

***The Evangelical Cause
from the
Reformation to the Great Awakening***

Russ Atmore

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As we come to this subject, "the Evangelical Cause from the Reformation to the Great Awakening," it would be right, firstly, to ask the question, why start with the Reformation & why end with the Great Awakening? Surely, Evangelicals existed before & after such great events. The answer is - that of course they did and still do. So why these two as starting point and end? The answer is, because these two events (the Reformation and the Great Awakening) were events of such singular magnitude. There have simply been no other events like them in the history of the Christian Church.

Secondly, why is it necessary to speak about the Evangelical cause? Surely, Evangelicals know who they are & what they believe. It is sad to have to remind ourselves that this is no longer true. Most Christians do not know who they are or what they believe or where they have come from. This was not the case during the Reformation, through the Puritan Age and on to the Great Awakening. The Christians of those times knew precisely who they were & what they believed.

The word "*evangelical*" has come under scrutiny for good and for bad in recent times. In fact, more than any other time, Evangelicals themselves do not seem to know what it means to be evangelical. If this is the case, and I am convinced it is, then this is a very important issue. It is

entirely possible that the future of the Evangelical Church depends on what we understand by this term: evangelical.

In recent times, David Bebbington, has of course, argued that evangelicalism, containing four identifiable features (conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism – known as the Bebbington Quadrilateral) began with the Revivals of the 1730's. If this is true, then, of course, we must say that prior to the 1730's, we had something other than Evangelicals or evangelicalism, and frankly, I am not prepared to do that. I am not prepared to do that, because these features of Bebbington's can be seen in other ages.

Can they be seen in the Reformation? Who would doubt that the Reformation saw a return to the Bible (biblicism)? Who would doubt that the Reformation did not lay stress on personal conversion (conversionism)? Who would deny that the Reformation did not display and proclaim the centrality of the Cross-work of the Lord Jesus Christ (crucicentrism)? Who would deny that the Reformers did not communicate their faith actively (activism)?

Who then could or would deny that prior to the 1730's in the Puritan Age, that they, the Puritans denied these things or that they understood them completely differently? We would argue for uniformity & continuity between the Reformers and the Puritans. The spiritual heirs of the Reformation, namely the Puritans, namely George Whitefield, and into the modern era, Charles Spurgeon (1834 – 1892), Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899 – 1980), along with all the Churches confessing themselves to be Reformed, along with individual Christians confessing themselves to be Reformed – all surely stand together with the Reformers.

In fact, in my opinion, this is the strength of the Evangelical, in one sense. He is connected to history, and he knows that he is connected to history. The Reformed Christian today, sees a living bridge between the Reformation and the 21st Century comprised, not of bricks and mortar, but of the same conviction and belief.

Now what does this mean? This means that we believe in sola fide, sola Scriptura, sola Christos, sola gratia, and soli Deo Gloria. These are the bricks and mortar of the Reformation. We believe them all, we love them all, and we proclaim them all. This is what it means to be an Evangelical? I fully accept this as a narrow definition or as narrowly defining. It has to be, especially today. The term "evangelical" today means many things. More often than not, it does not mean what I have just outlined. What I mean is this, that Reformed Churches, (here I include Confessional Reformed Churches, Independent Reformed Churches and Reformed Baptist Churches) and Reformed Christians stand alone, apart from and separated from others, who do not believe the five solas of the Reformation.

The five solas of the Reformation have come down to us in the great Confessions: the Belgic Confession (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), the Irish Articles (1615), the Canons of Dordt (1619), the Westminster Confession Faith (1647/8) with the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Savoy Declaration of Faith (1658), and the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith.

We can also say quite deliberately & confidently that all of these are Calvinistic. They all affirm the 5 points of Calvinism; Total Depravity;

Unconditional Election, Particular or Definite Redemption; Irresistible Grace and the Perseverance of the Saints.

It is important for us to remember that the 5 points of Calvinism were not the creation of Calvin. They were the response to the doctrinal controversy posed by the Remonstrants of Holland in 1610, who delivered their Arminian demands to the Dutch Church in the form of 5 points (their own 5 points) – to which the Calvinists responded. The response of the Calvinists is seen in the Canons of Dordt. This is history that we know or ought to know as Christians. If there is one thing that can be said of the 5 points of Calvinism, it is that they all tend to the glory of God (*Soli Deo Gloria*).

If man is totally depraved – then he can do nothing for himself. Therefore, God must do something & he has done something – He has chosen unworthy sinners to be His people (His elect seed). He has secured their redemption in the death of His Son. He has applied redemption through the effectual regenerating power of the Holy Spirit received through the instrumentality of faith, and God keeps these elect sinners secure by preserving them and ensuring their perseverance in the faith, that was given as a gift to them.

In other words, salvation is a sovereign act of a Sovereign God, and all of this is to the Glory of God. Now to reject one point, of course, simply makes a person inconsistent, for the five all stand together inextricably linked and bound to each other. We often hear of those who call themselves 4-point Calvinists or less. The idea that someone can be thought of as Calvinistic, but not espouse all 5 points is simply inconsistent & unbiblical to say the least.

Anything less than a solid 5 points grounded in the five solas of the Reformation must pose & deliver an inconsistent hypothetical universalism. This simply means that God loved the world so much that he gave his Son for the world, but he did not love the world enough to save it. The argument goes like this - God determined to save the world, but because not all men will be saved & knowing the depravity of man & the sovereign election of God, the inconsistent universalist has to say that God has another will, namely to save a select few. I ask, what is the purpose of this second purpose? It is merely a tactic to soften divine predestination. How can grace be universal knowing that only the particular elect can believe?

Therefore, the rejection of unconditional election or particular redemption must cause and lead someone to soften the purpose of the atonement. What was the intention of Jesus Christ in dying on the Cross? Did Jesus die to save all men? If he did, then why has he not saved them all? The answer is usually given: because they do not have faith, but we know, that man cannot exercise faith apart from regeneration. Faith is the gift of God. Now inconsistent Calvinism (if there is such a thing) or hypothetical universalism was introduced by Moise Amyraut (1596 – 1664) in the School of Saumur originally established in France in 1598.

My point in all of this wrangling (if I may use that term) is to demonstrate that if someone softens the Atonement of Christ - do not call yourself a Calvinist! My further contention is that ultimately, the weakening of what it means to be an Evangelical, is connected to this very issue – so it is important.

Now let me say that John Calvin would not have liked his name been given to a system of theology – but it is because he taught these truths so

consistently and so effectively, and because his successors also did, that we identify them & ourselves by the name "Calvinist." I do not think we should parade the name "Calvinist" about as we might brandish a tennis racket hitting out at anything just for the sake of hitting out or parading our position. This is not a name to be paraded about - (the name of Christian alone is biblical).

It is, however, simply a declaration of that which Reformed Christians believe. There is more to biblical Christianity than the five points of Calvinism, (as I will show shortly) but in my view, and I believe, in the view of all Reformed Christians, the five points are part of biblical Christianity. If this is true, then to be an Evangelical, in the truest sense of the word is to espouse these fundamental truths - it means that we are concerned about being biblical.

Now when we speak about the Reformation itself, we include the German Reformation, which led to the Lutheran Churches, the Swiss Reformation that produced the Reformed Churches, the French, Dutch, the Irish, Scottish and English Reformation each producing Reformed Christians. All of these find their origins in the movement sparked by Martin Luther. Luther himself, (who was born in 1483 & died in 1546) in recovering biblical truth was the flower and fruit of the labors of men like John Wycliffe (1329 – 84) and Jan Hus (1372/3 – 1415) who preceded him. It was their stress on Holy Scripture, that ultimately captivated Luther & which he defended & demonstrated so brilliantly. You just cannot argue with Scripture!

Luther was such a polarizing figure, wasn't he? What is it about Luther that we identify with? Surely it was his struggle with his sin, and his

coming to understand justification by faith. Along with this struggle, the Scriptures slowly began to ascend in increasing strength in their authority over Luther, such that he could burn Papal Bulls against him, which sought to end his life, and even to the point of denouncing the Pope. His innovative & accurately sharp 95 Theses stand against the tyranny of Rome & its captivating system of indulgences sold by the monk John Tetzel.

Tetzel sold certificates of salvation. You gave your money to Rome, and the Pope guaranteed salvation, not only for yourself, but also for your deceased loved ones with the suffering fires of purgatory being significantly lessened. Tetzel's famous quip shows the utter absurdity of this abominable theology: "when your coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs." Luther's progress from the 95 Theses was stunningly breath-taking. On April 18, 1521 at the Diet of Worms, Luther uttered his famous statement as to whether he would recant and retract his writings.

In a beautiful demonstration of yielded humility to Christ, Luther standing before Emperor Charles V states when asked, "will you or will, you not retract? Without hesitation, Martin Luther replies,

"since your most serene majesty and your high mightiness require from me a clear, simple and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the Pope or to councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore, I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or by the clearest reasoning – unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have requoted – and unless they thus render

my conscience bound by the Word of God, I cannot and I will not retract, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience. Here I stand; I can do no other, so help me God, Amen."

The assembly was thunderstruck. Noble princes were amazed at Luther's bold courage – they admired him for it. The Emperor even acknowledged that Luther had spoken with an "intrepid heart and unshaken courage."

If ever there was a critical moment for Christianity, as Merle D'Aubigne puts it – this was on everyone's heart. Luther had said no to the Church and to the Empire. The great ones of the earth were vanquished in a moment. Why was this? Because Luther yielded to Holy Scripture & thus he yielded to God. His conscience was bound to the Word. This is at the heart of what it means to be an evangelical. The Holy Scriptures alone are our authority. There is to be no substitute, no challenger, no competitor, no other wisdom, no rival school, and no alternate philosophy – only the Word of God.

Martin Luther's conversion and subsequent assurance that God had forgiven him, and had imputed Christ's righteousness to him, lay behind God's working in Germany and by extension elsewhere. Soon the Roman Catholic Church would feel the full force of this decimating truth: a man is right before God only because of the imputed merits of Christ.

Martin Luther would ignite the fires of hell as it were when he translated the Bible into German and put it into the hands of his people. William Tyndale would do the same in a few years forward for the people of England. A Bible in the hand of every ploughboy would cause those

ploughboys to know more of the mind of God, than all the learning ever acquired in England's famous academic institutions.

We must never forget that Luther was an Augustinian monk who understood the predestination of God as Augustine declared it. Calvin would follow in the same way, and so we can speak of divine election as being brought to the minds & hearts of people by Augustine. Luther, of course, gave back to the Church the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Calvin would bring all of this together and develop a doctrine of God to whom alone belongs all the glory. The Puritans would later capture the importance of an experimental devotional evangelicalism, and the great Awakening would demonstrate the supernatural intervention of God in Revivals bringing true regeneration – Revivals that were steeped in what the Reformers & Puritans believed.

The Reformers of the Protestant Reformation believed in the centrality of God. All of the Confessions and Catechisms echo this refrain - God is glorious and good and great. Beyond the Confessions we have the writings of the Reformers, Luther and Philip Melancthon in Germany, Ulrich Zwingli & Henry Bullinger of Zurich, Martin Bucer of Strasbourg and Cambridge, John Calvin and Theodore Beza of Geneva, Peter Martyr Vermigli of Italy, and then later on the works of Francis Turretin.

Read any Reformer, and soon you will encounter the centrality of God. This is because ultimately the Reformers and the Puritans subsequently believed in the glory of God as the great end. Man's chief end is to glory God and to enjoy Him forever. All of the Reformers held to the Church councils' views on the Trinity and the Person of Christ.

The Reformers are thus classified as Trinitarian. What was it that assured these men of long ago with the correctness of these truths? It was not the Church councils. No, it was the self-revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures. God was central to everything. The revelation of the Trinitarian glorious God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures comes home to us in the consideration of Jesus Christ as the Mediator between God and men.

It was Calvin who gave to the Church the biblical understanding of the knowledge of God and subsequently the knowledge of ourselves. In other words, knowledge of ourselves can only be attained in view of the knowledge of God. If God had not revealed Himself in the Scriptures we would not know ourselves. The centrality of God is thus found all through Scripture. Calvin understood that man could only recognize himself when he was confronted by the supreme majesty and transcendent holiness of God as God makes himself known in the Scriptures by His Spirit.

It is through this self-revelation of God that we become cognizant of our sin – of the utter depravity that pervades our entire natures. So Calvin elevates man to his true place by showing us that man is a moral being responsible to God, made in the image of God which is revealed to man by God himself. Our perversity and wickedness, is thus highlighted by the effulgence and grandeur of God.

Not only is the doctrine of God central to being an evangelical, but so too is the doctrine of salvation. I have already touched on this. What we must never forget is that salvation is the entire work of God. The worldwide universal pervasiveness of sin has rendered man incapable of returning to God apart from the sovereign intervention by God in the life of men. We all stand under the condemnation of God unable to change ourselves or our

condition. The Sovereignty of God in salvation lies in the sovereign predestination of God, which is according to the counsel of his own glorious will. God made a sovereign choice without the counsel of man and without anything intrinsic in man, (that forced his hand as it were).

Therefore, the purpose of Christ's incarnation and atonement was to save his people from their sins. Christ has not just done his part and is now waiting for us to do our part in salvation. No - he has done it all. Everything required to save sinners – Jesus has done. The finished work of Christ is not contingent upon our believing, nor is it provisional, waiting on our response. Jesus Christ has made a full and effective atonement that accomplishes the purpose of God; namely the saving of his people. It is because of this great work of Christ in securing our salvation that God the Holy Spirit draws us invincibly to Christ. Dead sinners are made alive. Sinners who are unable and unwilling, are made able and willing to trust Christ alone. Having brought us to Christ, the Holy Spirit keeps us there. We continue by the help and gift of the Spirit to pursue sanctification until God takes us to himself.

The Reformation also brought about an understanding of the Covenants of God. I believe that this is probably the most significant issue of all. How does God deal with man? He deals with man in terms of a covenant relationship. God dealt with Adam in the Garden in terms of a Covenant. A Covenant has parties to it – there is God and there is man. It has stipulations attached to it with threats for failure and blessings for obedience. The Covenants of God are grounded in the promises of God. God is a covenant-keeping God. He keeps covenant to a thousand generations. The Gospel is seen in the promises of God in Genesis 3:15 that God would supply a Seed who would destroy the Serpent. All of the

subsequent covenants are grounded in and related to what we call the Covenant of Grace. The New Covenant of Jeremiah 31, which is applied through the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ as prophet, priest and king, is the fulfillment of all the Covenants in the Old Testament. The Puritans really brought this out in their writings.

So let me synthesize what I have been saying to this point. An Evangelical is someone who should have a high view of Holy Scripture. The Bible is authoritative – it is inspired of God and without error in the original manuscripts. An Evangelical should have a high view of God – God is central. All that exists exists for the glory of God.

An Evangelical should have a high view of the Person and Work of Christ – Jesus is God and he has secured salvation. He accomplished redemption and the benefits of redemption, namely calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification have been secured for His people.

An Evangelical should believe in the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in applying redemption by the work of regeneration resulting from the effectual call made to sinners. An Evangelical should be covenantal in their understanding of how God deals with man. We should remind ourselves that the idea of Dispensationalism, which is so prevalent today is a new idea (only developed in the 1830's and onwards). It seems to me that Dispensationalism is fraught with unrelieved tensions: desiring physical Israel to have a place, when the New Testament says nothing about national Israel as a separate plan in the mind of God. God has one people. He has always had one people. They have always been His people. They are found in the Seed in Genesis 3:15, in every other covenant relationship

under the eternal Covenant of Redemption, culminating in the New Covenant with its incarnational principle, "I will be their God and they shall be my people."

Spiritual Israel is this people of God. In heaven, you will not find the Church over here on one side, and national Israel over there on the other. You will find all the people of God redeemed by the blood of the Lamb who is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of His church, and who is the husband of His bride. It is the Bride and the Spirit who say, "come" in Revelation 22:17. Not the Church and Israel.

There is only one Church and one Israel, and they are the same in the salvific and eschatological purposes of God. Physical Israel is a bankrupt and blasphemous entity promoting a religion that denounces Jesus Christ as the Messiah and therefore as their God. Judgment came upon them in AD 70, and God's declaration of Judaism as bankrupt still stands.

Now the Reformers and Puritans, and those who came after them grasped the idea of the Covenant. The Covenants of God are of fundamental importance in Scripture and in the history of theology. In fact the covenant idea is extended even to the relationship between God the Father and God the Son – in the eternal covenant of redemption (Heb. 9:12; 13:20). I think that more work needs to be done in working out the New Covenant in terms of practical application for the Christian today. The celebration of the Lord's Supper must be seen in the light of the New Covenant relationship, for this was how Christ spoke of it.

It was the Puritan William Ames, who said in his *Marrow of Theology* (1623) -

"that theology is to us the ultimate and the noblest of all exact teaching arts. It is a guide and master plan for our highest end, sent in a special manner from God, treating of divine things, tending towards man, and leading him to God."

All things lead to theology, which is, of course, the study of God. This statement is a comprehensive worldview, isn't it? The Puritans desired to see a return to true biblical worship, not only in the Church, but also in life.

An Evangelical should have a biblical view of the Church and the Christian life. It is here that the Puritans can help us. Theology for the Puritan was about being spiritual. Puritan theology quickens the conscience and softens the heart, and the Puritans would be the first to tell you that if your theology does not do this, then your theology actually hardens your heart. So, a theology that does not affect us positively must necessarily affect us negatively. If we are not encouraged in faith, unbelief will raise its ugly head.

The Puritans are largely despised, ignored and unknown today. This is because of the false caricature that is linked with them. They hate fun, we are told. They love doom and gloom, we are told. But this is false, unquestionably false. The Puritans believed quite simply in God. The return of the monarchy under Charles II in England (1660) saw the decline of Puritanism. That's why the Puritans came to America. For about 100 years after the Pilgrims came, Puritanism enjoyed a recovery. It was after the death of Jonathan Edwards that the world began to look elsewhere, as

did the Church and thus Puritanism again went into decline. In this sense, Jonathan Edwards can be said to have been America's last Puritan.

J. I. Packer describes these Puritans as mature Christians. They were spiritual giants, and by comparison, we are spiritual dwarfs. Such a comparison ought to make you want to read the Puritans, and when you do, you will soon discover how much a dwarf you really are. The Puritans can teach us about God.

George Whitefield wrote of the Puritans,

"Ministers never write or preach well as when under the Cross; the Spirit of Christ and of glory then rests upon them. It was this, no doubt, that made the Puritans...such burning and shining lights. When cast out by the black Bartholomew Act (Act of Uniformity 1662), and driven from their respective charges to preach in barns and fields, in the highways and hedges, they in an especial manner wrote and preached as men having authority. Though dead, by their writings they yet speak; a peculiar unction attends them to this very hour."

When you read the Puritans, you will actually discover this to be true. You will feel as though they are your best friends. Every time you reach for one of their volumes, it is as if they are right there with you conversing with you about God. Packer says that their maturity is breathtaking. It still is.

The Puritans had an experimental knowledge of Christ. They knew Him. They proved Him. They loved the Bible. They loved the Gospel. They

believed in preaching and held a very high view of it. They believed in the work of the Holy Spirit directly on the conscience. They believed in work as ordained of God designed to glorify God. They believed in the Lord's Day and had a very high view of it. They loved to worship God. They prepared themselves for worship. Marriage and family was held in high esteem. They believed in evangelism and they longed for revival.

Richard Baxter's ministry is an example of what God can do in revival. Arriving in the town of Kidderminster in 1641, Baxter found the town to contain an ignorant, rude and reveling people. His parish contained about 800 families, and so he spent time with at least 7/8 families on two days a week, so that he could visit with them all. He would use the Westminster Shorter Catechism as his aid, and says, that he spent about an hour with each family.

Kidderminster had about 2000 adults and most of them were converted under Baxter's ministry in a marvelous revival, and by 1665 all were still living a vibrant Christian life for the Lord. George Whitefield tells of his visit in 1743 to Kidderminster, "I was greatly refreshed to find what a sweet savor of good Mr. Baxter's doctrine, works and discipline remained unto this day."

The Puritans understood revival to mean – the work of God by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Word of God bringing those who were dead spiritually to a living faith in Christ, and also in renewing the spiritual life of Christians who had grown cold and indifferent. In other words, revival was understood to be a sovereign intervention by God into the life of a community and church. Revival brought about conviction and

conversion – even of those who thought they were Christians. I shall refer to this when we consider the Great Awakening.

The Puritan understood the Christian life. He understood the Christian. He understood the nature of man. He viewed the Christian as a man, as a fallen man, as a redeemed man and as a regenerated man. The Puritan understood the doctrine of sin.

John Owen said,

"sometimes a soul thinks or hopes that it may through grace be utterly free of this troublesome inmate. Upon some secret enjoyment of God, some full supply of grace, some return from wandering, some deep affliction, some thorough humiliation, the poor soul begins to hope that it shall now be freed from the law of sin. But after a while...sin acts again, and makes good its old station."

The Puritan had a biblical understanding of sin, and thus to be truly evangelical this is how we must think. The fight with sin is life-long, and it is always precisely that: a fight. This comprehensive understanding of sin and its effects upon man enabled the Puritans to develop a deep theology of sanctification.

This is the beauty of evangelical theology. It is not dry and dusty and contained only in old volumes – no, it is always ever fresh in the lives of the saints of God. It is a living faith. The essence of sanctification is found in holiness. The work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification is to make us holy.

Holiness is the Gospel engraved upon our hearts. As such, it is the fruit of the New Covenant – God has written His law on our hearts and placed it within us. Sanctification is seen in its double-sided features. On the one hand, is vivification – whereby the Christian is growing and maturing. On the other hand is mortification – the dying and killing of the old man.

The Christian must make use of all the available means of grace at his disposal in this sanctification process. He must hear the Word, read the Word, meditate on the Word, be watchful and be praying and be worshipping. It is holiness that will ruin sin – that will kill it. This killing of sin was a major feature of the Puritan. There was no such thing as "let go and let God." There was no such thing as a crisis point and you had forever won the battle against sin.

The Puritans would have told you that you were in a war to the death, therefore always be vigilant. Is not this the difference between old evangelicalism and new evangelicalism with its easy-believism? The Reformers and Puritans knew nothing of this shallow sanctification. The Puritan would point the Christian continually to the Cross and to the Work of the Holy Spirit. Where does this lead the Christian?

Well, it leads him to communion with God. What else is more important to us than vital communion with God? The enjoyment of God is part of the chief end of man, and to enjoy God is to glorify Him and to glorify God him is to enjoy Him. This is beautiful evangelical faith. It is biblical Christianity. It is Evangelical Christianity. Communion with God impacts our worship. Biblical worship, therefore, flows from a biblical understanding of communion with God.

John Owen stressed that communion with God is marked by certain characteristics. First, there is the sense of the sweetness of fellowship. Second, there is delight in that fellowship. Third, there is security and safety in that fellowship, and finally, there is support and comfort in that fellowship.

The Puritan brought about a refocus on the Lord's Day. In fact, they created the English Christian Sunday. Simply put, this meant that one day in seven was to be recognized as belonging specifically to God for the worship of God. The Reformers did not pay as much attention to the Lord's Day as did the Puritans – in fact; they were inconsistent on this issue. The Puritans on the other hand were very logical and biblical about the Lord's Day.

They saw it as the Christian Sabbath. They saw it as binding because it was a Creation ordinance reiterated in the Decalogue (the 10 Commandments). In other words, if the other nine commandments are morally binding upon men, being a reflection of the character and being of God, why would the 4th commandment in particular be any different? I do not know of a better argument for the Lord's Day as a continuing institution of Sabbath rest.

This seems to me, to be a part of what it means to be an evangelical. The evangelical Christian does not just go to Church on Sunday because it is Sunday. He is motivated by a much deeper cause than that. The moral law of God binds him to God, and obliges him to be obedient to God's revealed will. He also understands that God rested from all his labors, and that the Old Testament Sabbath is a sign of the eschatological rest promised to the believer in heaven.

Matthew Henry comments that the Lord's Day is a day of action and not inaction. It is not a day for idleness. The Lord's Day is not a tedious and mundane observance but a joyful privilege. It is a day of rejoicing. Jonathan Edwards viewed the Lord's Day as a day of salvation, a day in which God loves to be sought and loves to be found.

The Christian is to rejoice in this duty as he rejoices in the Lord every day, but especially more so on the Lord's Day.

Stephen Charnock said of worship on the Lord's Day,

"God is a Spirit infinitely happy, therefore we must approach him with cheerfulness; He is a Spirit of infinite majesty, therefore we must approach him with reverence; He is a Spirit infinitely high, therefore we must offer up our sacrifices with deepest humility; He is a Spirit infinitely holy, therefore we must address him with purity; He is a Spirit infinitely glorious, therefore we must acknowledge His excellency."

Is this not a word for our modern times? Notice that the focus is all on God and nothing on man except his response and responsibility before such a God. The true evangelical holds God up and magnifies Him – here again is the centrality of the doctrine of God.

The Puritans believed that marriage and the family was the basic unit of society – a little church in itself. Husbands were the head of their families. They were to be examples to their families. They were to lead and direct the family in spiritual activities. The

Puritan believed that love was the fountain of all parent's duties. Children were not to be spoilt – they were to be loved and disciplined. The greatest stimulus to holiness came from the mother especially in the child's earliest years. Education was to begin as early as possible, but godliness was considered far more important.

The gifts and abilities of children should be noted and parents should seek to direct their children to a particular calling. The Puritan did not expect his child's conversion to be some great dramatic event, but rather the eventual understanding on their position before God and by virtue of their training and the constant exposure to the Word of God, they would respond to it. The modern parent so desperately looks for the dramatic. The Puritan thought this unnecessary.

The Puritan viewed all of life's callings, whether by choice or by circumstance as being providentially supplied by God. Vocations were a gift from God and man was to work as unto the Lord. Husband and wives were in a calling by God. The family was established by God, and parents were stewards of what God had given them.

It is often thought that the Puritan concept of family life was austere, harsh and legalistically regimental – but this is not true. The Puritan believed that religion was the best encouragement to duty. The best Christians were the best husbands the best wives, the best children, the best carpenters, the best doctors, the best servants, the best subjects and citizens.

The Puritan family was all about order with authority as a reflection of the life of man under God. Now I raise this issue of marriage and family because the modern evangelical has no concept of it. Divorce is rampant in the Church and the Church has no answer to it because it has watered down God's standards. The Christian family to day is virtually no different from the unbelieving family. Oh, yes, they may go to church, but their values are sensory driven and materialism rules. The modern evangelical has no concept of truth as the Reformers and Puritans did. This is why they were great Christians and we are not.

The Reformers and the Puritans were famous for their preaching. This will pave the way for the Great Awakening. Their churches were powerful evidences of the Word being proclaimed, always with fresh power. They believed that a preacher performed his ministry painfully. He took care not to handle the Word of God carelessly. He prepared careful sermons. He labored deep and long.

The Puritan preacher was known for his plainness – seeking to communicate God's work simply. The Puritan preacher looked to honor Christ in his preaching. He was not interested in contextualizing Christ – making Him fit into their world. The Puritan was more interested in whether we fit into God's world. The Puritan preached with affection and passion. He believed the truths that he proclaimed.

He did not seek to water down the truth. He preached uncorrupted doctrine so that souls would be converted and the saints of God be built up. I suggest to you, that this is evangelical

preaching. This is not what we have today. The Reformers and the Puritans preached their way systematically through the Bible feeding their congregations with steady diet of God's Word. This is why you will find George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards such great preachers. They were the fruit of the Puritan age. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, J C Ryle and then in the 20th Century, Martyn Lloyd-Jones continuing the tradition. These men and others were evangelical men. This is the kind of preachers we need today.

Let me turn our attention to the Great Awakening. In England, the Church had somehow grown away from the Puritan ideals. It had become legalistic, moralistic and ritualistic, and eventually it became a social gospel. It was the done thing to go to Church. That was what respectable people did. This would be the situation primarily towards the 1800's and into the 19th Century. Part of the problem was that ministers were unconverted men – so the pulpit offered nothing. Man was basically good and as such did not need a vicarious substitutionary atonement – Jesus death was merely an example.

During the decade, 1730 to 1740 England lay paralyzed in a moral stupor. Sin was rampant. Spiritual decay lay all over England. Into the midst of this abominable situation, God came, as if roused like he was in the days of Noah. God came in such power that the nation was affected and revival came from heaven.

To get this point we go back to 1660 and 1662. The Puritans are out. Charles II is on the throne – the monarchy is restored. Christians like John Bunyan and a host of other Puritans are

imprisoned for their faith. The teaching of Deism began to be taught. God is a First Cause but he does nothing more. He winds up the clock and lets it run. Man's responsibility is simply to recognize this Being and all will be well. This came to be known as natural religion. It was vitally opposed to supernatural Christianity. This false religion sapped the life's blood out of the Church. The doctrine of regeneration was unheard of in the pulpits. From 1660 to 1730, England was in this wretched state.

In the city of Gloucester in December 1714, an infant boy was born to the parents of the Bell Inn. The infant's name was George Whitefield. Whitefield says that he came from his mother's womb as a very forward child. He hated instruction and shunned as far as possible every opportunity of receiving it. He says that he had a violent temper and that lying and swearing were common to him. He stole from his mother and thought that it was no theft at all. He says that he broke the Sabbath more times, than he can remember. All this at a very young age.

Whitefield said that he had some convictions of sin – he would seek to satisfy his conviction by giving some of the stolen money from his mother to the poor. Whitefield could speak of God working upon his heart. His natural inclinations experienced a conflict between right and wrong. He would read romances only to turn to the Bible and read some of it. He misbehaved in church, only to play a game of church with himself as the minister.

Whitefield's mother was careful to ensure that he had a good

education. His father died when he was ten and she remarried when he was twelve.

This second marriage was not a happy one. Eventually Whitefield's mother would leave her husband and live with her daughter. Whitefield's great desire was to go to Oxford. The expense was beyond him, but he discovered that you could attend as a servitor, that is your tuition was free but you had to serve others – wake them up in the morning, polish their shoes, tidy their rooms, run errands for them. It was not the best, but Whitefield was delighted to go. He received money and clothing and books from those above him.

The University of Oxford was decadent. Drunkenness and immorality were rife on the campus (much like our colleges today). Whitefield began to be serious about life. Because he was a servitor he was banned from mixing with his superiors. It was Charles Wesley, who observed Whitefield at this time and invited him to breakfast one day. From this occasion, Whitefield was invited to attend the Holy Club. This was a group of men who took life seriously. They had no knowledge of saving grace, but they were outwardly moral. They fasted often, exercised self-discipline, revered the Church of England, they visited the prisons and slums, and sought to do good works.

Whitefield began to live by their rules. The Holy Club met in the rooms of John Wesley who at this time was unconverted like Charles and Whitefield. Whitefield was not satisfied with the Holy Club. Something was missing. His spiritual dissatisfaction was

exposed to him when he read Henry Scougal's book, "The Life of God in the Soul of Man." This little book contradicted everything that Whitefield thought he knew about salvation. He was alarmed by it. God was showing him that he needed to be born again. Whitefield began to seek God. He gave up eating so often that his life began to be threatened. His school work suffered. He would walk in the woods thinking he would find Christ out there, lying prostrate sometimes for hours on end.

We do not know when God saved George Whitefield. It was when he had come to the end of himself. He had tried everything. A ray of light pierced his soul and he saw the mercy of God extended to him. In a sense of utter desperation and complete distrust of himself, he cast his soul upon Christ for mercy. Like Spurgeon 100 years later, Whitefield could testify that the burden of sin was gone, the pardoning love of God had come, assurance of God's grace and mercy to Him flooded him – it was he said, "a day to be had in everlasting remembrance – the day of his espousal to Christ."

Later in life, Whitefield could say, "I know the place!. It may be superstitious, perhaps, but whenever I go to Oxford I cannot help running to that place where Jesus Christ first revealed himself to me and gave me the new birth." Whitefield's conversion was the turning point of his life. Whitefield began to demonstrate the Christian life. All who knew him knew something had happened to him. Whitefield early on grasped the biblical truth that salvation was a divine work only. It had nothing to do with him. His salvation would lead him to embrace the doctrines of grace – those 5 points concerning God's work of salvation in the soul of man.

It is important to remember that both John and Charles Wesley were unsaved at this point. Whitefield was the first. The Wesley brothers went off to Georgia as missionaries only to return to England as failures. Whitefield would remain at Oxford after his ordination and finish his Master's degree. He began to do a little preaching. We know that the crowds began to listen to Whitefield.

He preached the new birth. If anyone was an evangelical it was Whitefield. Since we do not have the time to examine his life – here are a few further highlights from it. Since the church buildings could not accommodate the crowds who wanted to hear Whitefield, he resorted to open-air preaching. Later on when John and Charles Wesley were converted, Whitefield would entrust his entire ministry into the hands of John Wesley whilst he went abroad to America. He was capable of being heard easily in crowds of 20,000. This all before the invention of the microphone.

He made 7 visits to America and 15 to Scotland. He preached regularly in all the counties of England, and often ministered to the nobility in the home of that great Christian woman, Lady Huntingdon. It was John Wesley who preached a sermon against predestination to Whitefield's congregations that caused Whitefield to write to Wesley addressing the issues. Whitefield did this graciously, but Wesley broke off fellowship and formed his own churches. Methodism was divided into two branches - one being the Calvinistic-Methodists of Whitefield, and the other Arminian – Methodists of Wesley. Whitefield gave all of his work to Wesley since he wanted to preach and not be restricted by a congregation. This was a remarkable show of graciousness. Many urged him to

seek prominence but he said, "may the name of Whitefield perish, but Christ be glorified."

Whitefield's ministry is a striking example of declaring the absolute Sovereignty of God with the free offer of the Gospel to all who believe on Christ. God is holy and man is helpless. Only Christ can save through His atoning sacrifice.

Whitefield's visits to America brought him into contact with Jonathan Edwards. Edwards play the major role in the Revivals that we know as the Great Awakening. Edwards saw revival in his congregation and in others in 1735. Edwards speaks of some 300 souls added to the church in a 6 month period. He wrote his first famous work on revival called "*A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God.*" The chief characteristic of revival was a profound consciousness of sin and an awareness of God. The outpouring of the Spirit of God in 1740 brought the Great Awakening to its height.

These revivals were occasions of great silence in the congregation, and as the preacher preached the silence grew heavier and heavier, and the weight of the Word began to penetrate hearts and minds and people would be overcome with their sin. Whitefield arrived in Northampton on October 17, 1740. Men saw hell opening before them and themselves ready to fall into it – is how ministers described the effects of the Gospel upon their hearers. It was said, that when Whitefield preached in Northampton, that Jonathan Edwards sitting in the front row wept the whole sermon as he listened.

Nathan Cole, a farmer, describes what it meant going to listen to George Whitefield. He got the news that Whitefield was going to preach in the town 12 miles from his farm. He dropped his tools and ran to the house and told his wife to get ready to go and hear Whitefield. He says, he ran to his pasture with all his might to get the horse fearing that I might be too late to hear him. The two of them got on the horse and when the horse got tired, Nathan Cole would climb off and tell his wife to ride and not wait for him as he ran alongside.

He says that in the distance he began to see a cloud or fog rising which he thought was coming from off the river nearby, but he soon found that was the trampling of horses and people going the same way he was. The horses were all lathered up. I heard no man speak to another for some 3 miles – everyone was pressing forward in great haste to get to the old meeting-house. At the river, he saw ferryboats coming from every direction. Everything, he said, seemed to be struggling for life. Along the 12 miles, I saw no man in his field – all seemed to be gone.

Benjamin Franklin said as he listened to Whitefield that you could hear every word that he said absolutely perfectly, and Franklin said that in a crowd of some 30,000 and he was at the back.

Jonathan Edwards went to preach at Enfield in July 1741. He was not supposed to be there, but stood in as a substitute for another man. As of July 1741, the Revival had not reached this part of the country, and so Mr. Edward preached from Deuteronomy

32:35 ' "their foot shall slide in due time." We know this sermon as "Sinners in the hands of an Angry God"

It was said, that as Edwards preached the people, who were characterized as thoughtless and vain were so changed before the sermon ended that they were bowed down with an awful conviction of their sin and danger. There was great moaning and crying in the house – what shall I do to be saved?

Jonathan Edwards is the right man to read concerning the subject of Revival because he was there as firsthand witness. What is significant about the Great Awakening, is of course, that Whitefield and Edwards were thorough going Calvinists who believed in the 5 solas of the Reformation withal their hearts. What do we know of this power today? I do not mean the shallow emotional froth that the Charismatics conjure up. That is not biblical revival. Biblical revival is deep, all-pervading awareness of God and of sin. It is the conviction that man can do nothing - he is helpless (as it were in the hands of an angry God) whom he has offended. Biblical revival sees Christ help forth as the only means whereby sinners can be right before God.

Is not this what we need today more than anything? Edwards and Whitefield saw themselves as being in the line of the Reformers and Puritans. This meant for them that God was central – everything was for the glory of God. They saw Jesus Christ as central – salvation is in Christ alone. They submitted themselves only to the Bible as God's authoritative all-time binding Word upon their hearts and minds – Sola Scriptura. They saw that salvation was by grace alone

through faith alone. Man is in the hands of God, and God can save or God can damn, and none dare oppose Him. The severity of God as Judge is sweetened by the Christ as lover of souls. It is God who justifies sinners. It is God who saves sinners through His Son. God is propitiated by the death of Christ. In Christ, God the Father has set his affection and love upon the sheep of Christ. Christ came and died for them, and in time they are brought to the Cross and by faith embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior – drawn by the Spirit's irresistible wooing to a saving knowledge of Christ, and then with hunger for righteousness in their breasts they persevere in the way of Christ until God brings them to glory.

This is evangelical theology. This is the true evangelicalism that must be recovered in our own time. I can see no other antidote to the careless preaching of our times. I can see no other antidote to the lack of holiness in our times. Biblical revival comes because of biblical evangelism – man is dead in trespasses and sins – let him come to Christ for forgiveness. This is what must be proclaimed. The Gospel must be recovered across this land lest we sink into hell itself.

Who is the true evangelical? It is the person who recognizes the greatness of God and the glory of God, who cherishes the beauty of Christ, and yields to the power of the Spirit. This is what we need – a vision of God as He reveals Himself in the Bible. There should be a deep focus that is Trinitarian in nature. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit actively engaged in the redemption of sinners, according to the eternal purpose of a covenant-keeping God. The need for justification and sanctification

both married together and never separated. The recovery of the Gospel is directly related to the doctrine of regeneration, being a sovereign work of the Spirit. A passion for biblical evangelism that seeks the salvation of all men seeking to declare the truth about God and allow the Spirit to convict and draw the sinner to Christ, without man-made pressures being brought to bear.

We see these truths in the Reformation to the Great Awakening. The cause is not lost because God is God. Let us hope in God. Let us go forth like these other great men and women and declare that the God of the Bible is our God. Only then shall we truly be evangelical.

Soli Deo Gloria.