Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

Volume 33 · Number 2 · April 2009

Articles and book reviews reflecting global evangelical theology for the purpose of discerning the obedience of faith

Published by

Paternoster:
thinking faith

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detractors. Questions that are evasive may provoke thought and eventually win our detractors. 'That's a good question. I'm not sure how to answer. What do you think?'

10. *Activate Faith:* Jesus used questions to activate faith and commitment. Jesus wanted people to make up their own minds. He nurtured their thinking by challenging conventional wisdom and setting the stage for spiritual growth. 'Do you believe that God can change our city? What role do you see the church playing to bring change?'

Book Review Article

Restoring, Reforming, Renewing: Accompaniments to *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*[1]

Amos Yong

THE *CCET* BEGINS with an introductory essay by Timothy Larsen wrestling with and proposing a working definition of 'evangelical' for this project; the remaining seventeen essays are divided into two parts: the first on 'doctrines' has eight essays (on Trinity, scripture, Christ, theological anthropology, justification/atonement, Holy Spirit, conversion/sanctification, and ecclesiology) while the second on "contexts" has nine essays (on culture, gender, race, the religions, and evangelical theology in, respectively, Africa, Asia, Britain/Europe, Latin America, and North America). The perspectives of eighteen different essayists, including four women, from a range of evangelical backgrounds—Reformed, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Baptist, etc.—are registered in the book.

One way to read the *CCET* is as a performative speech act in three keys: a restorative one oriented to the past, a reformative one focused on the present, and a renewal one hopeful about the future. Sometimes one of these keys is out of harmony with the other two, but taken together, I suggest they reflect the opportunities and challenges of the ongoing task of contemporary evangelical theology as a live project. Let me explain.

Restoring

First, the restorative key should come to no surprise for a book on evangelical theology. Given evangelicalism's institutional emergence from out of the fundamentalist side of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies in the first half of the twentieth century, evangelical theology has always been conserv-

1 Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier, *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). All quotations from this volume will be referenced parenthetically in the text by *CCET* and page number.

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ative as opposed to liberal. My point here is not to nit-pick about the definition of conservative or liberal, but to simply observe that, as many of the authors of this book put it, evangelical theology is not first and foremost progressive or revisionist, but restorationist: looking to retrieve the past, especially the creedal tradition, or the Reformational one, or the revivalist one of the eighteenth century, etc.[2] As restorationist in this sense, it makes sense to look to evangelical theology to emphasize remaining faithful to the theological traditions of the past, to restate them, and perhaps even to merely repeat them (as would be involved in the recitation of Nicene confession). This is not to denigrate evangelical theology but to suggest how such restorationism may signal its strength. If so, then to find the *CCET* repeating, or restating, or attempting to restore previous formulations and perhaps give them life for the present time—this is precisely what one would expect.

And this is what we do find both at the structural and at other levels. Structurally, the volume carries on the tradition of evangelical theology that has become standard in the last one hundred-plus years, including the sequence of doctrinal loci in part I that contains relatively few surprises. Yet why divide the volume into the two parts of "doctrine" and "contexts," especially when you have admissions in the first part that evangelical doctrines are already contextually shaped (e.g., *CCET* 27, 43) as well as the repeated calls in part two to contextualize (in non-Western areas) received doctrines (usually derived from the Western traditions)? I'm certainly not saying disband with doctrines and forget about contextualization. Rather, I am complaining about the implicit message conveyed in the structure of the book that part I constitutes the doctrinal heart of evangelical theology while part II presents its applications, translations, and vernacularizations. Alternatively, the present arrangement also communicates, at least implicitly that part I presents universal truths that have been believed by all evangelicals everywhere and at all times while part II either provides (merely) historical description or addresses the missional dimension of evangelical theology. In fact, one of the essayists even suggest that evangelical theology can be understood in terms of a scriptural or gospel core (the doctrines) which, as structurally unfolded in the volume itself, can then be packaged and presented in many different ways in various contexts (*CCET* 215, 218, 222n5).

Finally, at the methodological level, the more traditional evangelical starting point of scriptural reflection is found in at least a few of essays (e.g., on theological anthropology, justification/atonement, and conversion/sanctification). This is not to dismiss the proposals presented in these essays, but rather to simply observe this is what one would expect in evangelical theological approaches. In fact, it is a wonder that there is not much more of

2 Thus I am using the 'restorationist' motif in a general sense rather than in any kind of specific sense such as that embraced by the Churches of Christ or Disciples tradition; the latter involves a specific scriptural hermeneutic—which may be included in the former, but not necessarily so.

this by others in the essays in part I of the volume, and this itself is noteworthy about how to understand both the *CCET* in particular and the shape of evangelical theology today in general.

Reforming

In fact, I was pleasantly surprised that the efforts to reform evangelical theology in the *CCET* were more substantive than I had anticipated. For example, Kevin Vanhoozer's theodramatic hermeneutic and theological method takes seriously the narrative aspects of human understanding, while D. Stephen Long engages with conversations regarding deification and the "new perspective on Paul" in his essay.[3] There are chapters on topics such as culture, gender, race, and religious pluralism that in the previous generation were not registered in evangelical theological reflection. And the attention to the contextual character of evangelical theology also marks an increasing sensitivity to the reformational task of doing theology.

There are two specific essays that I want to comment on further with regard to the reformational thread of the *CCET*. First, Elaine Storkey's essay at least takes a stand on a disputed issue in evangelical theology: on behalf of an egalitarian view of gender over and against the complementarian perspective. Her approach is not necessarily novel, and her specific strategy—of appealing to the relationality of the trinitarian identity of God—is itself questioned elsewhere in the volume (e.g., by Vanhoozer's query about whether the turn to relationality itself is a selling of the evangelical soul to another master; *CCET* 34n55). My point is that given how volatile this issue remains across the spectrum of the evangelical theological landscape, as well as the predominantly patriarchal character of much of evangelicalism in the global south, this is indeed a reformist stance within the evangelical context (even if such an option may be 'old hat' in 'liberal' circles since the age of women's suffrage!).

Much more radical (and easily the most enjoyable essay in the book for me) is J. Kameron Carter's discussion of race and theology.[4] Carter does not assume theology always proceeds from a core that is then translated into a racialized (or any other) context (as a restorationist approach would attempt). Instead, he asks how the experience of race itself emerges out of and then also informs a theological vision—a much more dialectical, and maybe even correlational, conception. More precisely, the essay explores 'how black folks' reception of the religion of their masters represents a counter-performance of American evangelicalism itself' (*CCET* 178), and argues that 'Evangelical belief was received by persons of African descent "who made Jesus their choice" so as to

3 The choice to assign Long to write on justification and atonement is itself a puzzling one when he's been doing creative and important work in ecclesiology, theology of culture, and theology of economics.

4 Carter's new book, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford University Press, 2008), is a must read for those interested in the future of evangelical theology in general and in Christian theology in general.

bear witness to a different, non-triumphalist Christian reality' (*CCET* 190). The genius of Carter's essay is that the good news of the *evangelion* itself is realized only in and through the Holy Saturday of the black evangelical bodily experience of slavery, lynching, and death.[5] There is much more to think about here regarding Latino/a and Asian approaches to evangelical theology.

In her essay, Storkey suggests that 'an evangelical theology of gender can only be developed by unearthing presuppositions in all these areas [i.e., the doctrines of creation, *imago Dei*, sin, redemption, ecclesiology, and others]' (*CCET* 167). Her efforts then proceed to sketch, in a very programmatic sense, what kinds of reforming is required for evangelical theology to transition from a complementarian to an egalitarian position. Following out the logic of Storkey's and Carter's essays would require an equally massive rethinking about central Christian doctrines like christology, the atonement, and soteriology. In fact, these doctrinal categories themselves may not even survive the reformation that ensues in (especially) Carter's train—at least not in the same format or structure as that which the restorationist tradition of evangelical theology would probably seek to preserve.

5 Carter's discussion of the Holy Saturday motif is different from that of Von Balthasar or Alan Lewis precisely because its dogmatic content is not just merely read from out of the scriptural account but is filled in from out of the palpable encounter of black evangelicals with the gospel. Compare, e.g., Lewis' *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

Renewing

While Storkey and Carter articulate why and how evangelical theology needs to be reformed—i.e., so that evangelical praxis can be better performed—their efforts raise questions about the trajectory of the future of evangelical theology. The *CCET* recognizes not only that evangelicalism is a global phenomenon, but also that there are a multiplicity of voices under that tent, some of which may cause seismic shifts in evangelical theological reflection. While this may be of concern to restorationists, there are some voices which call for a more dialogical approach (*CCET* 45), and insist that 'for the full truth, all the genuinely insightful voices must be spoken and heard together' (*CCET* 49n42). Herein lies the recognition that evangelicalism should not only be counting the numbers in their churches and organizations but that evangelical theology should be listening to and even internalizing what is being said.

The essays in part II represent the initial steps of registering evangelical perspectives from the global south. Part of the result is a willingness to entertain 'new possibilities' for evangelical theology in dialogue with primal traditions (*CCET* 233); an openness to the influence of culture and society in evangelical theology (*CCET* 256); and even the courage to risk the cross-fertilization of evangelicalism across racial, national, linguistic, and cultural lines (*CCET* 271). Will such postures of renewal enable the reformation of the doctrinal loci represented in part I of the book as well as the new performance of their correlated practices? Does this represent a genuinely forward-looking orientation among evangelical theologians that may, perhaps, get us beyond the conservative/liberal (or restorationist/progressivist) dichotomy?

Even the 'dogmaticians' (used here in reference to the authors of the 'doctrine' chapters in part I) acknowledge the unfinished and dynamic nature of evangelical theological reflection. Are evangelical serious in saying, 'The label "evangelical" is the statement of an ambition—to correspond to the gospel—rather than an achievement. Similarly, "God of the gospel" names a project, not a finished product' (*CCET* 18)? Is the strategy of asking questions—in some cases many of them in succession (*CCET* 101)—merely a rhetorical ploy or in effect a reflection of a genuine openness, curiosity, and quest to renew evangelical theology in anticipation of the time when we shall no longer see through a glass dimly? If the latter, then herein are manifest humble approaches to the theological task.[6]

6 Some would be concerned that too much humility betrays instead a loss of conviction; I would suggest instead that it takes boldness to ask the hard questions of our time. This is precisely what drives what I have elsewhere called a theology of quest; see Yong, *Spirit-Word-Community: Theological Hermeneutics in Trinitarian Perspective* (Burlington, VT, and Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, and Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), esp. ch. 1

Hence, these restorationist, reformationist, and renewal strands of the *CCET* can be interpreted as representing the conflicted nature of evangelicalism in general and evangelical theology in particular, or they can be seen to reflect the pluralism within evangelicalism which bodes well for its future. As a pentecostal theologian, I resonate with my evangelical friends and their wrestling with the theological task since my own pentecostal tradition also has restorationist, reformationist, and renewal streams.[7] I think each is necessary, even if my intuitions are to look ahead even while not neglecting to look left, right, and to the rear before making one's move.[8]

7 I document some of these in my *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005).

8 An earlier version of this paper was presented to the 'Contesting Evangelicalism' panel of the Christian Theological Research Fellowship (CTRF) at the American Academy of Religion, Chicago, Illinois, 1-3 November 2008. Thanks to D. Stephen Long, president of CTRF, for the invitation to be a part of this panel.