



An Evangelical Response
to the Theme Six Paper:
Theological Education
and Formation in Mission

- *Edinburgh 2010* -

Track 3 Parallel Session

Friday 4 June 2010

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

- ▶ Evangelicals are described as characterized by four distinctives:
 - 'Conversionism'
 - 'Biblicism'
 - 'Activism', &
 - 'Cruci-centrism'.
- ▶ These 4 Characteristics provide a lens through which we can evaluate the Theological Education & Formation Paper:
 - ▶ Noting only the Headings in this summary.

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

1. Evangelicals focus on Conversion & Mission leading to a holistic Life-Transforming Experience of Christ as we evaluate TE.

We look for TE:

- a. That promotes the growth & missional involvement of the Church; by giving due priority to evangelistic proclamation, prophetic engagement with society, and humble service to fellow-humans.
 - ▶ We would like sharper emphasis on such criteria as one goal of contemporary TE
- b. That values spirituality of Faculty & their commitment to Gospel priorities as crucial for quality TE;
 - ▶ So spiritual formation & witnessing prioritised in lecturer load allocations

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

Our Conversion focus looks for TE ...

- c.** That equips graduates with in-depth grasp of the Gospel message & contextualization & communication skills to effectively present it in our pluralistic societies; So:
 - *Curriculum addresses inherent tensions between academic & ministry skills formation*
 - *Ensures Cross-cultural relational & translation competence for 21st Century context*
- d.** With curriculum attention to missiological understanding of processes of religious change, & therefore of conversion, as illustrated from history of mission

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

Our Conversion focus looks for TE ...

e. That leads to 'The continuing conversion of the church,' to maintain spiritual vitality & missional heart in each generation

▶ Especially by enabling Northern churches to hear & heed "boomerang challenges" coming back to them from the more vital Christianity of fast-growing & persecuted churches of the South, like:

▶ "Why is it that where TE is flourishing the church is not, & where the church is flourishing TE is not?"

▶ So committed to publishing & promoting South-South & South-North theological interchange

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

2. Our 'Biblicism', sees Bible as the authority for Christian faith & life – thus central in TE curriculum:

a. We accept the paper's challenge & confess that despite our focus on Bible translation we have not adequately addressed hermeneutical assumptions & contextualization issues in Mission;

b. We want to bring a more richly nuanced Evangelical voice to the global hermeneutical discussion,

Particularly in shaping a 'missional hermeneutic' in exegetical methodology, &

Re-stating the role of the Spirit in 'illuminating' the supremely authoritative text where multiple theological authorities are treated as of equal value.

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

Our 'Biblicism' means ...

c. We would welcome deeper biblical undergirding & discussion of the Paper's implicit & often explicit assumption that a certain kind of ecumenical unity ought to characterize TE : E.g.,

▶ In 2nd recommendation, at 3.2, for a *Global and Regional forum on theological education*, that "should cooperate" with the WCC ETE.

▶ To enable greater Evangelical participation in regional Theological Associations & Accrediting agencies, (3.7)

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

Our 'Biblicism' Means ...

- d. We recognize we have much work to do on Biblical models for engaging with persons of other faiths in TE:
- ▶ To more adequately reflect diversity & nuancing of biblical teaching on attitudes to other religions;
 - ▶ To better reflect the "justice, courtesy & love," which Edinburgh 1910 showed the Bible calls for in inter-faith relationships;
 - ▶ To uphold with Christ-like courage & humility the uniqueness, Supremacy & Sufficiency of our Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour of all humanity; and
 - ▶ To move beyond the caricaturing inherent in categorizing approaches under the terms: 'universalism', 'inclusivism' or 'exclusivism'.
- ▶ We welcome attempts to present fresh paradigms for inter-faith relationships which keep in balance the integrity of the Gospel and proper respect for the beliefs of others.

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

3. Evangelicals are 'activist' & entrepreneurial for the cause of Christ.

a. So, the Paper has challenged us & we confess that in *TE methodologies* we have been:

➤ Quick to export our own methods, curricula & expectations of TE in our mission enterprise, & slower to listen, learn from, adapt to local cultural settings;

➤ Slow to equip, transfer responsibility to, & trust local leadership in TE, but also adept in equipping entrepreneurial visionaries for new ministries in & from their local settings;

Sometimes separatist & insular in TE, but we have also established strong interdenominational colleges with proven track records over generations of service;

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

Our "Activism" means ...

- b. In our TE curriculum we confess we have sometimes contributed to a lack of depth and failure to develop adequate teaching & learning resources. We have sometimes stood apart from cooperation for common standards, & helped escalate fragmentation & inappropriate duplication in TE.
- c. But as our movement matures we also:
 - Have skills in drawing fellow-evangelicals into alliances & cooperative ventures for improving quality standards (e.g., Associations of Bible Colleges; Accrediting agencies, TE funding agencies working globally)
 - Are working for new levels of integration & cooperation by developing articulation relationships, mutual cross-crediting & seeking to pull our weight in accreditation agencies & processes where we are respected and welcomed.

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

Our "Activism" means, we note that:

- d. For *Viability in Majority World TE* we need to enhance *Governance competency of Board members (2.5)*, & *professional competence of Senior Faculty as well as addressing financial viability issues (3.10)*. Local Board & Faculty members have inadequate support for multiple tasks required of them:
- To develop contextualized curricula (pp163-4), while also leading institutions into mutually enriching regional, & international relationships;
 - To bridge gap between serious research-based theology & populist theologies in Christian literature, practical discipleship programmes, church worship styles & general standards of church life (2.8);
 - To creatively develop new contextual TE models as an institution with often only, or primarily, Western educational experience, while also achieving or maintaining international parity & carrying heavy local administrative duties.

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

Our "Activism" means, we Call for:

- e. Appropriate contextual Competency Criteria & Standards for International academic Graduation Qualifications, as an aspect of Affirmation 3.3:
 - Some courageous Western schools need to set new patterns of academic excellence, recognizing & rewarding more culturally diverse learning methods, more communally oriented assessment criteria, more contextually flexible means of assessment for international recognition of academic equivalence of alternative epistemologies, pedagogies and assessment methods.
 - We seek not a less rigorous, but more flexible approach. Feminist & Indigenous approaches have made a start & developments in qualitative research suggest possibilities.
 - Biblical teaching on equivalence in value, but diversity of form & function of spiritual gifts lays a theological basis.

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

4. *Evangelicals are committed to 'Cruci-centrism', seeing Christ's work in his death & resurrection as heart of the Gospel to which we witness, & the pattern & measure of TE, which:*

a. Models consistency with the self-denying, self-sacrificing Love of Christ expressed at Calvary, in:

- Our TE Institutional & Administrative practice;
- Our Teaching Methodologies, serving, liberating and empowering our students;
- Our Curriculum design, ensuring forgiveness & reconciliation flow from our learning;
- Our Patterns of student formation: showing cruciform self-sacrifice and service as the norm rather than exception in ministry;
- Our Faculty/Staff/Student relationships; and
- Our Outreach training/ experience & ministry

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

Our "Cruci-centrism" means we look for TE, which ...

- b. Not only focuses on culturally & contextually most relevant biblical metaphors to anchor the significance of God's self-giving at the Cross, but also explores and explains the biblical fullness of diverse redemptive, reconciling and salvific metaphors expanding the meaning of this death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- c. Like Paul, makes the Word of God fully known & fulfills our Lord's intention that "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all nations ... And [we] are witnesses of these things."

An Evangelical Response - Theme Six

