

Cultural Critique and Theology as Public Discourse: The Challenge for Evangelical Theology in the Future

(An abstract)

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Talking about evangelical theology for the future, we cannot avoid asking a much more fundamental question: does theology have a future in this supra-secularized world where liberal humanism regards the autonomy of the individual person as absolute and market capitalism treats functional rationality as the measure of all values. The transcendent is in exile and any sheer mentioning of it is immediately regarded as alien. Theology is not only marginalized in the market place, it is being marginalized in the church. The market logic, functional rationality and the so-called “performativity,” has permeated the life of ministry. The concern for truth is taken over by the concern for the “marketability” of truth. Theology is no longer encountering secular challenge at the doorstep of the church. It has to fight for its existence right at the heart of church life.

If evangelical theology is to have a future, it has to be prophetic. It has to dare to challenge the philosophical anthropology of liberal humanism as well as the ideology behind market capitalism. Theology has to bring back the eschatological dimension of human existence in a convincing way. It has to show forth the covenantal Eucharistic reality

of Christian existence in which sacrificial self-giving is part and parcel of holistic humanity. In short, theology has to enter into public debates with dominant ideologies of the day and bring prophetic critiques to our contemporary culture. A theological anthropology with covenantal reality at the heart of human existence is vital. Theology also has to provide the perspective of divine economy to re-orientate economics to become truly “the order or the law of the household” (*oiko-nomia*), to bring covenantal rationality into the logic of functional rationality.