

THE EVANGELICALS AND EDUCATION

"Evangelicals do not, characteristically, look to the intellectual life as an arena for glorifying God because, at least in America, our history has been pragmatic, populist, charismatic, and technological more than intellectual. In our tradition, we leap much more eagerly to defend the faith than to explore its implications. We have tended to define piety as an inward state opposed to careful thought rather than a human state that includes the mind." (Knoll, Mark A. "The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind." *Christianity Today*, October 25, 1993. pp. 29-32.)

(I) Para-local Church Movement

"Para-local church: Any spiritual ministry whose organization is not under the control or authority of a local congregation." Many evangelicals are involved in the para-church movement. "The proliferation of para-local church movements and organizations will be one of the distinguishing hallmarks of the last half of the twentieth century."

Leadership

Para-church movements are usually founded by an individual with a vision for a particular type of ministry. The movement is often centered on a strong personality.

Accountability

A major criticism is the lack of accountability to anyone but themselves.

Finances

There is competition with the local church and/or denomination for the dollar. "The majority of para-local church support comes from individuals, not churches. So competition for money becomes intense, especially in severe economic times."

Duplication

"Most para-local church groups operate in complete independence and isolation from each other. Consequently many groups duplicate and overlap each other in their specialties. This happens even in the same geographical areas. Each group thinks that its approach is unique or more effective than others - and especially more effective than the local church." (White, Jerry. *The Church & the Parachurch: An Uneasy Marriage*. Portland: Multnomah Press, 1983.)

(II) Focus On The Family

This parachurch movement, founded by Dr. James Dobson, focuses on prayer for students in the public school system, and home schooling for those who find the public school no longer an option. Christian Day Schools are also considered a possibility. Since Dobson's film series, broadcasts and literature are well received by many within the Reformed community, his evolving view on education should be watched carefully.

Focus on the Family, P.O. Box 9800, Stn. Terminal, Vancouver, B.C., V6B 4G3.

(III) Why Encounter

This new organization organizes prayer rallies for the salvation of Canada. "The only real weapon we have is prayer." It publishes the magazine *Prayer Warrior*. No thought is given to promoting a Christian view of education or establishing alternative Christian schools for the nurturing of youth in the Christian faith.

Christian Week, Box 725, Winnipeg, Man. R3C 2K3, Nov. 2, 1993.

(IV) Bible Colleges

Evangelicals are strong supporters of Bible Colleges and Bible Institutes. These schools train pastors, missionaries, church workers and lay leaders. They represent a pietistic reaction to secularism, humanism and liberal theology. Their view of the church is generally baptistic. "With few exceptions they hold to faith rather than to infant baptism. Most distinguish between mystical membership in Christ's body and formal membership in a visible church." (Witmer, S.A. *The Bible College Story: Education with Dimension*. Manhasset: Channel Press, Inc., 1962. p. 61.)

(V) The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

Founded in 1964. Its first president was Dr. Oswald J. Smith of the Peoples Church, Toronto, Ont. The E.F.C. is the Canadian counterpart of the U.S. National Association of Evangelicals. Membership is made up of individuals, organizations, congregations, and denominations. Its objectives are "to affirm loyalty to the historic, evangelical doctrines of Christianity as represented in our Statement of Faith, and in mutual fellowship with all of like faith to stand against the apostasy of our day." The Christian Reformed Church is an active member.

Faith Today

May/June, 1990 issue, the EFC's official publication, describes the ambivalent attitude of evangelicals toward the Christian school movement. The majority still remain committed to the "public school socialization function, i.e., decent morals and neutral practical skill knowledge."