



# West Suffolk Epistle



Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

## West Suffolk Baptist Church

*“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”*

Volume 1, Issue 4

July 2014

## *If You Had a Big Red Button That Would Destroy the Internet, Would You Press It?*

I’ve never understood those who take a principal objection to hypothetical questions. “I make it a point never to answer hypotheticals” they tell me. Really? The truth is I actually have no such button. But it is helpful to consider what I might do if I did. I know what I’d do first—wrestle with whether to push the button. That is, I suspect it would be something of a close call. Because, naturally, there are good things and bad things that come with the internet. That doesn’t make it, however, neutral. It makes it good and bad. Ironically, often its strengths and weaknesses are one and the same.

Take, for instance, the democratic element of the internet. Time was not so long ago that if one wanted to reach a large audience with one’s thoughts, options were limited, and came equipped with high bars. There were gatekeepers in the press, in movies, music, and book publishing. You had to have a certain amount of talent, and a message that was both apt to appeal to a large audience, and yet not be utterly dull and hackneyed.

When the cultural elite guarded those gates, it was tough for new ideas to get through. Funny isn’t it that cultural hegemony first began to crack not with new internet technology, but old radio technology? When the AM band was all but abandoned thirty years ago, conservative talk moved right in and changed the face of radio.

The internet has still a lower bar. Now with a phone and a data plan one can share one’s thoughts with the world. When those thoughts are good thoughts—faithful to the Word, encouraging to the saints, honest and beautiful, that’s a good thing. When, however, those thoughts are born of anger and bitterness, when they are designed to tear down and destroy, that’s a bad thing.

As with old fashioned gossip, however, the weakness is not just with the one posting, but the one reading. I suspect that more damage is done by what we download than by what we upload. Which, happily, gives us an opportunity to use the internet for more good than bad. Some self-discipline goes a long way. I may be tempted to read about the sexual foibles of some reality star, but it will serve me no good. I may be tempted to sift through the amalgam of half-truths, imposed motives, and sneering snark at *myexpastorkickspuppies.com*, but it will serve me no good. I may be tempted to invest my day in scrolling through an endless supply of Dilbert cartoons, but it will serve me no good.

There is, however, even danger in the good. The internet allows us to cyber-connect with like-minded people all over the world. Which can all too easily become a faux substitute for a more healthy actual connection with my actual neighbors. Sometimes the easy good is the enemy of the hard best.

So would I destroy the internet if I could? I think not. I aspire instead to treat the internet like a spark plug wrench. This is a tool that is profoundly useful when changing spark plugs, but useful for nothing else, a tool that when not in use can stay in the bottom drawer of the tool chest. When the net was young we were so excited we weren’t on guard to her dangers. Now that she has been with us for half a generation, she has become merely normal, and so we still aren’t on our guard. My advice? Use with caution. Remember, it only takes a spark. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Jr.*



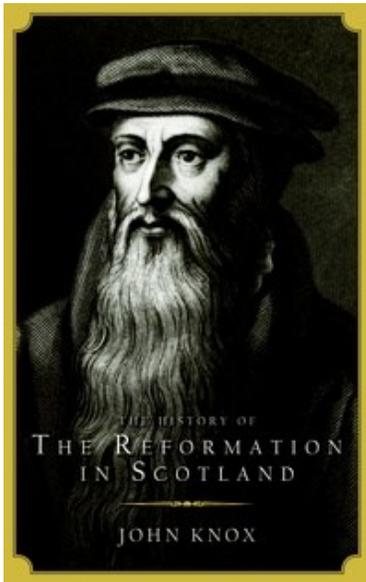
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## *Book Reviews*

### *The History of The Reformation In Scotland*

*by John Knox*



Few figures have dominated the character of a nation's life as John Knox has influenced the history of Scotland. In this remarkable work, originally dictated to his secretaries between 1559 and 1571, John Knox tells the story of his times and the progress of the Reformation in Scotland. These pages breathe the sense of excitement and expectation possible only to an eye-witness and participant in the unfolding drama of the Reformation in 16th century Scotland.

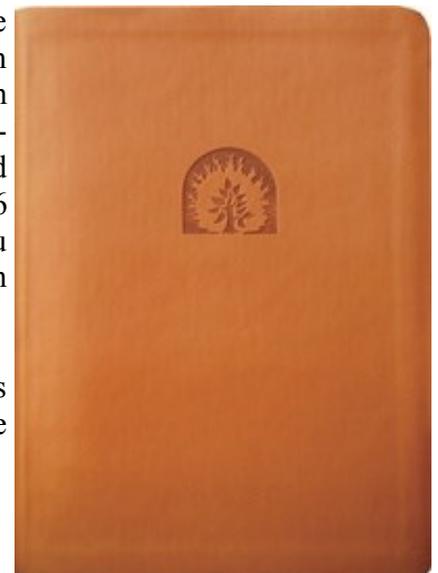
John Knox was incapable of writing history in a detached fashion, merely as a catalogue of events, or even as a tracking down of causes and effects. The days through which he lived were full of the signs of the work of God. So, he said: 'We write that the posterity to come may understand how patiently God wrought in preserving and delivering those that had but a small knowledge of the truth, and for the love of the same hazarded all'.

### *The Reformation Study Bible (ESV)*

*By R.C. Sproul, Sr.*

Widely considered one of the best tools available for Bible study, this unique study Bible was first published in 1995 as The New Geneva Study Bible in the New King James Version (NKJV). It was renamed The Reformation Study Bible in 1998 and in March 2005 transitioned to the readable and accurate English Standard Version (ESV). This foundational resource was created by more than fifty scholars and features thousands of in-depth study notes, 96 theological articles, 19 in-text maps, colored maps, and 12 charts to help you understand the Bible better. Also included in this edition are a presentation page and the updated ESV text.

The Bible measures 9 ¼ in. x 6 ¾ in. The type of the ESV text is 10.25 points and the study notes are approximately 8 points. This is the study Bible for the next generation of reformers.





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## *“Give Me Scotland, or I Die”*

Perhaps more than anything else, John Knox is known for his prayer “Give me Scotland, or I die.” Knox’s prayer was not an arrogant demand, but the passionate plea of a man willing to die for the sake of the pure preaching of the gospel and the salvation of his countrymen. Knox’s greatness lay in his humble dependence on our sovereign God to save His people, revive a nation, and reform His church. As is evident from his preaching and prayer, Knox believed neither in the power of his preaching nor in the power of his prayer, but in the power of the gospel and the power of God, who sovereignly ordains preaching and prayer as secondary means in the salvation of His people.

Although Knox had been imprisoned and enslaved, and though he was often infirm and under threat of persecution, he consistently lived out his theology, believing that “one man with God is always in the majority.” As such, the prayers of one man heard at the throne of God were a threat to the throne of Scotland. During the time of the sixteenth-century Scottish Reformation, Knox’s ministry of preaching and prayer were so well known that the Roman Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, is reputed to have said, “I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe.”

Above all, Knox was a committed pastor and churchman whose ministry served as a compass to numerous pastors throughout Scotland. Knox’s unwavering commitment to the pure preaching of the gospel was a bright and shining light amid the darkness in a nation steeped in doctrinal and ecclesiastical compromise. He reinvigorated God’s shepherds throughout the nation; this, in turn, reformed the church and, thus, in God’s providence, revived the country. Most notably, what inspired the pastors perhaps more than any other characteristic in Knox was that he did not fear men, because he feared God—he was a man willing to offend men, because he was unwilling to offend God.

John Knox preached and prayed to the end that God would rescue Scotland precisely because he was clinging to Jesus’ promise and prayer to save His people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. It should be no surprise to us then that when Knox was near death, he asked his wife to read to him the High Priestly Prayer in John 17 that our Lord Jesus prayed the night before He went to the cross. Knox called this passage “my first anchor.” For indeed, Christ is the captain of our souls and Christ’s prayer is the anchor and only hope of the nations. Therefore, in light of so great an example of God’s power working through one man, let each one of us pray with the same passion for our nation—and all nations—as Knox prayed for Scotland. ~ **Burk Parsons - Editor of *Tabletalk* magazine and serves as co-pastor of Saint Andrew’s Chapel in Sanford, Florida.**

## *This is the story about Four Persons named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody*

“There was an important job to be done and Everybody was asked to do it. Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody’s job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it and Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn’t do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when actually Anybody should have known that Everybody was to blame.” **Author: Another Somebody**



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## *Why is the Muslim World So Resistant to the Gospel?*

The future shape of the world appears to be a worldview competition between Christianity, Islam, and Western Secularism. For Christians, both of these worldviews represent real and lasting challenges to evangelism. Neither of these is a particularly new challenge, and the Christian encounter with Islam is now over a millennium in duration.

Writing over thirty years ago, when most American evangelicals had little knowledge of Islam, missiologist J. Herbert Kane of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School outlined **six** reasons why the evangelization of the Muslim world has been so difficult. His explanation of “Why the Muslim Soil is So Barren” remains both instructive and important.

### **1. *Islam is Younger than Christianity***

Having borrowed from both Judaism and Christianity, Islam “has just enough Christianity in it to inoculate it against the real thing.” As with Mormonism, Muslims claim a later revelation that corrects and supersedes the Bible. This represents a very real challenge to the Christian, who will base the argument for the Gospel on the biblical revelation.

### **2. *Islam Denies the Deity and the Death of Christ***

Islam not only denies the deity of Christ, it finds the idea abhorrent. “If a missionary but mentions the deity of Christ the fanatical Muslim is likely to spit on his shadow to show his utter contempt for such a blasphemous suggestion.” Furthermore, the Qur’an denies that Christ actually died on the cross, thus taking away the very act of our atonement. “There appears to be no way around these two obstacles,” Kane lamented. “The Christian missionary can find many points of similarity between Christianity and Islam, and certainly he will want to make full use of these; but sooner or later he must come to the central theme of the gospel — the cross. At that point he runs into a stone wall. He can remove many offending things, but he can never do away with the offense of the cross. That and the deity of Christ are hurdles that can never be removed.”

### **3. *Islam’s Treatment of Defectors***

“All religions, including the broadest of them — Hinduism — look with disfavor on the devotee who changes his religion,” Kane advised. “But it remained for Islam to devise the Law of Apostasy, which permits the community to kill the adherent who defects from the faith.” For Islam, “conversion is a one-way street.” Even when death is not a real threat, losing the bonds of community and family are huge costs.

### **4. *The Solidarity of Muslim Society***

Muslim societies are a solidarity, with religion, politics, economics, and personal life all accountable to Islam as a total way of life. Even where Muslims are not in a majority, such as in Western nations, they often concentrate in specific areas or communities where this solidarity can be approximated.

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## *Why is the Muslim World So Resistant to the Gospel?*

Under such an arrangement, efforts by Christians to evangelize meet a unified resistance, and a decision to leave Islam can be construed as an unpatriotic act, tantamount to rejecting one's nation and people.

### *5. The Public Practice of Religion*

Often overlooked by many Christians is the fact that a faithful Muslim demonstrates that faithfulness in a public pattern of prayers and observances. A convert who ceases these observances becomes immediately evident. This system of public prayer and ritual represents a powerful support for Islam and a powerful deterrent to conversion to any other belief system.

### *6. The Memory of the Crusades*

As Kane explains, "To Christians in the West the Crusades were a bad dream, of which we have only the faintest recollection; but to the Arabs they are the greatest proof of the Christian hatred for Islam." Christians bear the burden of a long and intensely bitter Muslim memory. Though atrocities were common on both sides, the atrocities committed by Christians were uniquely a repudiation of central Christian teachings.

In the mind of many Muslims, the Crusades feel like a living memory. To many within the Islamic world, Christians remain Crusaders, and evangelism is just another way of continuing the crusading mission.

Professor Kane's breakdown of these obstacles is not only interesting and helpful, it also serves as a reminder that these issues are hardly new. At the same time, Christians must evangelize, no matter the obstacles to Christian witness.

Christians must remember that the Holy Spirit can break down the greatest wall of resistance and the Word of God is, as He says, like a hammer that shatters a rock. Dr. Kane's arguments help us to understand the challenge, but were not meant to suppress evangelism. To the contrary, he wanted the church to be better informed as we fulfill the command of Christ. ~ *Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.*

## *Live As If Christ Will Appear Today*

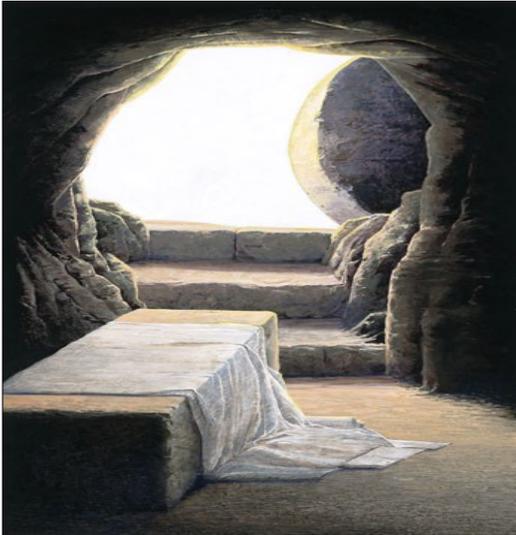
Live as if you thought that Christ might come at any time. Do everything, as if you did it for the last time. Say everything, as if you said it for the last time. Read every chapter in the Bible, as if you did not know whether you would be allowed to read it again. Pray every prayer, as if you felt it might be your last opportunity. Hear every sermon, as if you were hearing once and forever. This is the way to be found ready. This is the way to turn Christ's second appearing to good account. This is the way to put on the armor of light. ~ *J.C. Ryle*



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## *Christ Is Risen! He Is Risen Indeed!*



We need not wonder that so much importance is attached to our Lord's resurrection. It is the seal and memorial stone of the great work of redemption, which He came to do. It is the crowning proof that He has paid the debt He undertook to pay on our behalf, won the battle He fought to deliver us from hell, and is accepted as our guarantee and our substitute by our Father in heaven.

Had He never come forth from the prison of the grave, how could we ever have been sure that our ransom had been fully paid (1 Corinthians 15:17)? Had He never risen from His conflict with the last enemy, how could we have felt confident that He has overcome death – and him that had the power of death, that is the devil (Hebrews 2:14)? But thanks be unto God, we are not left in doubt. The Lord Jesus really rose again for our justification. ~ J.C. Ryle

## *How do we determine which doctrines are more important and which are less important?*

The answer to that question depends on how closely related to the gospel a doctrine is and how much practical impact it has on the Christian life.

Doctrines like the Trinity, the full deity and humanity of Christ, justification by faith alone, and the authority of Scripture are all intimately bound up with the gospel. Without them, we either lose crucial aspects of the gospel or the gospel itself. Such doctrines are therefore of utmost importance. Disagreements here divide the church from the non-church.

Doctrines like the proper subjects of baptism and the biblical form of church government are less closely related to the gospel, and therefore less central to the faith. Still, such doctrines are not totally unrelated to the gospel. *For example*, baptism is a picture of the gospel and defines the membership of the church, the people of the gospel. Other theological issues, such as our understanding of the roles of men and women in marriage and the church, have huge practical implications and are therefore very important even though they are not directly related to the gospel. Disagreements here may divide one church from another, like the differences between a Baptist and a Presbyterian. But such differences need not hinder embracing one another as fellow Christians.

Some doctrines, such as the meaning of the thousand years in Revelation 20, are far removed from the gospel and have little practical impact on the Christian life. This is not to say that such doctrines are entirely without importance, but disagreements here can still allow for cooperation between Christians to the highest degree, namely, fellow membership within a local church. ~ **Mark Dever - Senior Pastor - Capital Hill Baptist Church - Washington, D.C.**



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## *Doctrine Divides*

***“They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (v. 14).  
- Jeremiah 6:1–15***

Throughout history men have appeared who would become famous for seeking peace at any price. Perhaps the greatest twentieth-century example of such a figure is the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain who in 1938 proclaimed that he had achieved “peace in our time” with Adolf Hitler even as he was preparing to unleash his blitzkrieg on Europe. Chamberlain’s aversion to hostility was so great that Hitler played him for a fool.

Conflict is something that most people, when given the opportunity, try to avoid. Peace is so desirable that significant differences between individuals and groups are often ignored, and unity is sought under the lowest common denominator. When peace is sought under these auspices, it can be easy to ignore the importance of truth altogether. The modern heirs of nineteenth-century Christian liberalism reveal such tendencies. In the drive to live peaceably with other professing believers and even other non-Christian religions, liberalism has tended to redefine Christianity as “the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man,” or some other innocuous definition. Ironically, liberals tend to tolerate any kind of belief system unless it happens to represent orthodox, biblical faith.

We cannot, however, judge mainline Protestantism without recognizing that these problems are increasingly evident within evangelicalism. Even though many different denominations were born out of the Protestant Reformation, evangelicals have traditionally confessed the inerrancy of Scripture and the doctrine of justification by faith alone whether they were Lutherans, Baptists, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and so on. Today, unfortunately, the desire for unity means that such essential doctrines are often diminished so that Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox can all get along. Professing evangelicals no longer necessarily believe that justification by faith alone is an essential doctrine — even though without it there is no Gospel (Galatians 1:6–9; 2:15–16).

If Christian unity is to mean anything, it must be a unity of faith grounded in the truth. To sacrifice conviction for “peace” is to have no conviction at all.

### ***Coram Deo (Before the Face of God)***

Christians have often divided over matters not essential to Christian orthodoxy and lobbed charges of heresy at one another. Such actions have created a distaste for theology in the minds of many people, and there is now a tendency to downplay any essential differences within the visible church because of all the vitriol shown over the less important points of doctrine. Let us be passionate for the truth, but let us not divide unless Christian orthodoxy is at stake. ~ ***Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.***



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## *Foolish Children Need Wise Fathers*

There are times when God reaches out His restraining hand and catches His child before he runs out into a street of sin chasing after a ball of worldly desire. There is a deadly danger there that God's grace and Christ's atonement protects us from as we grow into mature faith. There are other times when that same Fatherly hand pulls back from the child who ignores the warnings and reaches for the hot pan. The temporary sting of sin is a protective grace that instructs and reminds us that sin is a viper to be killed not a puppy to be cuddled. The Father's soothing hand then moves in quickly as we confess our foolishness and rebellion to provide the greater reminder that though we are at times very poor sons and daughters, we are sons and daughters nonetheless. And we will never be anything less- precious children who will one day grow up to be like our eldest brother, Jesus. ~ **Pastor Joe Bailey/Headmaster - Pinnacle Classical Academy - Little Rock, Arkansas**

## *The Value of Inconspicuous Service*

Some people will not play in the band unless they can beat the big drum. Peter had that tendency. But not Andrew. He is never named as a participant in the big debates. He was more concerned about bringing people to Jesus than about who got the credit of who was in charge. He had little craving for honor.

Andrew is the very picture of all those who labor quietly in humble places, "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6)(ESV). He was one of those rare people who is willing to take the back seat and be in the place of support. He did not mind being hidden as long as the work was being done.

Many Christians today would do well to learn that lesson. The Lord values people like Andrew. They're the quiet men and women, laboring faithfully but inconspicuously, who accomplish the most for the Lord. They don't receive much recognition, but they don't seek it. They only want to hear the Lord say, "Well done." ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

## *The Value of "Insignificant" Gifts*

No gift is too small when put into the Lord's hands. Jesus taught His disciples that lesson. "Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and He saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. *And He said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."* (Luke 21:1-4)(ESV)

The poor person who gives everything he or she has is giving a greater gift than rich people who give much more out of their abundance. In God's economy, the sacrificial faithfulness of the giver, not the size of the gift, is the true measure of the gift's significance. That's a difficult concept for the human mind to comprehend. It is not the greatness of the gift that counts, but rather the greatness of the God to whom it is given. He takes the sacrificial and seemingly insignificant gifts of His people who give faithfully and promises to use them to accomplish monumental things. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**



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## Visit from the Joyners

On Friday, June 27th the Joyner Family hosted a BBQ Dinner at the Parsonage. Following the dinner there was a Presentation/Update of their Mission and Ministry Activities.



On Sunday (June 29th) following the morning worship service the church had a fellowship meal with the Joyner Family.





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## *Birthday and Anniversary Corner - July 2014*

Tim Humphrey - 7/6  
Sadie Halsey - 7/13

David and Jennifer Allesandro - 7/4

## *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*

### *Chapter 4 - Of Creation*

1. In the beginning it pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, to create or make the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.
2. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, rendering them fit unto that life to God for which they were created; being made after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfil it, and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change.
3. Besides the law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which whilst they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.

### *Disclaimer*

The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or it's leadership.



West Suffolk Baptist Church

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Please submit information to Walt Lawrence by the second Sunday of the month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.