

How to Stay Solidly Evangelical in the Faddish World of Academic Theology

Evangelicalism's strength (and weakness) is that it is entrepreneurial. Evangelical leaders can quickly respond to needs and create strategic organizations or creative intellectual projects. In short, Evangelicalism has been influenced by charismatic and creative leaders... and thinkers. Because evangelicalism isn't institutional but is shaped by these strong leaders it also is vulnerable to leaders who are not well-grounded evangelicals. We've seen this over the last few decades as academic theology has been profoundly shaped by fads like Liberation Theology, Process Theology, Openness Theology, Post-Modern [Emergent] Theology, Barthian Theology, and New Perspective Theology. Historical perspective and robust biblical theology allow us to understand and critique these movements. This session will evaluate how evangelical theologians can become wiser and better equipped to evaluate the next academic fad.

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Introduction

A. A Bird's Eye View of 20th-21st Century Evangelical Theology and the Academy

1. The Controversialist Legacy: Evangelical Theology *Contra Academiam* (e.g. G. Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, 1923)
2. The Evangelical Resurgence Aspiration: Evangelical Theology *In Academia* (e.g. ETS 1949; Tyndale House 1956; FATELA 1969, FEET 1976 ...)
3. The Risk of Assimilation: Evangelical Theology *Perditit in Academia* (lost in academia) (e.g. D.F. Wells, *No Place for Truth. Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?*, 1993)

B. Critical (and Moving) Dimensions of Evangelical Theology

1. The Meaning of Evangelical: Adjective or Substantive
2. The Scriptural Principle: the viability of "Scripture alone"
3. The Historical/Orthodox Heritage: the critical appreciation of the "great tradition"

4. The Protestant Heart: Evangelical Theology vis-à-vis Rome
5. The Socio-Political Public Stance: The conservative/progressive spectrum
6. The Inter/Trans-Confessional Profile: evangelically diverse or ecumenical?
7. The Global Reality: Institutional Polycentrism and Missiological Epicenter
8. The Leadership Vacuum: Where are the fathers/mothers of evangelical theology?

C. Theological Areas Under Pressure

1. The 20th-century heritage: prolegomena (the supernatural), bibliology (inspiration), protology (creation), eschatology (millennium), hermeneutics, Christology (uniqueness of Christ), ethics (abortion/euthanasia), social impact of the gospel (liberation/transformation)
2. The 21st-century challenges: anthropology (gender, sexual identity, personal embodiment, humanity and non-human creation), theological pluralism/ecumenism, hamartiology (sin), social ethics (justice and empowerment, prosperity), eschatology (digital world, AI), public theology

D. Antidotes to Evangelical Theological Shallowness

1. The identity backbone: back to the “formal” and “material” principles
2. The apologetic perspective: against idolatry in all forms, old and new
3. The principled flexibility factor: evangelicals before denominational distinctives
4. The overcoming of the inferiority complex: academically responsible more than respectable or learning to stop chasing after the last fad
5. The institutional context: strengthening networks of evangelical theologians

Conclusion

Bibliography (in English only)

Overview

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