



The Institute for Worship Studies

FLORIDA CAMPUS

President's Lecture January 2006

A CALL TO AN ANCIENT EVANGELICAL FUTURE

In every age the Holy Spirit calls the church to examine its faithfulness to the story of the Triune God. We younger evangelicals, in age and/or spirit, recognize with humble gratitude the worldwide, multi-cultural growth of the evangelical community. Yet at such a time, we need to be especially sensitive to our weaknesses. We believe that today evangelicals fail to achieve full maturity of faith through a commitment to scientific theology on the one hand and a captivity to the cultural narrative on the other. There is therefore, a pressing need to reflect more deeply on the substance of the Biblical narrative, its articulation in the historic faith and its application in the global world.

We call the evangelical church to the common faith and practices of ancient Christianity in a time of tumultuous cultural transition and change similar to that of the ancient church. In this moment between modernity and postmodernity in a post-Christian and neo-pagan era, we plead for an embrace of God's story, and to its implications for an applied theology in the church's missional and global witness. May the church not be formed solely by the world in which it lives, but by the narrative to which it belongs, the story of God. For it is only through God's story proclaimed, enacted and embodied by God's people that the world will learn its own destiny. We offer this Call as a reflection of the new leadership among the younger evangelicals and as a document to facilitate the theological thinking and applied theology of the next generation.

We invite like-minded leaders to participate in the preparation of *Articles for an Ancient Evangelical Future*. Without presuming to identify all our needs, we have identified areas of concern and initiatives to set forth an ancient-future faith for a global witness in the twenty-first century.

The 39 Articles of *An Ancient Evangelical Future*

1. On scientific theology
 2. On the cultural narrative
 3. On organic faith and practice
- I. On Christian Foundation
4. On the priority of God's story
 5. On the centrality of Christ
 6. On the work of the Holy Spirit
 7. On the biblical witness
 8. On the biblical narrative
- II. On Ecclesiology
9. On the Church's mission
 10. On Reconciliation of races and all people
 11. On historical connection
 12. On servant leadership
 13. On women in ministry
 14. On the unity of the church
 15. On interfaith dialogue
- III. On Theological Reflection
16. On the nature of theology
 17. On tradition
 18. On the ecumenical creeds
 19. On systems of theology
 20. On theological reflection in a postmodern world
 21. On the atonement
 22. On universal salvation
- IV. On Christian Formation
23. On evangelism
 24. On discipleship
 25. On the spiritual life
 26. On the new monasticism
- V. On Worship
27. On the theology of worship
 28. On ancient preaching
 29. On musical eclecticism
 30. On artistic integrity
 31. On Christian time

- VI. On the Sacraments
 - 32. On the sacramental life
 - 33. On baptism
 - 34. On the Eucharist
 - 35. On sacramental healing
 - 36. On sacramental ecology

- VII. On Life in the World
 - 37. On the new communalism
 - 38. On a responsible ethic

- VIII. On Seminary Education
 - 39. On seminary reform

A Brief Bibliography for Evangelical Faith in a Post Modern Setting

A. Works on Post Modernity

Myron B. Penner (ed). Christianity and the Post Modern Turn: Six Views (Grand Rapids Bragos Press, 2005). This book is particularly helpful because it contains articles from evangelicals who contend for the modern rational case for evangelicalism as well as evangelicals who contend for an evangelical faith that, listening to post modern philosophers, returns to a pre-modern nonfoundational story-formed faith. Both sides are represented fairly.

James K.A. Smith. Who's Afraid of Postmodernism? (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006). This book, scheduled to appear in the spring of 2006, is the clearest case I have yet to see for an evangelical faith based, not on person and evidential apologetics, but on the story. Formed faith of ancient Christianity Smith thoughtfully interacts with the writings of Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault.

B. Works on Translating The Faith Into A Post Modern World

Kevin J. VanHoozer. The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John... Press, 2005). Kevin is clearly the leading theological thinker among evangelicals who seek to re-situate faith in the overarching story of God. I highly recommend this very readable interaction with historic Christianity and post modern thought.

Robert Webber. Ancient-Future Faith. Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Post Modern World. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998). What can I say? This book is a kind of primer on ancient Christianity. Its aim is not to interact with post moderns, but to show the relevance of ancient thought in a new post modern world.

C. Ancient Works

If you doubt the story-formed nature of ancient Christian thought, read the following works by two second century pastor/theologians:

St. Irenaeus of Lyons. On the Apostolic Preaching (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Press, 1997)

Melito of Sardis. On Pascha (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimirs Press, 2001)