

DISTINCTIVES OF THE REFORMED FAITH AS EMPHASISED BY THE BRITISH REFORMED FELLOWSHIP

James North

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6. Reformed Christianity is Evangelical Christianity

The believer who holds dear the doctrines of grace – salvation through Christ alone, through faith alone and by grace alone – who rejoices in the finished work once done at Calvary, and who looks for that blessed hope of the second coming of our Saviour in clouds of glory with great power, should be considered a true Evangelical.

The word 'Evangelical' has been much abused, misrepresented and brought into disrepute by the professing church during the last 150 years or so. Many claims to being *evangelical* are made but, sadly, these are too often found to be spurious. The Arminian often claims to be *evangelical* but, more often than not, this describes an attempt at being *evangelistic*. Many facets of their religion are evangelistic in practice and show great zeal in the spread of their kind of gospel. The cults do this very thoroughly but this has nothing to do with being evangelical. As Reformed Christians who hold to the doctrines of Sovereign Grace, we must remember that we are commissioned by Christ to be *evangelistic* in our practice. He told His followers to take the Gospel of the Kingdom into the uttermost parts of the earth. He said: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." (Matthew 29:19). But the Reformed believer should also be thoroughly *evangelical* in the true Biblical sense.

An Evangelical Christian embraces a robust, full-orbed Gospel. His beliefs are based fairly and squarely on the Bible and there should be a total life commitment to the cause of Christ. He should have a desire for the things pertaining to eternity – eyes forever upward and heavenward, looking for that blessed hope (Titus 2:13) and sights set toward the New Jerusalem.

An Evangelical Christian seeks out fellowship with like-minded believers whom he regards as his brothers and sisters in Christ. He daily resists the devil and his conversation is in heaven. His feet tread the pilgrim pathway and the daily bearing of a cross marks his walk and his way. In adversity he can identify with Job when he declared, "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). The life of an Evangelical is a life lived for the Saviour. Although we travel through a sin-stained weary world we do not travel alone; we walk in fellowship with Him. He has promised to be with us even unto the end of the world.

A true Evangelical is a labourer with Christ. From coming to faith in Christ to the end of the journey we are servants of the King. This world is just our temporary abode; it has no claim upon us anymore and it can offer us nothing compared to Christ. But it can influence us and hinder us in our service for the Lord. Very often Christians are victims of a spirit of 'worldliness' that creeps up upon them. There are many misguided theories as to what characterises worldliness. The devil has been quite successful in erecting a massive smokescreen on the subject deluding many into false thinking as they wage a spiritual battle against this pestilence. Many Evangelicals harbour erroneous views as to what worldliness really is. Much of this stems from the traditional views upon which they have been nurtured, if they have been brought up in a typical evangelical church environment. Young ladies have been labelled as *worldly* because of certain trends in fashion, the wearing of jewelry, make-up etc. Certain cultural entertainments and pastimes have been held up as the height (or depth) of worldliness. These are, however, just peripherals and this is just a smokescreen to hide what wicked worldliness amongst Christians really is.

Worldliness is literally the world *in us*. It is a *state of heart* that exists within a person. When it rears its ugly head it can immediately be identified by the discerning Christian. This spirit of worldliness obscures and negates the Christian's testimony and he becomes wedded to this world – like the church at Ephesus which left its first love (Revelation 2:4). Christian discipleship is a costly affair. Sometimes the Lord's work makes demands upon our time which we begrudge. Ask someone to do a practical job in the Lord's work and often the excuses are legion – no time this week, too much to do at home, must visit friends, that evening we go to the supermarket etc etc – anything rather than carry out the

business of the King of Kings. We may give the Lord a few hours of our time on the Lord's Day but during the week all our time and thought is devoted to the multitude of concerns of this world.

Who then is more worldly – the young lady who wears a little jewelry or the church member who refuses to give up some leisure hours for the Lord? It is time that Evangelicals stopped hiding behind the cultural taboos of the devil's delusion and faced up to the issue of worldliness in the heart, the root cause of the problem. We need to take heed to James 4:17, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

A true Evangelical is one who lives daily and totally for his Saviour. Of course, many of us have to spend a large part of our lives in the secular world and use it for our livelihood. But there is no reason why the world should wrap its roots around our hearts, totally sap our spiritual strength and destroy our testimony. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

An Evangelical faith is a sure and certain faith. We know where we have come from – lost in sin; we know where we are now – under grace; and we know where we are going in the future – to glory!

Christ reigns in His church, He reigns in His world and He will reign within His people. Reformed Christianity is totally and eternally an Evangelical Christianity!

7. Reformed Christianity is Biblical Christianity

The Reformed believer is one who prizes, above all other books, the Bible which is the very Word of God.

We can read many theories, interpretations, commentaries, sermons etc – and many are a blessing to the believer – but ultimately, the only reliable guide book for the Christian life, the final authority on Christian doctrine and the Lord's Word to us, is the Holy Scripture. His Word is not 'contained' within the covers of the Bible; His Word IS the Bible. From beginning to end it is the Living Word. It comes straight from the Father and straight from the Throne, illuminated by the Holy Spirit and applied to the life and case of every Christian believer.

His Word should be to us as necessary as our next breath. Our minds and our hearts need to be saturated with its message. Its principles and standards should be our guide and direction for daily life. It is sufficient for all the trials, concerns and cares that we may face in our pilgrim journey. It is an anchor to the soul and its

pages a resting place from the world. It is our own personal 'Cherith' and, as Elijah was fed by the ravens, so God ministers to His people and feeds them from His own precious Word. As we travel through the christian life, time and again we need spiritual respite and refreshment, and this is always richly provided through the pages of this sacred Book.

Reformed Christianity is based on the great doctrines presented therein. It embraces principles for daily living and looks forward to the promised future of the Church. "It begins with the tale of a garden, and ends with the city of gold." This precious Book tells man of his history and also of God's dealings with His people. The story of Redemption and the love of a Saviour run through it like a golden thread, and in it a glorious future is promised for the Redeemed.

Our Reformed Faith rests on Biblical certainties – things that shall surely come to pass. We have the assurance that all those for whom Christ died shall and will be saved. And whatever present and future calamities may occur in this world, our God reigns and rules in earth and in heaven, and He remembers His own.

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth" (Hosea 6:3). Reformed Chistianity knows and follows the Lord for time and for eternity!

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"The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word; and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God, and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed."