC. Does the Bible have equal authority to tradition? At the Council of Trent (1545-63) the question was raised: Where is the saving gospel, which Jesus bestowed on us and we are now to preach, to be found? Trent's response? "The council clearly perceives that this truth and rule are contained in the written and unwritten traditions which have come down to us." From an evangelical perspective, the doctrine of the two-source theory constitutes a doctrinal innovation of enormous import. They can't see any Biblical evidence for the mass, the doctrine of purgatory, the immaculate conception and bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary, the claimed authority of the magisterium, including papal infallibility. But evangelicals should put their hands into their own bosoms, argues John Woodbridge of the evangelical church in his fascinating essay, *The Role of "Tradition" in the Life and*

Thought of Twentieth Century Evangelicals. So many evangelicals have used the doctrine of sola scriptura as their warrant to run into many different theological directions. Yet they have also been influenced by traditions or have created their own traditions. And their traditions are more impacted by their surrounding culture than by the Bible. They are quite disposed to bypass church history and history of doctrine. But despite their depreciation of history many of them affirm beliefs about the Christian faith that do reflect Biblical teaching and are in line with basic Christian truths found in the early Christian rules of faith.

The contributors of *Your Word is Truth* state that they recognize our common need to become more deeply in touch with the thought of the past as well as learn from each other from all that has been achieved in modern thought. As we face an ongoing dialogue between Evangelicals and the RC, I suggest Reformed pastors read this book to gain an understanding of the developments within RC theology and the fragmented evangelical community.