

Streams of Living Water

The Evangelical Stream

October 6, 2019

Texts: Psalm 119:97-104, Matthew 28:16-20, Romans 10:9-13, Isaiah 6:1-8

According to Richard Foster, the Evangelical Tradition is “A life founded upon the living Word of God, the written Word of God, and the proclaimed Word of God.” In other words, the Evangelical Tradition emphasizes the faithful proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the centrality of Scripture for faith and practice, and the confessional witness of the early Christian community as a faithful interpretation of the gospel. The Christian Scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) have primacy over culture, church tradition, individual religious experience, individual revelations, dreams and visions.

A central focus of evangelical faith is the proclamation of the gospel and the saving nature of God’s grace, which brings about conversion/new birth in those who believe. Theologians have debated the role of human faith/action versus the role of God in bringing about such a conversion. I agree with Augustine, who argued that: “Without God we cannot; without us, he will not.”

Menno Simons once wrote: “**True evangelical faith** is of such a nature it **cannot lie dormant**, but spreads itself out in all kinds of righteousness and fruits of love; it dies to flesh and blood; it destroys all lusts and forbidden desires; it seeks, serves and fears God in its inmost soul; **it clothes the naked; it feeds the hungry; it comforts the sorrowful; it shelters the destitute; it aids and consoles the sad**; it does good to those who do it harm; it serves those that harm it; it prays for those who persecute it; it teaches, admonishes and judges us with the Word of the Lord; it seeks those who are lost; **it binds up what is wounded**; it heals the sick; it saves what is strong (sound); **it becomes all things to all people.**” (with commonly quoted part in bold)

At its best, the Evangelical Tradition calls us to become committed disciples of Jesus Christ through the transforming grace of God as revealed in the Scriptures, with a mandate to share the good news of God’s salvation with all nations. When distorted or misused, the tradition can focus on making decisions rather than disciples, demand assent to beliefs or actions that present a limited view of salvation (salvation for heaven; neglecting social action), and/or worship the Bible rather than the God to whom it points.

Questions to ponder:

- 1) What has been your experience of the Evangelical Tradition, as evidenced in one or more of the following practices: responding to an altar call at a revival meeting, accepting Jesus as your personal Savior, being born again, being baptized as an adult, engaging in Bible memorization or quizzing, witnessing with gospel tracts or personal testimony?
- 2) To what extent do you identify with those who call themselves Evangelicals today?