



Volume 4 Issue 11

# *West Suffolk Epistle*

## *West Suffolk Baptist Church*

*“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”*



November 2017

*Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America*

## *How Should Christians Respond to the Homosexual Movement?*

If you’ve been watching the headlines over the last couple years (and especially the last few days), you have undoubtedly noticed the incredible surge of interest in affirming homosexuality. Whether it’s at the heart of a religious scandal, political corruption, radical legislation, or the redefinition of marriage, homosexual interests have come to characterize America.

That’s an indication of the success of the homosexual agenda. And some Christians, including some national church leaders, have wavered on the issue even recently. But sadly, when people refuse to acknowledge the sinfulness of homosexuality—calling evil good and good evil (Isaiah 5:20)—they do so at the expense of many souls.

How should you respond to the success of the homosexual movement? Should you accept the recent trend toward tolerance? Or should you side with those who exclude homosexuals with hostility and disdain?

In reality, the Bible calls for a balance between what some people think are two opposing reactions—condemnation and compassion. Really, the two together are essential elements of biblical love, and that’s something the homosexual sinner desperately needs.

Homosexual advocates have been remarkably effective in selling their warped interpretations of passages in Scripture that address homosexuality. When you ask a homosexual what the Bible says about homosexuality—and many of them know—they have digested an interpretation that is not only warped, but also completely irrational. Pro-homosexual arguments from the Bible are nothing but smokescreens—as you come close, you see right through them.

God’s condemnation of homosexuality is abundantly clear—He opposes it in every age, from the patriarchs (Genesis 19:1–28), to the Law of Moses (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13), to the Prophets (Ezekiel 16:46–50), to the New Testament (Romans 1:18–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Jude 7–8).

Why does God condemn homosexuality? Because it overturns His fundamental design for human relationships—a design that pictures the complementary relationship between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:18–25; Matthew 19:4–6; Ephesians 5:22–33).

Why, then, have homosexual interpretations of Scripture been so successful at persuading so many? Simply because people want to be convinced. Since the Bible is so clear about the issue, sinners have had to defy reason and embrace error to quiet their accusing consciences (Romans 2:14–16). As Jesus said, “Men loved the darkness rather than the Light, [because] their deeds were evil” (John 3:19–20).



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### *How Should Christians Respond to the Homosexual Movement?* *- Cont'd*

As a Christian, you must not compromise what the Bible says about homosexuality—ever. No matter how much you desire to be compassionate to the homosexual, your first sympathies belong to the Lord and to the exaltation of His righteousness. Those who condone homosexual behavior stand in defiant rebellion against the will of their Creator who from the beginning “made them male and female” (Matthew 19:4).

Don’t allow yourself to be intimidated by homosexual advocates and their futile reasoning—their arguments are without substance. Homosexuals, and those who celebrate their sin, are fundamentally committed to overturning the lordship of Christ in this world. But their rebellion is useless, for the Holy Spirit says, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9–10; cf. Galatians 5:19–21).

So, what is God’s response to the homosexual agenda? Certain and final judgment. To claim anything else is to compromise the truth of God and deceive those who are perishing.

As you interact with homosexuals and their sympathizers, you must affirm the Bible’s condemnation. You are not trying to bring damnation on the head of homosexuals; you are trying to bring conviction so that they can turn from that sin and embrace the only hope of salvation for all of us sinners—and that’s through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

True compassion towards those caught in homosexuality is evidenced not by excusing sexual sin, but by pointing them to the reality of the gospel.

Those engaged in a homosexual lifestyle need salvation. They don’t need healing—homosexuality is not a disease. They don’t need therapy—homosexuality is not a psychological condition. Homosexuals need forgiveness, because homosexuality is a sin.

First Corinthians 6 is very clear about the eternal consequences for those who practice homosexuality. But there is good news offered through the gospel. No matter what the sin is, whether homosexuality or anything else, God has provided forgiveness, salvation, and the hope of eternal life to those who repent and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ in saving faith.

Right after identifying homosexuals as those who “will not inherit the kingdom of God,” Paul said, “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

God’s invitation to those in homosexual sin is that they repent and turn to Christ for salvation. Former homosexuals were in the Corinthian church back in Paul’s day, just as many former homosexuals today are in my church and in faithful churches around the country. With regenerated hearts, they sit in biblical churches throughout the country praising their Savior, along with former fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, coveters, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers. Remember, such were some of you too.



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### *How Should Christians Respond to the Homosexual Movement? - Cont'd*

So, what should be your response to the homosexual movement? Make it a biblical response—confront it with the truth of Scripture which condemns homosexuality and promises eternal damnation for all who practice it.

What should be your response to the homosexual individual? Make it a gospel response—confront him with the truth of Scripture that condemns him as a sinner, and compassionately point him to the hope of salvation through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Stay faithful to the Lord as you respond to homosexuality by honoring His Word, and leave the results to Him. ~ *Dr. John MacArthur - The Master's Seminary Journal entitled: God's Word on Homosexuality: The Truth about Sin and the Reality of Forgiveness. - July 2, 2015*

### *Becoming a Worshiper of God*

“Church is boring”—this is the most oft-stated reason why people stay away from church. It raises some important questions. How is it possible that an encounter with a majestic, awesome, living God could ever be considered boring by anyone? God is not dull. If worship is boring to us, it is not because God is boring. Sermons can be boring and liturgies can be boring, but God simply cannot be boring. The problem, I think, is with the setting, the style, and the content of our worship.

The New Testament gives us little information about proper Christian worship. It establishes some guidelines, but does not offer much content. In contrast, the Old Testament provides a panorama of worship information. This poses some dangers, as well as some vital clues, for worship. We cannot simply reinstate the elements of Old Testament worship, because many of them are clearly fulfilled once and for all with the finished work of Christ in His offering of the perfect sacrifice.

The Old Testament does provide a key to elements involved in worship. We see, for example, that the mind must be engaged in worship. The centrality of preaching underscores the crucial role of the Word. Full worship, however, is both verbal and nonverbal. The whole person is addressed and involved in a worship experience. We note that in the Old Testament, worship intimately involved all five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*

### *Coram Deo - ( To live one's entire life in the presence of God )*

Is church boring to you? What do you think might be the reason? Spend some time in prayer asking God to show you how to become a true worshiper.



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### *Calvinism Isn't Enough*

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,” Charles Dickens wrote in his classic *A Tale of Two Cities*. Perhaps years from now historians will reflect on the state of Calvinism at the beginning of the twenty-first century and offer similar commentary about the historico-theological tale of two, three, or four different shades of Calvinism. Perhaps the future thoroughgoing Calvinist editors of *Time* magazine will come out with a top-ten list called “Ten Ways God Changed the World as He Sovereignly Worked Through the Secondary Cause of Our March 12, 2009, Top Ten List.” And perhaps, years from now, Collin Hansen at The Gospel Coalition will write a follow-up book titled *We’re Neither as Young Nor as Restless as We Used to Be, But We’re Still Reformed*.

### **Recovering the Meaning of Reformed**

It’s hard to know what may come of this so-called “New Calvinism.” However, we do know that if the New Calvinism does in fact endure, it will endure only because it becomes firmly established on the old Calvinism of John Calvin himself — the same Calvinism of Jonathan Edwards, Martin Luther, Augustine, and the apostle Paul, which is nothing less and nothing more than the all-encompassing gospel-religion of our eternal and triune God — a religion, in the best sense of the term, existing in and among people of every tribe, language, and nation whom our Lord has sovereignly called into an eternal relationship with Himself through the redeeming work of the Son and the applying work of the Spirit.

The Calvinism I’m describing is an historically and ecclesiastically grounded Calvinism established within and upon that which our covenant Lord established and against which the gates of hell shall not prevail—the church of Jesus Christ. And we, the called-out ones, are the confessing church of Jesus Christ, and have been given ordinary means of God’s grace (the Word, prayer, and the sacraments, that is, all aspects of worship for all of life) through which God has promised to convict, convince, convert, equip, purify, discipline, sanctify, and sustain to the end, that we would love God, glorify God, and enjoy God forever.

Against such, there’s no argument. However, argument does exist over the very meanings of some of the words I have used to describe this old Calvinism. Words such as covenantal, church, confessing, and sacrament represent particular doctrinal affirmations of historic, confessional Reformed theology to which I adhere, but to which many churchmen, past and present, do not adhere while at the same time using the words Reformed and Calvinist to refer to themselves. As to whether or not this phenomenon of Reformed classification is appropriate, many have disagreed, and they disagree on reasoned grounds and on all sides of confessional Protestantism: Anglican, Baptist, Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, and Presbyterian. On the one hand, the words Reformed and Calvinist are historically and ecclesiastically rooted in confessional Reformed “theology, piety, and practice,” to employ the language of R. Scott Clark in his helpful epilogue, “Predestination Is Not Enough,” in *Recovering the Reformed Confession* (P&R, 2008). Yet, at the same time, there is a foundational doctrinal element that is common to all our confessions and to which all confessional Protestants adhere. It is the overwhelming, overarching, and often underrated doctrine of God.

Calvinists new and old, around the world, have been convinced biblically of this one crucial tenet of historic, confessional Calvinism: God’s sovereignty over all—life, death, pain, disasters, relationships, salvation, condemnation, the good things, the bad things, the big things, the little things, the in-between things, and all the things we don’t even know about or can’t even see—over all. Simply put, we believe that God is God.



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### *Calvinism Isn't Enough - Cont'd*

#### **A Younger, New, Old Calvinist**

For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, I am a confessional Presbyterian. When I say “confessional,” I am referring to the confessional standards I affirm as an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America, namely, the Westminster Standards, which I believe contain carefully worded, helpful, and generally accurate summaries of biblical doctrine. As such, while I don’t officially represent the Dutch Reformed Calvinist churches, I do nevertheless consider myself a “Reformed” churchman. And although I’ve never been much for “isms,” I do consider myself a Calvinist who has been entrenched in the so-called “New Calvinism” for about fifteen years. Allow me to explain.

Not only was I not raised going to church regularly, I wasn’t raised around Presbyterian and Reformed circles. In fact, when I became a Christian at fifteen, it was through the ministry of a gospel-preaching but decidedly anti-Calvinist Southern Baptist church where I later went on staff. For the most part, I thought all Presbyterians and all those who got babies wet were just plain liberal, unbiblical, and, generally speaking, bound for hell. I didn’t realize there were entirely different types of Presbyterians—those who believe the Bible and those who don’t. And later on, much to my disappointment, I realized there were different types of Baptists too—those who believe the Bible and those who say they do but actually don’t.

Although my first pastor didn’t teach me Reformed theology, he did nevertheless teach me a great deal about how to study the Bible and why I should love the God of the Bible. Although he may not have realized it at the time, that godly man of the Word was teaching me to know and love the God of Scripture, who, as it turns out, is the same God of Reformed theology — the same God of Calvin and, perhaps I should add, the same God of Charles Spurgeon and John Bunyan.

Of course, Calvin, Luther, Cranmer, Edwards, and Spurgeon disagreed on various doctrinal matters. And while there are obvious doctrinal differences among men like Mark Dever, Sinclair Ferguson, Mike Horton, John MacArthur, John Piper, and R.C. Sproul, just to name a few, we nevertheless confess the same sovereign God over all—as well as all that confession carries with it in every area of doctrine. And while we are all fully aware of the doctrinal differences that exist among us, there does exist a significant doctrinal thread that binds us together. For the past few generations that thread has been somewhat uncommon and hard to find among professing evangelicals throughout the world, but is now, as Time magazine, Hansen, and others have rightly pointed out, a very common thread weaving together men and women, young and old, black and white, South and North American, Dutch and British, who have come to understand, affirm, and teach biblical doctrines of God, man, sin, and salvation, even when it means real turmoil, real persecution, and real ecclesiastical and familial division.

#### **Calvinism Isn't Enough**

When I finally came to affirm the biblical doctrine of God’s sovereignty after fighting against it with all the free will I could muster, I found it wasn’t merely predestination that governed my theology.



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### *Calvinism Isn't Enough - Cont'd*

Rather, it was a more biblical knowledge of God Himself that began to change every aspect of my theology, starting with my knowledge of our gracious and just God and my knowledge of my dead and depraved self, which is precisely where Calvin started his Institutes of the Christian Religion and where the synod of churchmen at Dordrecht (1618–19) hung their doctrinal hats in combating the Arminian Remonstrants.

In essence, the Reformed doctrines of grace as taught by Calvin and by every other faithful student of God's Word throughout history, gave me a new hermeneutical lens through which I began to interpret all of Scripture. At the time, it wasn't my foremost concern to wear a particular label, and because of the great respect I had for men on all sides of the Reformed camp, it was my foremost concern to study the Word of God and to study the theology of men of God throughout history who studied the Word of God to the end that I might rightly preach and teach the Word of God and submit myself to the ecclesiastical body that I believe to be in closest accord with Scripture.

My desire then, as it is now, is to think, speak, and act biblically and not to base my doctrines, my affiliations, or my allegiances on a respected name, a "successful" ministry, or an historically faithful or unfaithful denomination. This, in essence, is the predominant mind set of the New Calvinists, just as it was the mind set of Calvin himself, who was concerned neither with keeping up unbiblical appearances nor with keeping the Roman Catholic status quo.

### **A Really Radical Reformation**

Although I very much want to preserve and define the words Calvinism, Reformed, and Presbyterian carefully and appropriately along historical and confessional lines (as do confessional Baptists, Lutherans, et al.), I also want to recognize and rejoice that so many young, restless, and reforming New Calvinists are so incredibly passionate and so gloriously gospel-centered as they are being reformed by our mutually worshiped sovereign God, according to Scripture, in God's sovereign timing and for God's sovereign glory.

In truth, day by day we're all growing a little older, a little more willing to settle down and listen to our faithful forefathers, and a little less eager to jump on any sort of personality-driven bandwagons. And for what it's worth, I think this is precisely the way Calvin (and all the old and New Calvinists) would want to see true, lasting reformation take place in the church and around the world. However, considering he wanted no stone ever to mark his grave, Calvin would likely raise the more radical question of whether we should employ his name at all in our doctrinal shorthand. He would probably prefer instead that we simply employ the name of our sovereign and gracious Lord, who is sovereign over the New Calvinists, the old Calvinists, and all the Calvinists yet to come—all of whom desire simply to be known as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. ~ **Dr. Burk Parsons** - *Editor of Tabletalk magazine, copastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Fla., a visiting lecturer at Reformed Theological Seminary, and a Ligonier Ministries teaching fellow.*



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### *Here We Stand*

Martin Luther's great moment of theological clarification came at the climax of a command performance. Facing the threat of martyrdom and execution, Luther appeared on trial at the Diet of Worms before the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Asked on what authority he dared to defy the Pope and the magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church, Luther famously replied:

*"Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason—for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, as it is clear that they have erred repeatedly and contradicted themselves—I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Thus I cannot and will not recant, because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. God help me. Amen."*

To those words were added: *"Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me."*

The Diet of Worms was held in 1521. At the conclusion of his defense, Luther simply said, *"I am finished."* There was good reason to believe that he was quite finished. He would be excommunicated from the church and he would live with the threat of martyrdom for the rest of his life. But now, 500 years after Luther nailed his famous 95 Theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg, the faith of the Reformation is still very much alive.

That moment of exquisite clarification came when Luther had nowhere to stand but on the authority of Scripture alone. Standing on biblical authority would not have been controversial, but the addition of that little sola changed everything. There is an infinite chasm between the authority of Scripture and the authority of Scripture alone.

The same is true of each of the *Solas* now formally associated with the Reformation. *Faith alone, Grace alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone, and to the Glory of God alone.*

Now, 500 years after the Reformation was begun, Evangelical Christians rightly celebrate this anniversary of our Reformation faith. But commemoration isn't enough.

Today's evangelicals do not stand on trial before the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, but we do stand on trial before a world that is increasingly secular, and hostile to biblical Christianity. The Modern Age is marked by an alienation of secular elites from historic Christianity. In many cases, that alienation takes the form of outright opposition. And the alienation is no longer limited to the cultural elites.

The most visible evidence of this transformation is the vast revolution in morality – especially sexual morality – that has redefined even the most basic of all human relationships and ethical expectations. There is also the tragic witness of empty churches and the emergence of a post-Christian culture, particularly in much of Europe.

Meanwhile, within institutional Christianity, theological reform looks ever more necessary. Across the larger theological landscape, evangelicals see the desert of theological liberalism and the debris of doctrinal compromise.



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### *Here We Stand - Cont'd*

The so-called “mainline” Protestant churches – the most direct institutional heirs of the Reformation – abandoned the faith. Then their members abandoned the churches.

A look across the landscape of American popular religion is equally disheartening. Prosperity theology and a false gospel devoid of Christ and his cross spread like an infection. The great American heresy – pragmatism – is always close at hand.

**First**, we stand for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. This means that we do not date our faith to 1517, but to Christ and the Apostles. We stand in that faith that Christ taught his Church, and continues to teach through the Holy Scriptures. This is the faith that the true church has believed, confessed, and taught from the time of the New Testament until today.

**Second**, we stand for the faith reaffirmed in the Reformation. The Solas are central to this reaffirmation. Each was controversial in the sixteenth century – controversial enough to divide Christendom – and each is even more controversial today.

*Faith alone* puts the lie to every pretense of the sinner’s contribution to the salvation achieved and accomplished by Christ.

*Grace alone* reminds the church that the mercy of God is the solitary explanation for the salvation of even a single sinner.

*Christ alone* points to the atonement accomplished through the singular and sufficient obedience of Christ in his sinless life, his substitutionary death on the cross, and his resurrection by the Father on the third day. We are saved by the merits of Christ, alone.

*Scripture alone* affirms the sole, final authority of the written Word of God. As B. B. Warfield would explain a century ago, this means embracing the “Church Doctrine of Scripture,” including all of its perfections. We take our stand on the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible, its infallibility, inerrancy, sufficiency, and final authority. The Bible is central to our entire curriculum.

*To the glory of God alone* means that the church seeks no glory for itself, but exults in the infinite glory of God alone. The very “theology of glory” that Luther warned against is what millions of people see in any church that seeks to display its own glory.

**Third**, we stand on preaching as the first mark of the church. On this the Reformers were completely agreed. The first mark of the true church is the preaching of the Word of God. Where the Word of God is not rightly preached, there is no church. It’s just that simple.

This means that our first responsibility is to teach those who will preach the Word of God to local churches. That is incredibly clarifying. We don’t have to wake up every morning trying to remember what we are supposed to do, or why Southern Seminary exists. While so many other seminaries are redefining their purpose away from the pastorate, we maintain that first priority of grounding preachers in the Bible and in theological studies in order that they will be faithful preachers and pastors of the flock of God.



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### *Here We Stand - Cont'd*

**Fourth**, we stand on confessional fidelity as our hallmark. The Reformers understood what the church has learned through centuries of preaching and teaching, praying and singing: The faith once delivered to the saints must be expressed and defined and defended in confessional form. The necessity of creeds and confessions is learned anew, often painfully, by every generation of Christians. We must define what we believe and what we teach, and what we expect any professor at Southern Seminary and Boyce College to teach. Every professor must gladly agree to teach “in accordance with and not contrary to” the Abstract of Principles and the Baptist Faith and Message. We have learned over the last three decades just how important this commitment truly is. That is a lesson that must never be lost.

**Fifth**, we stand for the totality of the Christian worldview. At Boyce College and Southern Seminary, we affirm what the Reformers also affirmed – that the Bible presents a comprehensive view of the world. The Reformers would not have known the word worldview, but they taught it nonetheless. The Reformation would give birth to revolutions in politics, science, and culture and would influence the development of every arena of human knowledge and civilization. This is no accident. Nor is it accidental that this school seeks to equip a rising generation with the most crucial skills in worldview analysis and thinking.

**Sixth**, we stand on the Great Commission. This is the mandate to make Christ known among the nations. To know Christ is to obey his commandments, and this means taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Christ alone reminds us of the truth that the gospel of Christ is the only saving message, and it is our responsibility to preach the gospel to the nations. There are now more students preparing for missions through Southern Seminary and Boyce College than in any previous generation.

**Seventh**, we stand on the centrality of the local church in the purposes of God. Our great privilege is to serve the church – and that means local churches. We hold the highest academic accreditations known to higher education in America, but our ultimate accreditation comes from the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as is affirmed in the confidence that those congregations place in us and in our graduates.

**Eighth**, we stand for a continuing reformation. Christ’s church will remain in need of a continuing reformation until He comes. But here we must be very careful. More liberal churches claim to embrace the Reformation call of *Semper Reformanda* – as the church always being reformed. This can open the door to doctrinal revisionism and liberalism in the name of reformation. The true churches of the Reformation, however, understood that the right call was for a church always reformed by the Word of God.

That is the Reformation we celebrate, and that is the continuing reformation we seek and serve. Here, we take our stand. We cannot do otherwise. God help us. ~ *Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.*



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### *Birthday and Anniversary Corner - November 2017*

#### Birthdays

*Brenda A. (1)*      *LeAnn M. (10)*  
*Diana K. (3)*      *Audrey D. (11)*  
*April F. (5)*      *Luke P. (15)*  
*LeAnn M. (10)*    *Walt L. (20)*

#### Anniversaries

*Gene and Brenda A. (22)*  
*Marlin and Sadie H. (22)*  
*Francis and Phyllis C. (24)*



Please welcome our new covenant members Daniel and Diana Kim



This past Saturday (November 4th) the ladies of West Suffolk had a baby shower for April Fox at the home of the McPhatters. As you can see there was plenty of celebration. April is expecting a girl in late November (22nd).



**West Suffolk Leadership**

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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.

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or its leadership.