



Volume 2, Issue 11

# *West Suffolk Epistle*

## *West Suffolk Baptist Church*

*“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”*



November 2015

*Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America*

## *What is Reformation Day?*

A single event on a single day changed the world. It was October 31, 1517. Brother Martin, a monk and a scholar, had struggled for years with his church, the church in Rome. He had been greatly disturbed by an unprecedented indulgence sale. The story has all the makings of a Hollywood blockbuster. Let's meet the cast.

First, there is the young bishop—too young by church laws—Albert of Mainz. Not only was he bishop over two bishoprics, he desired an additional archbishopric over Mainz. This too was against church laws. So Albert appealed to the Pope in Rome, Leo X. From the De Medici family, Leo X greedily allowed his tastes to exceed his financial resources. So enter the artists and sculptors, Raphael and Michelangelo.

When Albert of Mainz appealed for a papal dispensation, Leo X was ready to deal. Albert, with the papal blessing, would sell indulgences for past, present, and future sins. All of this sickened the monk, Martin Luther. Can we buy our way into heaven? Luther had to speak out.

But why October 31? November 1 held a special place in the church calendar as All Soul's Day. On November 1, 1517, a massive exhibit of newly acquired relics would be on display at Wittenberg, Luther's home city. Pilgrims would come from all over, **genuflect** (kneel or show excessive respect) before the relics, and take hundreds, if not thousands, of years off time in purgatory. Luther's soul grew even more vexed. None of this seemed right.

Martin Luther, a scholar, took quill in hand, dipped it in his inkwell and penned his 95 Theses on October 31, 1517. These were intended to spark a debate, to stir some soul-searching among his fellow brothers in the church. The 95 Theses sparked far more than a debate. The 95 Theses also revealed the church was far beyond rehabilitation. It needed a reformation. The church, and the world, would never be the same.

One of Luther's 95 Theses simply declares, "The Church's true treasure is the gospel of Jesus Christ." That alone is the meaning of Reformation Day. The church had lost sight of the gospel because it had long ago papered over the pages of God's Word with layer upon layer of tradition. Tradition always brings about systems of works, of earning your way back to God. It was true of the Pharisees, and it was true of medieval Roman Catholicism. Didn't Christ Himself say, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light?" Reformation Day celebrates the joyful beauty of the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is Reformation Day? It is the day the light of the gospel broke forth out of darkness. It was the day that began the Protestant Reformation. It was a day that led to Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and many other Reformers helping the church find its way back to God's Word as the only authority for faith and life and leading the church back to the glorious doctrines of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.



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### *What is Reformation Day? - Continued*

It kindled the fires of missionary endeavors, it led to hymn writing and congregational singing, and it led to the centrality of the sermon and preaching for the people of God. It is the celebration of a theological, ecclesiastical, and cultural transformation.

So we celebrate Reformation Day. This day reminds us to be thankful for our past and to the Monk turned Reformer. What's more, this day reminds us of our duty, our obligation, to keep the light of the gospel at the center of all we do. ~ *Stephen J. Nichols - President of Reformation College and Chief Academic Officer for Ligonier Ministries*

### *Sovereign Grace in the Wilderness*

Unhindered by man and unrestricted by Satan, the sovereign grace of God irresistibly overcomes every obstacle to the salvation of His chosen ones. The conditions in the lives of the elect do not have to be just right in order for God to bring them to Himself. Whether it is during the high times of a great reformation and revival or the low times of a spiritual famine in the land, whether in a king's palace or a pauper's prison, in a cosmopolitan culture or in a remote outpost, the sovereign grace of God is perfectly capable of irresistibly drawing those whom He has chosen to eternal life. No matter what seemingly impossible obstacle looms on the horizon, be it satanic forces or human hardness of heart, God's grace is greater still.

Perhaps nowhere was this irrepressible triumph of sovereign grace more clearly seen than in the dark days of the wilderness experience of Israel under the leadership of Moses. In the desert, Israel was confronted with many difficulties and challenges. In most of these tests, she failed miserably. The Israelites whined and complained against God, even in the face of His gracious guidance. They saw God's abundant provision, yet fell repeatedly into spiritual apostasy and sexual orgies. When they stood on the precipice of entering the Promised Land, they tragically fell back in rank unbelief and rebellion. For forty years, they wandered aimlessly in the barren wilderness until an entire generation died there. Never did God face greater obstacles to the fulfillment of His plan of salvation.

Yet even in these difficult straits, God's sovereign grace was promised and provided to those for whom it was intended. Despite the foul stench of unbelief and the swirling apostasy of Israel in the wilderness, the saving grace of God blew as a life-giving breath of fresh air. There, on the back side of the desert, the truth of God's sovereignty was clearly heard from heaven and unmistakably seen upon earth. Like a radiant star on the darkest night, God's sovereign grace shone brightly in the wilderness. This is the triumphant truth that Moses penned in the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy. ~ *Dr. Steven J. Lawson*



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## *Does James 2:24 Deny Justification by Faith Alone?*

This question is not critical only today, but it was in the eye of the storm we call the Protestant Reformation that swept through and divided the Christian church in the sixteenth century. Martin Luther declared his position: Justification is by faith alone, our works add nothing to our justification whatsoever, and we have no merit to offer God that in any way enhances our justification. This created the worst schism in the history of Christendom.

In refusing to accept Luther's view, the Roman Catholic Church excommunicated him, then responded to the outbreak of the Protestant movement with a major church council, the Council of Trent, which was part of the so-called Counter-Reformation and took place in the middle of the sixteenth century. The sixth session of Trent, at which the canons and decrees on justification and faith were spelled out, specifically appealed to James 2:24 to rebuke the Protestants who said that they were justified by faith alone: "You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone." How could James say it any more clearly? It would seem that that text would blow Luther out of the water forever.

Of course, Martin Luther was very much aware that this verse was in the book of James. Luther was reading Romans, where Paul makes it very clear that it's not through the works of the law that any man is justified and that we are justified by faith and only through faith. What do we have here? Some scholars say we have an irreconcilable conflict between Paul and James, that James was written after Paul, and James tried to correct Paul. Others say that Paul wrote Romans after James and he was trying to correct James.

I'm convinced that we don't really have a conflict here. What James is saying is this: If a person says he has faith, but he gives no outward evidence of that faith through righteous works, his faith will not justify him. Martin Luther, John Calvin, or John Knox would absolutely agree with James. We are not saved by a profession of faith or by a claim to faith. That faith has to be genuine before the merit of Christ will be imputed to anybody. You can't just say you have faith. True faith will absolutely and necessarily yield the fruits of obedience and the works of righteousness. Luther was saying that those works don't add to that person's justification at the judgment seat of God. But they do justify his claim to faith before the eyes of man. James is saying, not that a man is justified before God by his works, but that his claim to faith is shown to be genuine as he demonstrates the evidence of that claim of faith through his works. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*

## *Courage and Compassion*

Homosexual sin is a grievous and heinous sin. While it is indeed true that all sexual immorality is sin—adultery, fornication, pornography—homosexual sin is different. It is a more heinous and grievous sin because, as the Word of God makes clear, homosexual sin is contrary to nature (Rom. 1:26). Homosexual sin strikes against God's created order in every way and mocks God's design for procreation, thus making homosexuality logically self-defeating. Those who suggest the Bible is not clear about homosexual sin have never read the Bible or have not been given the ears to hear what the Bible plainly teaches.



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### *Courage and Compassion - Continued*

The Bible is clear, so we must be clear. We cannot and must not waver in the face of seemingly overwhelming opposition. Although the world is changing, the Word of God is not. We must stand our ground on the unchanging Word of God in the midst of an ever-changing culture. For even if the whole world says homosexuality is acceptable, we must stand our ground on the authority of God's Word and insist that it is in fact unacceptable and unconscionable. We must speak the truth even if it means persecution and imprisonment. We must insist that homosexual sin is wrong, and like all sins, sexual or otherwise, it is deserving of God's righteous wrath and condemnation.

Make no mistake, this is not hate speech; it is love speech. We speak of the sinfulness of homosexual sin, sexual sin, and all sin not out of hate, but out of love. In fact, the most hateful thing we could do is not call sin what God calls sin. That would certainly be the easier path for us, but it is not the path of truth that leads to forgiveness and freedom. We love homosexuals just as we love adulterers and all sinners, which is precisely why we must speak the truth in love to them, just as we need the truth spoken in love to us about our own sins. The Bible calls us to be righteously vexed by sin and to hate sin—our sin and the sins of the world. The Bible also calls us to love sinners and to pray that they would repent of their sins and trust Jesus Christ, who is the Savior of repentant sinners. If only more Christians demonstrated Christian love as they should by praying for the sexually immoral of this world, by calling sin what God calls sin, and by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to the end that the sexually immoral might know their desperate need to repent and that, by the grace of God, they might cling to Christ and His righteousness. Then homosexuals might know how much we Christians love them. For we cannot love without speaking the truth, and we must not speak the truth without love. We must have compassion and courage as we live *coram Deo*, before the face of God, proclaiming His truth and His gospel to our homosexual neighbors, sexually immoral neighbors, and unrepentant, unbelieving neighbors, just as we preach the gospel to ourselves. ~ *Burk Parsons - Editor of Table Talk Magazine and Co-Pastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Fla.*

### *You Shall Not Take the Lord's Name in Vain*

The ethic of Jesus is the ethic of the Ten Commandments. He taught His people to live by that rule, and He did so Himself. He is the very embodiment of obedience to God; nowhere are the Ten Commandments personified and manifested in their fullness as they are in the life of Jesus.

As the law of God requires of us not to take His name in vain, so Jesus teaches us to pray, "Hallowed be your name" (Matthew 6:9). Prayer expresses our desire to keep the third commandment. It also expresses our need for the grace of God to that end. Prayer is a recognition that what God requires of us, He also provides for us.

In Scripture, God's name is a means of His self-revelation. As early as Genesis 4:26, there is a reference to people's calling on the name of the Lord—not because God had told them His covenant name, but because He had spoken and revealed Himself.





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### *You Shall Not Take the Lord's Name in Vain - Continued*

Later, however, God did make His name known. He revealed Himself to Moses as the great “**I AM**” (Exodus 3:14) and declared that He had raised up Pharaoh so that His name—the revelation of His justice and power—would be proclaimed throughout the earth (Exodus 9:16). Later, the temple was built “for the name of the LORD” (1 Kings 3:2; 8:17), and that name became the object of Israel’s worship as they praised the name of God in song (Psalm 69:30; 122:4).

So important is the name of God that it is guarded solemnly in the Ten Commandments by a prohibition on taking His name in vain (Exodus 20:7). Violation of this law is a capital offense: “Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 24:16). Leviticus cites a variety of examples of what such misuse of God’s name includes: offering children to Molech (18:21), swearing falsely (19:12), and priests’ shaving the edge of their beards (21:5–6). The sheer variety of infringements of the command shows that taking the Lord’s name in vain involves not merely speaking it badly, but includes living it wrongly.

It was the name of the Lord that was to be put “upon” the people of Israel, through the Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6:24–27). The name was not merely a title or an epithet, but it included the character and eminence of God revealed for the salvation and sanctification of His people. By the name of God they are saved, and by the name of God they are set apart.

These themes are evident in the life and work of Jesus. He had come to earth for us and for our salvation in the name of the Father (John 5:43; 10:25). He lived to glorify the name of God (12:28; 17:4) and to reveal it (17:6). In the name of God He had preserved His people, and in that same name they would be kept forever (17:11–12). The name of God, upon His people through baptism (Matthew 28:19), would be the name by which the Holy Spirit would come to comfort them and hear their prayers (John 14:26; 16:23). It is the name of God that guarantees eternal life to all who believe (20:31).

John Calvin is correct, therefore, when he comments on the third commandment that “it becomes us to regulate our minds and our tongues, so as never to think or speak of God and his mysteries without reverence and great soberness, and never, in estimating his works, to have any feeling toward him but one of deep veneration” (Institutes 2.8.22). That sense of veneration in connection with God’s name is what characterizes a life of holiness and a worship that is genuine. Both in our service and in our worship, we are to think on the things of God with adoration and reverence, knowing that the fact that God has revealed Himself to us by name is itself a great act of grace.

In his study of the Ten Commandments, the famous Puritan Thomas Watson cites twelve ways in which we take God’s name in vain. Among them are using God’s name irreverently, professing His name but not living according to our profession, worshiping Him externally but not in heart, misusing His Word, falsifying our promises, and speaking without care for the honor of God. It is a sobering analysis, intended not to micromanage our behavior but to show us how the third commandment permeates the whole of life.



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### *You Shall Not Take the Lord's Name in Vain - Continued*

By naming Himself, God not only discloses who He is, but He does so in such a way that we might know Him personally. To live by the terms of the third commandment is to recognize and confess that God deserves the highest honor; that He has singled us out by putting His name on us; that we would be entirely lost were it not that for the sake of His name He keeps and protects us; and that He calls us to live after the example of Jesus, glorifying God on earth. We are the bearers of the name of God; may all our conduct show it. ~ **Dr. Iain D. Campbell** - Senior minister of Point Free Church, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland on the Isle of Lewis

### *Consider Your Opponent*

I became convinced of the truth of Reformed theology while attending Dallas Theological Seminary — the flagship institution of dispensational theology. Some of my fellow students accused me of being apostate when they discovered that I had rejected dispensationalism. Having donned my new five-point Calvinist uniform, I assumed an attitude that was patronizing and condescending toward those who remained committed to dispensationalism. Mockery became a chief weapon in my arsenal. Upon my arrival at Reformed Theological Seminary, I landed right in the middle of debates between students on topics that were unfamiliar to me — debates about theonomy, apologetic methodology, and more — and not frequent at Dallas. I was not able to contribute much to those discussions, but I did continue my mockery of dispensationalists.

I was in what Michael Horton refers to as the “*cage stage*” — that period of time during which a new convert to Reformed theology should be locked up in a cage for his own good and the good of others around him. During the cage stage, the novice Reformed convert is often angry that the doctrines of grace were not taught to him sooner. He can be particularly vitriolic toward the tradition from which he came, and woe to those who remain in that tradition (whether dispensationalism or something else). They are often viewed as intellectually inferior for not being able to see the plain truth of Scripture that the mega-mind Calvinist sees. They become the butt of jokes and the target of sarcasm and derision. The level of arrogance and pride that one can reach during the cage stage is mind-boggling to comprehend and ugly to behold.

I do not know whether John Newton went through anything comparable to a “cage stage” after he came to Christ. I do know that his letter “On Controversy” helped me to see what I had been doing. Newton wrote this letter to a fellow minister who was planning to take up the pen against another minister he believed to be in error. This is sometimes necessary, but Newton offers some wise advice on how to do it. In his letter, he advises his friend to think about three things: his opponent, his audience, and himself. In this article, we will consider how we are to think about our opponents in controversy.



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### *Consider Your Opponent - Continued*

Newton begins this section of his letter with some very wise advice. He writes:

*As to your opponent, I wish that before you set pen to paper against him, and during the whole time you are preparing your answer, you may commend him by earnest prayer to the Lord's teaching and blessing. This practice will have a direct tendency to conciliate your heart to love and pity him; and such a disposition will have a good influence upon every page you write.*

Have you ever thought about praying for those with whom you are engaged in any kind of controversy? It seems obvious, but we tend to get so caught up in the heat of battle that we easily forget to do this. We view our theological opponent the way a soldier views an enemy combatant — as someone to be destroyed before he destroys us. Thus, theological debate in Calvinist circles sometimes degenerates into the verbal equivalent of the World Wrestling Federation. Were we to pray for those with whom we engage in controversy, we would be less inclined to anger and malice toward them.

*Newton then explains that we need to think about whether our opponent in controversy is a believer or not.*

*If you account him a believer, though greatly mistaken in the subject of debate between you, the words of David to Joab concerning Absalom, are very applicable: "Deal gently with him for my sake." The Lord loves him and bears with him; therefore you must not despise him, or treat him harshly. The Lord bears with you likewise, and expects that you should show tenderness to others, from a sense of the much forgiveness you need yourself. In a little while you will meet in heaven; he will then be dearer to you than the nearest friend you have upon earth is to you now. Anticipate that period in your thoughts; and though you may find it necessary to oppose his errors, view him personally as a kindred soul, with whom you are to be happy in Christ forever.*

How often we forget this. How often we forget to treat brothers in Christ as brothers in Christ — those whom the Father loves and those with whom we will share eternity in the new heaven and earth.

On the other hand, if we view our opponent as an unbeliever, we should be reminded that "there but for the grace of God go I." God could have opened his eyes rather than ours. We must remain humble. We must remember that we, too, were alienated from God. We, too, were enemies of the Lord. Our prayer in this case should be for his conversion, and we have to be careful that we do not do anything that places unnecessary stumbling blocks in his way. We should speak or act in the hope that our words will be used by God to bring this person to faith and repentance.

Newton's letter encourages us to treat our opponents in controversy as we would wish to be treated, and if there is one thing we all dislike, it is being misrepresented or slandered. We must, therefore, make every effort to represent accurately the views of our opponents. While Newton does not explicitly deal with this issue, it is implied in his words.



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## *Consider Your Opponent - Continued*

The ninth commandment forbids us to harm our neighbor through lies (Exodus 20:16). Those who follow Christ are not to bear false witness against other people — theological opponents or otherwise (Exodus 23:1, 7; Leviticus 19:11, 14, 16). To misrepresent an opponent's position in the midst of theological controversy is to slander that person, and slander is an example of the evil use of words and language (James 4:11).

To misrepresent the views of those with whom we disagree is not only dishonest, it is pointless. We must strive to represent the views of our opponents honestly. Beating up a straw man is a pointless exercise and makes us look rather silly in the process. One cannot convince an opponent of the error of his view if one is arguing against a view this opponent does not hold.

Let us strive, then, in controversy to remember our opponent. Let us remember to pray for him, to deal with him gently, and to deal with him with the highest standards of honesty. ~ **Dr. Keith A. Mathison - Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformation Bible College in Sanford, Fla.**

## *A Child's (Mis)understanding*

Like many, I have watched my fair share of films over the years, and the vast majority have been quite forgettable. There are a small number that I enjoyed enough to purchase in order to watch them again. But there are very, very few that were so powerful in one way or another that they have stayed with me years after seeing them. (I am still not sure I will ever forgive Walt Disney for the trauma inflicted by Old Yeller.)

When I think about the films I've seen as an adult that have really stayed with me, three come to mind. One is *The Straight Story*, a film based on the true story of seventy-three-year-old Alvin Straight, who drove his riding lawnmower 240 miles from Iowa to Wisconsin to visit his brother, who had recently suffered a stroke. The look on his brother's face when he realizes what Alvin has done is deeply moving.

Two foreign-language films also fall into this category. The first, *Sophie Scholl*, is a German film based on the true story of a teenage girl who was arrested by the Gestapo for distributing anti-Nazi leaflets during WWII. Again, the final scene is powerful, but the questions this movie makes you ask about yourself and what you would have done in that situation are what stay with you long after the credits roll.

The second foreign-language film that I have never been able to forget is *Ponette*, a French film about a four-year-old girl attempting to deal with the death of her mother. *Ponette* is not an easy film to watch. There are few things more heart-wrenching than the grief of a young child, and the performance of the young actress portraying *Ponette* is truly nothing short of amazing. The most fascinating aspect of the film for me, however, had to do with the questions it raised about the way young children interpret (and misinterpret) the words of adults.





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## *A Child's (Mis)understanding - Continued*

In the film, Ponette's father is an atheist, and he tells her very bluntly that her mother is gone. While dealing with his own grief, he leaves his child with her aunt and uncle, who are devout Roman Catholics. In an attempt to console Ponette, her aunt tells her the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. In her four-year-old mind, Ponette takes this to mean that if she waits a few days, her mother will come back to her. Her aunt and uncle do not realize how Ponette has misunderstood them and, therefore, never really clarify things for her. Neither do they realize how devastated she is when her expectation fails to be realized. The advice Ponette's four-year-old friends give her throughout the remainder of the film puts her through an emotional wringer, but misunderstanding them is far less serious than misunderstanding the relevance of Christ's resurrection to her situation.

As Christians, we are called to teach our children. But how often do we simply take for granted that they have comprehended the meaning of our words? And do we consider the damage that can be done if they misinterpret us without our realizing it? Very young children are in the process of learning the basic rules of grammar through imitation and use. Their vocabulary is also growing—sometimes by inventing their own words. (My daughter came up with the word “foosies” for “flowers” when she was very young.) But young children often make mistakes in their use of the language as they learn it, and they do not always automatically grasp the proper denotations or connotations of every word and phrase they hear.

Confusing the meaning of the words restaurant and restroom as a child, while potentially embarrassing, is one thing. However, confusing the meaning of the words of Scripture or the basics of Christian theology is quite another. Anyone who teaches young children has to stop and think about the words he uses when communicating to them. We should not assume that the thoughts in our minds are effectively communicated without distortion to the minds of the children. It is vitally important to ask children what they have understood us to say.

What do they hear you, your pastors, or their Sunday school teachers saying about God when they hear talk about “the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit”? What do they hear us saying when we say we believe in Jesus Christ, God's “only begotten Son”? What do they hear if we use the words “Holy Ghost”? Do they understand what is being said when we use words like heaven, faith, soul, or salvation? We can only find out by asking them.

If they do require further explanation, the next question is this: Are we equipped to do the explaining? Can we clarify the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, to a young child? It is a self-evident truth that we cannot teach what we do not know, and we cannot explain what we do not ourselves understand. The study of Scripture and theology is simply not a luxury for those entrusted with children. It is a necessity. ~ **Dr. Keith A. Mathison - Professor of Systematic Theology at Reformation Bible College in Sanford, Fla.**



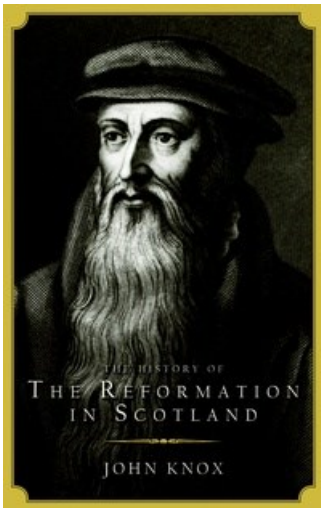
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## *Book Reviews*

### *The History of the Reformation in Scotland (Paperback)*

*John Knox*

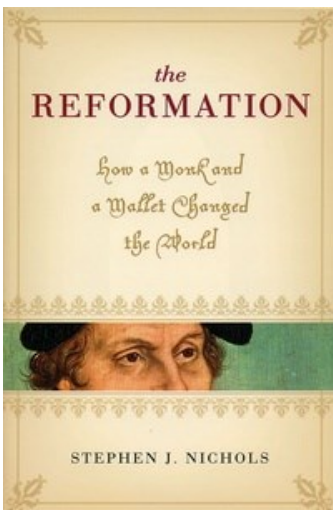


Few figures have dominated the character of a nation's life as John Knox has influenced the history of Scotland. In this remarkable work, originally dictated to his secretaries between 1559 and 1571, John Knox tells the story of his times and the progress of the Reformation in Scotland. These pages breathe 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 (Paperback)*

*Stephen Nichols*



Mention history and some might struggle to stifle a yawn. But when presented as a narrative it can often be compelling reading. Stephen J. Nichols takes a key period in time, the Reformation, and presents its major players in a fresh way. From Martin Luther, a simple monk who wielded the mallet, to kings and queens, this book goes behind the scenes to uncover the human side of these larger-than-life Reformers. Along the way readers meet Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, Kings Henry VIII and Edward VI, Lady Jane Grey, Anne Bradstreet, and many others.

For those wanting to see history in its context, Nichols also provides a sampling of primary source materials. It is an engaging read that will remind readers of the foundational truths that can never be taken for granted by the church in any age. Includes numerous illustrations.



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### *The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*

#### *The Gospel and it's Gracious Extent - Chapter 20*

1. As the covenant of works was broken by sin and was unable to confer life, God was pleased to promise Christ, the seed of the woman, as the means of calling the elect and bringing to life within them faith and repentance. In this promise the substance of the Gospel was revealed as the effectual means for the conversion and salvation of sinners.
2. This promise of Christ and of salvation by him, is revealed in the Word of God alone. Neither the works of creation and providence, nor the light of nature, reveal Christ or grace through him, not even in a general or obscure way. How much less, therefore, can people who are devoid of the revelation of Christ by the promise or the Gospel, be enabled [by the light of nature] to attain to saving faith or repentance.
3. The revelation of the Gospel to sinners has been given at various times and in a variety of places, together with the promises and precepts concerning the obedience required by it. As to the nations and persons to whom it is granted, this is solely according to the sovereign will and good pleasure of God. It has never been granted to them by virtue of their promising to improve their natural abilities on the grounds of common light received without the Gospel—no one has ever made such a promise, nor can anyone do so. Therefore, in all ages, the preaching of the Gospel has been granted to persons and nations, whether to a great extent or limited extent, in greatly varying measures, according to the counsel of the will of God.
4. The Gospel is the only external means of revealing Christ and saving grace, and as such is totally sufficient for this purpose. Yet if people who are dead in trespasses are to be born again, brought to life or regenerated, an effectual, irresistible work of the Holy Spirit upon every part of the soul is necessary to produce in them a new spiritual life. Without this no other means will bring about their conversion to God.



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*Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America*

### *Birthday and Anniversary Corner - November 2015*

#### **Birthdays**

*Brenda Arthur - November 1*  
*April Fox - November 5*  
*LeAnn McPhatter - November 10*  
*Luke Purser - November 15*  
*Walt Lawrence - November 20*

#### **Anniversaries**

*Gene and Brenda Arthur - November 22*  
*Marlin and Sadie Halsey - November 22*  
*Francis and Phyllis Carter - November 24*  
*Doug and Robyn Hall - November 24*

## *Conforming to the Image of Christ*

The obvious fact that we all sin can create an atmosphere of false security among us, leading us to accept with ease the idea that sin is so commonplace that we ought not to be too bothered by it lest we surrender our mental health to a self-deprecating neurosis. Yet in our desire to console ourselves and maintain a good self-image, we may push to the back burner the mandate of God, “Be you holy, even as I am holy.”

Evangelical Christians are most vulnerable to succumbing to this distortion. We stress the fact that our justification is by faith alone and insist that our righteousness is found in Christ alone. Though these assertions are true, it is equally true that the faith by which we are justified is a faith that brings forth fruit in our lives. The slogan of the Reformation was that we are justified by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone.

The instant true faith is present in the heart of the believer, the process of sanctification begins. Change begins at once. The Christian begins to be conformed to the image of Christ. We are becoming holy. If we are not becoming holy, then Christ is not in us and our profession of faith is empty. ~ *Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.*

### **Disclaimer**

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



West Suffolk Baptist Church

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