

# LIGHT

KINGDOM • CULTURE • MISSION



Summer 2017  
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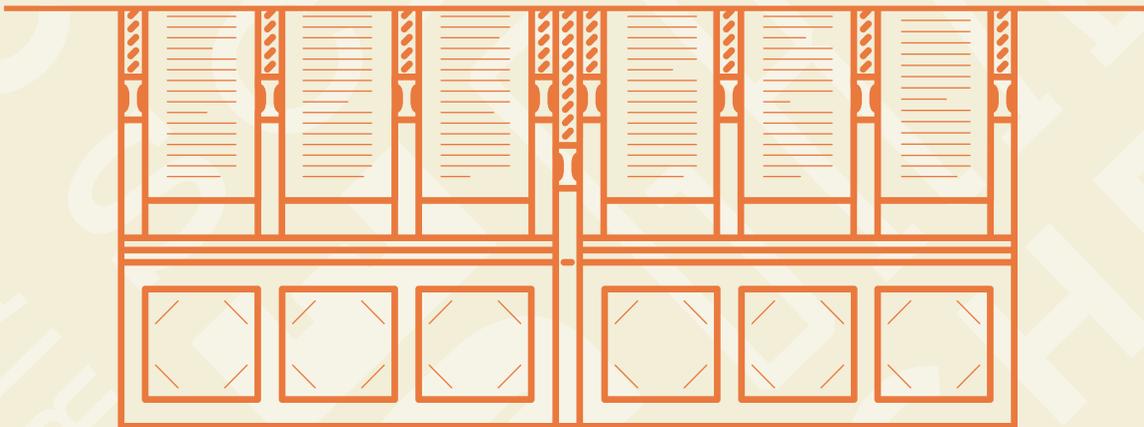
*Russell Moore on why sola Scriptura matters for our morality*

*An Interview with Robert P. George*

*Nathan Finn on Baptists and the Reformation*



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# THE REFORMATION WILL NOT BE EUTHANIZED

Russell Moore



**M**Y LONGTIME FRIEND, THE theologian Gregory Thornbury, often reminds people that Martin Luther's revolutionary message to the medieval church could be summed up in these words: "I'm not afraid of you." This is true, and, on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Reformation,

this is precisely the sort of reformation that is worth not just remembering but reviving.

The primary object of protest in the Protestant Reformation, after all, was not the Pope but purgatory. The selling of indulgences, the intercession of saints, the mediation of the priesthood, all of these were dependent on a particularly scary eschatology—the idea that one must progress—through God's purification and the prayers of those who remembered the deceased—from a precarious afterlife into the heaven promised to the righteous. Since the church held, in the medieval church's view, the keys to the kingdom of heaven, the granting of indulgences seemed coherent. And, of course, excommunication would mean more than exile from a church; it would mean exile from Jesus himself. The church was hard to reform because the people were terrified, of that which terrifies all people in every age: death and the judgment to come.

Martin Luther was not afraid of those who threatened to separate him from the love of God. In the gospel—especially Paul's epistle to the Romans—the German reformer found the freedom of a Christian, a freedom from which he could dare

to say that the church was in a Babylonian captivity. Few of us could imagine the lack of fear with which Luther stared down the church and the empire. But that fearlessness launched a global movement.

The best of the Reformation came to us with a fear of God, the sort of fear that could lead Luther to defy the Diet at Worms and Calvin to write expositions of Scripture and theology at variance with the Roman church. The fear of God, as it always does, evaporated the fear of men.

We should always reform, in our churches and in our lives, in that direction: in the direction of fear of God, conformity to Scripture and consistency with the gospel. We can come before God with clear consciences because God does not receive us based on the clarity of our consciences. He receives us on the basis of the life, death, resurrection and intercession of Christ Jesus. When we are accused by the principalities and powers, he is unaccusable—and we are joined to him not by our works but by simple, receptive faith.

WE CAN COME BEFORE GOD  
WITH CLEAR CONSCIENCES  
BECAUSE GOD DOES NOT  
RECEIVE US BASED ON THE  
CLARITY OF OUR CONSCIENCES.

The Reformation is not dead. There is more yet to be done, in reformation and renewal and revival. But the reformers would have us to remember that what's even more important than that truth is that we—the people of God—are not dead, even those who are now long past their funerals. Our God is the God of the living, and we only are alive, in this age and in the age to come, through the good news of the gospel.

As you read this issue, let's resolve together to keep that gospel clear—for a lost world around us, and for ourselves. The best way we can celebrate the Protestant Reformation is to say, armed with the gospel, to the devil: "We're not afraid of you." ★

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# LIGHT

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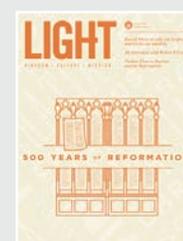
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THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS  
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*On the cover, designer Jacob Blaze illustrates the doors that Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to at All Saints' Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The 5*

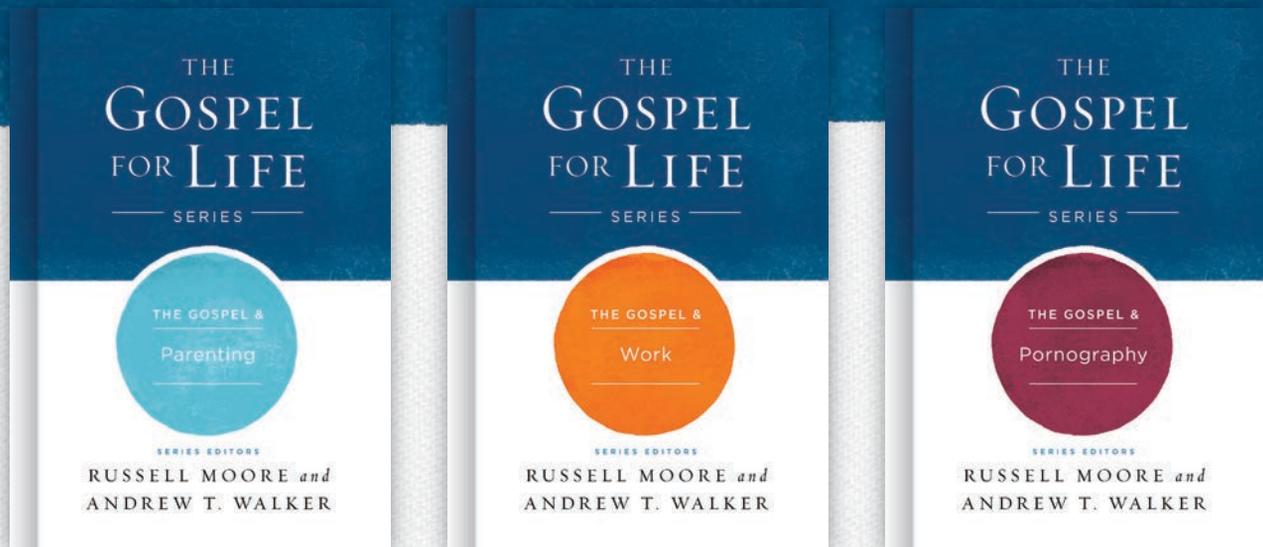
*solos in the background show the foundation of the reformation and its ongoing impact.*

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*by Russell Moore and Andrew T. Walker*

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THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS  
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# THE REFORMATION'S REMINDER FOR TODAY'S CHURCH



“DADDY, WHAT IS THE difference between a Catholic and a Baptist?”

I've read a lot of parenting books. I've attended parenting conferences. I work for an organization that creates parenting materials. And still this question from my inquisitive 12-year-old

daughter, over dinner one evening, caught me a bit off guard.

I did my best to fumble through a recap of the Reformation and then a short Baptist history, but her question has caused me to think deeply about the cataclysmic events that shook up the church five centuries ago, sparked by a series of theses posted by Martin Luther on that Wittenburg Door.

The 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation comes at an important time for the church. We live in an era of amorphous spirituality and do-it-yourself evangelicalism. Many evangelical institutions, long unmoored from the formal creeds of church history or disconnected from denominational faith statements, are having to tighten up

their commitments and rediscover what everyone assumed they believed. The Protestant Reformation reminds us that we stand for something. And our own denominational history (as illuminated well in this issue by essays from Nathan Finn and Jason Duesing) reminds us why we are Baptist. Andrew Walker reminds us that, when it comes to religious liberty, the work of the reformers was largely unfinished and that our Baptist forefathers picked up the torch to secure religious freedom for all.

As an ethics agency, we are tasked with applying the gospel of the kingdom to a shifting moral climate, which is why, more than ever, we need to understand that second *sola*. Our president, Russell Moore, offers an important piece on what it means to believe in “Scripture alone.” As a pastor, I need to understand how to apply the Word to the people I serve, which is why I'm helped by Steven Smith's powerful article on preaching in light of the Reformation.

Of course, though we remain proud Protestants and convictional Baptists, our cultural witness often makes us allies with friends on the opposite side of the Reformation. Andrew Walker's interview with Dr. Robert George sheds light on the contributions of evangelical Protestants to our co-belligerence with Roman Catholics in moral and ethical activism. Chris Castaldo, a former Catholic, helps us think through what it means to be conventionally Protestant and yet work with Catholics for the common good.

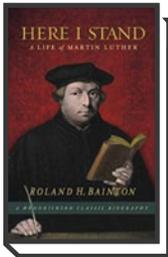
As we assess what the next 500 years of the church might look like, we hope that this issue produces a deep gratitude for the imperfect courage of the men who challenged the errant theology of the institutional religious system, but more importantly a deeper faith in Christ, the true and perfect Head of the church.

—DANIEL DARLING

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION  
REMINDS US THAT WE STAND  
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DENOMINATIONAL HISTORY  
REMINDS US WHY WE ARE BAPTIST.

# BOOK REVIEWS

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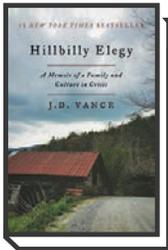


## Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther

by *ROLAND H. BAINTON*

I recently read this classic biography of Martin Luther. Roland Bainton approaches his subject without either hagiography or agenda, as all good biographers do. This book is both readable and comprehensive, offering a portrait of the flawed giant. Reading this book left three marks on my soul: a renewed passion for the gospel, an appreciation for intentional discipleship in the home, and a rekindled awe in the power of God to use men like Luther to purify his church and spread the fame of his name around the world. *-DD*

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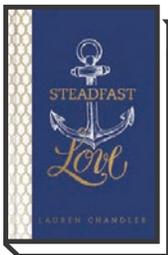


## Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis

by *J.D. VANCE*

J.D. Vance grew up in Ohio as a second generation transplant from rural Kentucky and describes his memoir as a look into a culture in crisis. His is a tale of the American dream—pursuing a better life out of difficult and messy circumstances that often seem inescapable. Reading *Hillbilly Elegy* reminded me of Jesus' command to love our neighbor. Seeing one another is the first step toward carrying each other's burdens. Vance's work has helped me grasp this and allowed me to begin seeing my own neighbors more clearly. *-JP*

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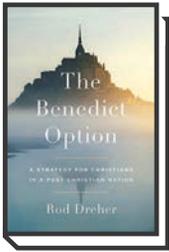


## Steadfast Love: The Response of God to the Cries of our Heart

by *LAUREN CHANDLER*

*Steadfast Love* is a testimony of suffering yet rejoicing in the midst of terminal illness. Chandler shares how the Lord strengthened her faith during and after her husband's brain cancer diagnosis. Throughout each chapter, the reader digs into a portion of Psalm 107 to see how to apply the Bible to her own suffering. I finished this book with a deeper understanding of how the Lord mercifully uses hard circumstances "to bring about repentance and reconciliation—for our good and His glory." (*Note: This book now has an accompanying Bible study.*) *-AH*

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# BOOK REVIEW: THE BENEDICT OPTION

Samuel James

**R**OD DREHER'S *The Benedict Option* is perhaps best described by its own subtitle: *A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*. Taken individually, every word of that phrase helps flesh out what exactly the Benedict Option is—an intentional “strategy,” not merely for theoretical debate but for actual change. It’s a strategy for Christians, since the Benedict Option is about preserving the faith and practice of traditional Christianity. And it’s a strategy for Christians in a post-Christian world, which, according to Dreher, means we are living in a cultural moment that is actively hostile to many fundamental tenets of the faith.

Dreher begins the book taking on each of these topics in reverse order. First, he argues that we really have arrived at a post-Christian moment in American (and, really, Western) history. Legal transformations (such as same-sex marriage) have combined with cultural transformations (such as the omnipresence of pornography and gender ideology) to create an American culture that increasingly sees the assumptions of historic Christian belief as threats to the public square.

Christians then, Dreher argues, have both an opportunity and obligation. We have an opportunity to relinquish the fantasy of cultural and political power and embrace our spiritual identity as exiles and strangers. We also have an obligation to embrace simple lives of spiritual discipline, and build faithful communities that function less as battleships in a failing culture war but as arks that can withstand the great floods of change. “If we are going to be for the world as Christ meant for us to be,” Dreher writes, “we are going to have to spend more time away from the world . . . We cannot give the world what we do not have.”

That gets at the heart of the Benedict Option. First and foremost, Dreher calls for believers to embrace the lessons of spiritual discipline, attentiveness and simplicity that characterize the lives of Benedictine monks. Dreher makes it clear that he’s not arguing that all Christians flee to the monastery.

On the contrary, the Benedict Option is about what can happen when ordinary believers take seriously the demands of the gospel and the challenges of the times. This means that everyday working, marrying and churchgoing Christians can and should orient their lives not around better careers or better politics, but around the gospel, the church and the local community. This, Dreher says, is what will survive the changing cultural tide: “The best witness Christians can offer to post-Christian America is simply to be the church.”

*The Benedict Option* is a compelling, thoughtful, and deeply theological book for American Christians. While evangelical believers will probably not agree with all of Dreher’s conclusions or suggestions, many will find his book consonant with

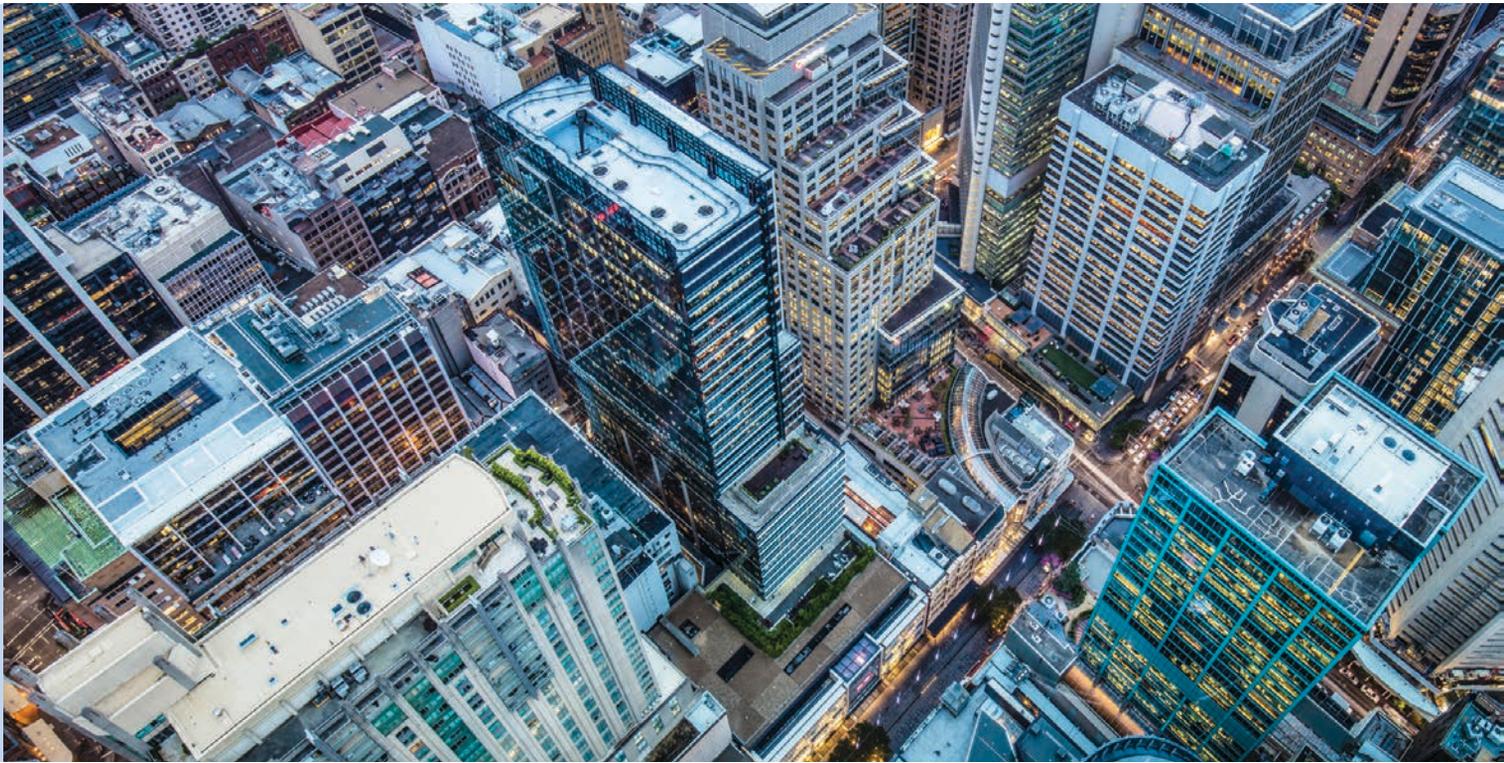
WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO RELINQUISH THE  
FANTASY OF CULTURAL AND POLITICAL POWER  
AND EMBRACE OUR SPIRITUAL IDENTITY AS  
EXILES AND STRANGERS.

the New Testament’s teaching on quiet and ordinary faithfulness to Christ (1 Thess. 4:11). In fact, the best thing that can be said for *The Benedict Option* is how much of it sounds, not new or innovative, but old and timeless.

It may sound radical to speak of a “strategy” for a “post-Christian” culture. But as believers in a kingdom that is both here and yet to come, we’ve been here before. The gospel of the crucified and resurrected King has always been strange; we just haven’t always noticed. *The Benedict Option* serves as a valuable reminder. ★

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SAMUEL JAMES serves as communications specialist in the Office of the President at The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.



# THE CULTURE AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

*Hunter Baker, J.D., Ph.D.*

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**IF YOU LOOK AT** “culture,” you will see the root word “cult” contained within it. That should not cause you to think about bizarre religious groups on the fringes of society, but rather should help you to see that religion is at the core of communities and nations. Our beliefs make up a large part of who we are.

Unsurprisingly, there tends to be a dominant faith in almost any culture. The adherents of that faith do not like to

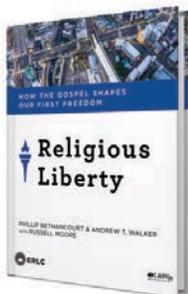
be reminded that there are others who may not share their views. Peter Berger, a sociologist, noted that societies try to create a sacred canopy that reinforces fundamental beliefs shared by the group. One of the

most difficult problems to deal with in any culture is to figure out how much freedom we give others not to share a vision of the good (or of God, for that matter). It can be physically unpleasant to be confronted by dissent.

For that reason, we sometimes react negatively (and even coercively) toward dissenters.<sup>1</sup>

The United States (and Baptists) emerged as leaders in solving that fundamental problem. Thanks to increasing pluralism, distance from the established churches of Europe, Baptist theology, and new ideological ideas about liberty, the United States developed a strong concept of religious liberty. This freedom to believe, to choose one's church, and to live out a life of integrity based on one's beliefs proved to be immensely attractive. Many of the immigrants who flooded into the young American nation during the past two centuries came so that they might experience religious liberty.

But the story is not nearly as smooth as it sounds in a brief summary. Even in the United States, the issue of religious liberty has been a herky-jerky one. When all have liberty to believe, others will be disturbed by the lack of conformity to dominant modes of worship, membership, thought, and living. For that reason, we have sometimes treated members of different religious groups badly. Baptists were persecuted at one point. Jews have been ostracized and marginalized. Catholics found tremendous resistance from



Protestants at various points in history. But over time, religious liberty has developed into a durable and treasured American value. At our best, Christians have learned that we can accommodate the beliefs of those who disagree, such as the Amish families who wanted to remove their children from formal schooling at an earlier age than most state laws require. The United States Supreme Court protected them.<sup>2</sup>

Today, American society has changed in ways that put the beliefs of many Christians at odds with the policies of national, state, and local governments. Gay marriage is a prime example. Christians often find that they cannot compromise on a fundamental Christian belief when law requires some affirmative act on their part. And thus we have the cases of florists, bakers, photographers and others who have been subject to real coercion from American governments who do not respect their

## READ MORE

### RELIGIOUS LIBERTY: HOW THE GOSPEL SHAPES OUR FIRST FREEDOM

Phillip Bethancourt and Andrew T. Walker with Russell Moore  
(Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2017)

wish not to participate in a ceremony or ritual with which they strongly disagree.

Religious liberty should protect these individuals in the same way our Supreme Court protected the Amish in the past. In the current cultural moment, large numbers of Americans seem to think that Christians must be made to bow to the majority (if indeed that is the majority's will). The idea is that accommodating religious liberty will create chaos. But various American Founders understood the reality is not so stark. If a person's religious practice (or "free exercise") does not threaten the peace or safety of the community, then we should respect it.

What needs to be understood is that those who would stake a claim based on religious liberty typically are asking for some kind of fairly narrow exemption. One of the major misconceptions in the debate over non-discrimination laws related to sexual orientation is the belief that Christians are trying to create a gay/straight apartheid or recreation of Jim Crow Southern segregation. Such an interpretation is deeply misguided.

The simple reality is that respecting religious liberty is a way for us to live together without crushing faith and conscience. Religious liberty helps us to live in peace. ★

<sup>1</sup> Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205 (1972).

*This modified excerpt was taken from the new Bible study, Religious Liberty: How the Gospel Shapes our First Freedom, by Phillip Bethancourt and Andrew T. Walker with Russell Moore, LifeWay Press, Nashville, TN, pp. 22-23. The excerpt's author is HUNTER BAKER, who serves as a university fellow and associate professor of political science at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee.*

# Ad Fontes

## RETRIEVING THE SPIRIT OF THE REFORMATION

*Matthew Pinson*

**T**HIS YEAR, WE CELEBRATE the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, which began when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg, Germany, critiquing abuses in the late medieval Catholic Church. Our temptation is to treat that distant event and the gospel-animated movement it spawned as ancient history, irrelevant to what it means to help churches grow in our environment of religious pluralism, consumerism and amusement.

Yet, evangelical Protestants need, more than ever, to recover the spirit of the Reformation. As Timothy George often reminds us, we need to engage in “renewal through retrieval.” A retrieval of the gospel essence that stirred those Reformation fires half a millennium ago will enliven and renew the church today.

### **AD FONTES!**

The spirit of the Reformation is encapsulated in the Latin phrase *ad fontes*, or “back to the fountains, back to the sources.” Emerging from the Northern Renaissance, with its desire to recover classical realism in the arts and classical texts from the original Greek and Latin, the Reformation sought to go *ad fontes*, back to the sources of the Bible in its original languages and back to the Greek and Latin church fathers. This work caused the reformers to see a stark contrast between the beauty of the primitive church and what medieval Catholic faith had become, and it compelled them to reform the church, retrieving the richness of biblical faith that had been eclipsed during the Middle Ages.

In advancing this ancient-future vision of the gospel and the church, five emphases came to be associated with the reformers: the five “solas” (Latin: *solae*). These were *sola Scriptura*, *solus Christus*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide* and *solus Deo gloria*. A return to these riches can breathe new life into a North American church that, like the Church of Rome in late medieval times, has become captive to the spirit of the age in many ways.

### **SCRIPTURE ALONE**

Against the medieval Roman Catholic Church, the reformers preached the sufficiency of Scripture. This meant that the church could not bind the consciences of God’s people with doctrines and practices not warranted in Scripture, the only sufficient rule for the church’s faith and practice.

When humans add to the faith and practice of the church revealed in holy Scripture, they inject what Harry Reeder calls “cultural steroids” into the church. These “steroids,” though they might seem to bring health initially, eventually produce weakness and death. The reformers thought the Roman Church had invented so many new doctrines and practices not warranted in Scripture that it had drifted into something completely different from apostolic Christianity.

Yet the reformers’ emphasis on *sola Scriptura* didn’t mean they ignored the Christian tradition, as some evangelicals are tempted to do today. Instead, they were hearkening back to a biblically faithful tradition of the apostles and church fathers that they believed had been eclipsed for hundreds of years.

# tes

## SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE, THROUGH FAITH ALONE, IN CHRIST ALONE

Another hallmark of the Reformation was salvation by *grace alone* through *faith alone* in *Christ alone*. When the reformers compared late medieval teaching with that of the New Testament and early Christianity, they saw a difference between what they viewed as works-righteousness, or merit theology, in medieval scholastic theology and the emphasis on grace and faith they saw in the New Testament.

So, they taught that God's grace, not our works, is the only thing that can enable totally depraved, spiritually dead people to see their need of Christ, who alone provides the remedy for their sin. This realization reoriented the reformers' doctrine of justification. For them, the righteousness of Christ, imputed to the sinner who has faith in Christ, is the only thing that can make a sinner righteous in God's estimation, not inherent or infused righteousness.

The emphasis on salvation by Christ alone also means that he is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). It laid an axe at the Roman Catholic penitential system of confession to a priest who granted absolution (forgiveness) and the believer doing penance. It also opposed the teaching on Mary's mediatorial role in salvation. Christ, alone, is our mediator and high priest, and we, as believers, are all a royal priesthood and holy nation.

## TO GOD ALONE BE THE GLORY

The last sola is *solī Deo gloria*—to God alone be the glory. Luther taught the “theology of the cross.” He said that late

medieval Roman Catholic theology was a “theology of glory.” Instead of the pomp and splendor of this theology, we are called to the humility and plainness of the cross. In the cross, Luther averred, we see “God's backside.” We see God in Christ humbling himself to death for the people he loves, kneeling to wash their feet.

This mentality calls us to deflect all glory away from ourselves and onto God in our faith and in the life of the church. The Reformed (Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin) and Anabaptist (Balthasar Hubmaier, Menno Simons) wings of the Reformation took this idea even further, seeking to cut away all vestiges of the theology of glory—all the ways that the church, in its worship and service and practices, sought to glorify humanity and not God.

## RENEWAL THROUGH RETRIEVAL

Retrieving the spirit of the Reformation, with its five solas, can help evangelical churches bear witness to Christ in our increasingly fragmented age. Going back to the scripturally rich sources of our past can help bring the renewal we desperately need in this era when we seem so bent on making Christianity palatable to its cultured despisers.

This will mean a fresh vision of how the apostolic doctrines and practices of Scripture shape the way we live out the gospel of the kingdom in the week-in, week-out practices of the church (for more on this, read *Reverberation*). It will mean a move away from legalism, self-help, prosperity and human-centered spirituality and worship, back to the true gospel. And it will take our focus off ourselves and our glory—and ways we can attract people to Christianity through things that focus on human glory and self-gratification—and put it back on the cross.

This sort of *ad fontes* is what made the Reformation happen and changed the world. And it's the same sort of renewal that can bring fresh, God-centered, word-driven, gospel-focused, energy back into evangelical churches as they bear faithful witness to the gospel of the kingdom. ★

WE EVANGELICAL  
PROTESTANTS NEED,  
MORE THAN EVER, TO  
RECOVER THE SPIRIT OF  
THE REFORMATION.

MATTHEW PINSON is a Free Will Baptist leader and president of Welch College in Gallatin, Tennessee, and author of *Arminian and Baptist: Explorations in a Theological Tradition*.

# IS THE REFORMATION STILL NECESSARY?

*Chris Castaldo*

**IT'S AN OFT-REPEATED QUESTION:** Is the Reformation still necessary? During this commemoration of Luther's protest, it's proper to consider how the Reformation impulse of yesteryear applies to our present moment in history.

Central to the Reformation was the fact that God places us before his unbroken gaze. We who were once separated from Christ—strangers to the covenant or promise and without hope in the world—have been drawn into the loving embrace of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This happens, says the Apostle Paul, “by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13). But how exactly it happens is a key tenant of the Reformation.

## THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE

A basic distinction between Catholics and Protestants has concerned this question of how God embraces sinners. Divine acceptance, according to the Roman Church, is internally “infused” through her sacraments, a process that consists in moral virtues and good works as the necessary condition for humanity's final absolution. The Protestant reformers, on the other hand, located the basis of one's acceptance

in the finished work of Christ upon the cross, a forgiveness that was attributed or imputed to sinners as a gift.

It's at this point that the phrase “faith alone” (*sola fide*) is so important to the Protestant tradition. From the earliest days of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, *sola fide* was a slogan to describe how sinners receive the gift of acceptance. On the basis of Scripture, reformers recognized that God justifies men and women apart from meritorious works. In the words of Paul, “And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).

All of this is pretty straightforward: We are accepted because of Christ, and not on account of our achievements. And yet, foundational as this doctrine may be, those of us with a modicum of self-awareness recognize our tendency toward self-justification. We succeed, we accomplish, we perceive ourselves to be significant, and this, we think, hastens our acceptance. It's the normal pattern of life in the world. But such self-reliance is incompatible with life in Christ.

The reformers recognized in their historical moment this same challenge

we see in our own: God embraces sinners, and we recoil from his presence. God establishes, feeds and fulfills his promises, and we regularly mistrust his motives. God pledges his love by providing his Spirit as an enduring bond, and we doubt his commitment. So long as this is the case, reformation will continue to be necessary.

## WHERE ETHICS COME INTO PLAY

So what about moral virtues and good works? What role do they play in the Christian life? Some suggest that since divine acceptance is devoid of meritorious works, ethics should be of secondary concern. After all, isn't salvation by faith alone apart from works? Unfortunately, this denigration of ethics is the other side of the horse from which we sometimes fall when considering our Reformation heritage.

Yes, over and against advocates of Catholic renewal, such as Desiderius Erasmus, Protestant reformers refused to see Jesus as an ethical paradigm for Christianity. They insisted, first and foremost, upon spiritual union with the crucified and risen Christ as the priority and guiding impulse of faith.



“Did we in our own strength confide,” wrote Luther, “our striving would be losing.” Thus, the “theologian of the cross” lives by this conviction, and it animates the cruciform shape of his or her life. In short, we come to the Savior full of weakness and find his grace to be sufficient.

But how do we find God’s empowering grace to be sufficient? This question leads us into ethics. Contrary to popular opinion, it is not by relegating the Christian life to forgiveness—a merely judicial or forensic faith. In Oswald Bayer’s words, “The new human is no grotesque caricature who spends his life in a darkened room, reciting with closed eyes, ‘I am justified by faith alone, I am justified by faith alone.’”<sup>1</sup> While Reformation Protestants assert that we are justified by faith alone, this faith does not remain alone: “For we dream neither of a faith devoid of good works nor of a justification that stands without them,” said the Genevan reformer, John Calvin.

Such virtue is not extra credit for religious overachievers; it’s the natural unfolding of our life and calling as children of God. We may not agree

with our Catholic friends in recognizing divine acceptance as a sacramental process that consists in moral virtues and good works, but we nevertheless insist that authentic faith issues forth in good works. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” said Paul, “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13). Salvation may not be achieved *by* works, but it is certainly comprised *of* works.

### OUR REFORMATION CALLING TODAY

Living in the unbroken gaze of God’s love, our calling is to distinguish faith and works without separating them. It’s easy to reach toward one of these extremes, but our calling is to uphold both. In biblical terms, it’s the need for Luke 18:9-14 and 14:25-33. In the first case, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector teaches us that it’s not the one who boasts about his works who is justified, but the one who prayed, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

At the same time, we must include the uncompromising reality that “any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.” In Martin Luther’s words:

God will not judge by your name, whether you are called a Christian or have been baptized. But He will tell you: If you are a Christian, tell Me where the fruits are by which you can prove your faith.<sup>2</sup>

As gospel-centered Christians, our Reformation calling is to proclaim the gift of divine acceptance by faith alone and to embody the moral transformation that such a gift produces. ★

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<sup>1</sup> Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification*. Trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 27.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther, *What Luther Says, An Anthology*, vol. 3, ed. Ewald M. Plass. St. Louis: (Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 1510.

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# PREACHING LIKE THE REFORMERS

EVERY SERMON IS AN ACT OF REFORM

*Steven Smith*

**W**HAT DOES IT MEAN to preach in the tradition of the reformers?

The theology of the reformers is synonymous with, and most often reduced to, the five solas. The operative word in each phrase is the word “alone.” When

something is added to faith, it becomes misplaced confidence. When something is added to grace, it becomes merit. And when something is added to Scripture, it becomes opinion. In other words, once something is alloyed

into faith, grace or Scripture, they become something less—and different. So, the Reformation was about the *singular nature* of faith in reception of salvation, grace in receiving it and Scripture in communicating it.

## THE PASTORAL STRUGGLE

While the reformers were certainly involved in ecclesiological power struggles, the principle struggle was more of a pastoral one. In short, they were like every pastor, every Sunday, fighting for individual texts. It was a struggle of hermeneutics from the pulpit. It's a struggle that I, as a pastor, face often. There's something in me that wants to add or take away from Scripture—to skim the text; to massage it toward my favorite topic; to gloss over something important because it doesn't fit an outline; or to force the text down and my ideas up. However, to take something away from Scripture, or add something to it, is to misrepresent the singular nature of Scripture. Scripture, *alone*, is both authoritative and sufficient.

Evangelicals in general, and Southern Baptists in particular, have a long and interesting relationship with the text of Scripture. We affirm and believe Scripture but have often interpreted it with an “evangelistic hermeneutic.” Long before Christ-centered preaching became the theological topic *de jour*, we were finding a gospel invitation in any text, anytime and anywhere. This kind of preaching would take a text and conclude with, “In other words, get saved.” This is a glorious heritage in that it flowed from a pure heart that genuinely loved lost people and a belief that the objective of preaching was seeing people saved. If, historically, we've had a homiletic fault, it was to ignore the plain meaning of the text to get to the end of people being saved.

This is where the reformers are helpful, for in their pursuit of the singular nature of truth, they paved the way for a thoroughgoing missions endeavor. This is instructive for us. The explanation of a text is not in competition with gospel advance. It is its greatest ally. Those who relentlessly pursue the explanation of

## SO, THE REFORMATION WAS ABOUT THE SINGULAR NATURE OF FAITH IN RECEPTION OF SALVATION, GRACE IN RECEIVING IT AND SCRIPTURE IN COMMUNICATING IT.

texts find themselves evangelist. It just happens. As Judson was quick to remind us, while an open Bible makes one a Baptist, the same open Bible makes a Baptist a missionary.

### EXPLANATION LEADS TO EVANGELISM

The study of Scripture by the pastor, and by extension, the explanation of Scripture from the pulpit, protects the singular nature of these doctrines. Scripture, unleashed, defeats its own competition. Only when Scripture is unexplained is it harmless. It has no self-propagating power. To be effective, it must be preached. And, once explained, one is forced to feel the weight of lostness, the trajectory of salvation history leading to the coming of Jesus Christ, the heart of a Savior who wept over the lostness of Jerusalem, and the eternal weight of God's judgment that motivated Jesus to intervene between God's wrath and sinners, the objects of his wrath. It's in the understanding of Scripture that we become evangelistic. It is only in the explanation of Scripture that hell feels hot.

I don't think it's wrong of me as a pastor, holed up in my study week by week, to think of the eternal souls of those who have never heard the gospel as a motivation to keep myself in the seat and finish the work. It's just the way things work. But, if I don't faithfully explain the Word, those listening to me may value preaching more than Scripture, might pursue something

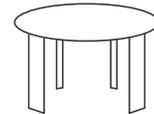
other than faith, or may perceive that part of their work melds with grace to merit salvation. Perhaps they may embrace some doctrine from Scripture, just not in a *singular* way. Alone. *Sola*. A heart that has not been confronted by the singular nature of truth will eventually deflate the mission enterprise.

A heart that is gripped to know God through his word will be a witness. It's the impression of the Word, rightly understood, that leads to the expression of witness. The conviction to expend one's life for the gospel is not intuited, rather it is ignited by fire from a pure faith. And a purity of faith is the fruit of Scripture explained. In this way, every sermon is an act of reform. We're calling others to embrace Scripture, grace and faith alone.

All this to say, to place missions and evangelism at the top of the foundation there must be a foundation. To preach in the tradition of the reformers is to faithfully explain Scripture in a way that the evangelized become evangelists. It's the catalyst used to send God's people out as missionaries for his glory. This is the end. The *solas* then, aren't relics; they're kindling for our souls because to faithfully explain Scripture is to call believers to love lost people. And this is what we pour ourselves out for week to week. ★

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STEVEN SMITH is the pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock. Before coming to Immanuel he served as a vp and professor of preaching at Southwestern Seminary, and has written two books on preaching, *Dying to Preach*, and *Recapturing the Voice of God*.



# The Reformation, Vocation and the Importance of an Artist's Craft

*Jason Thacker*

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## ROUNDTABLE CONTRIBUTORS

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### **MIKE COSPER**

is the director of Harbor Media. He is also a pastor, writer, podcaster and musician based in Louisville, Ky.

### **LATIFAH PHILLIPS**

is an artist, writer, producer and engineer. She is a member of the band Page CXVI.

### **JASON WRIGHT**

is a product graphic designer for NCAA football at Nike in Portland, Ore.

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**H**ow were the arts viewed during the Reformation? And how can certain biblical truths that flow out of the Reformation (i.e. the solas) influence an artist's work?

**MC:** The best word to describe the relationship between the arts and the Reformation is tension. On the one hand, theirs was a reactionary spirit (and not an entirely unjustified one) that wanted to reject Roman Catholic sacramentalizing of the arts, particularly as it relates to icons and the veneration of the saints. Later voices in the Reformed tradition like Rookmaker, Schaeffer and their contemporaries like Calvin

Seerveld and Dan Siedell advocated strongly for the role of the arts and the imagination in the formation of the church.

The Reformation's core ideas—salvation by faith alone through grace alone—allow an artist a radical freedom. The work doesn't define us; the gospel liberates us and gives us a beautiful identity, a wholeness that we can't find any other way. An artist who knows this may not, in fact, become a better artist, but will certainly become a more healthy and whole individual.

*How does your faith inform and shape how you contribute to the arts?*

**MC:** The arts, broadly, are simply another form of work, and they function much like any other kind of work. Like engineering, teaching and medicine, they exist to help sustain a flourishing human society. They stimulate, enrage, inspire and mystify us in order to evoke our deepest thoughts and feelings. In short, they keep vital and healthy one aspect of what it means to be made in the image of God: a flourishing and human imagination.

**LP:** Sometimes I feel like people talk about art and faith as if they are separate things. For me, it would be like asking how does your left hand feel about your right hand? They are both my hands. I use them together to accomplish the same goals. That's how I feel about my faith and creativity. Being a full-time artist, my faith impacts everything I do. I can't separate them, even if I try. Art making is part of how I understand who God is, appreciate God as a creator and relate to him.

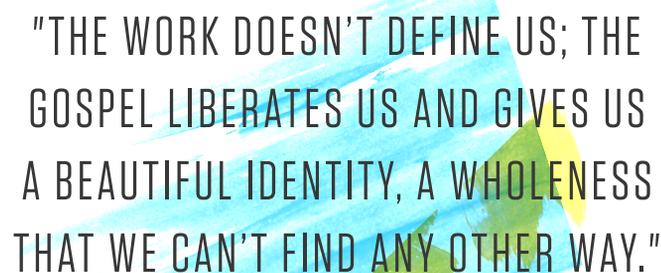
*What's unique about being an artist and a Christian?*

*What drives you as an artist to pursue excellence?*

**MC:** Christians are liberated from their art. In almost any type of vocation, there's a temptation to blur the lines between self-identity and the quality of our work. This can turn us into workaholics and can lead to a tremendous amount of anxiety about our work. If it isn't good enough, then we aren't good enough. As a Christian, I'm freed from that burden; my self-worth is found by being made in God's image. So a Christian artist is free to try and fail, to receive scathing reviews and high praise, and to let it all wash off our backs, free instead to simply enjoy the work and learn from artistic success and failure.

**LP:** I don't think of myself as separate from my other artist friends that don't ascribe to the Christian faith. I think we're all trying to make powerful art that impacts culture and society. I think pursuing excellence is our best tool in getting the most genuine response to what we're trying to accomplish with our art. And I think it's imperative that we do the best we can because God created all things with excellence including mankind, animals and plants. That compels me to not be lazy when I create, which can be hard because creating is life-giving and exhausting at the same time.

**JW:** It's not uncommon in design to spend late nights researching, sketching and working on a project and realize that you've [just] worked a bunch of bad ideas out of your system. There are also some projects where the perfect idea comes to you as the client is walking you through the creative brief. Working in a profession that regularly requires these moments of inspiration makes it clear that I'm in no way in control and that every new idea serves as a reminder of God's providence. The belief that all inspiration comes from God and the fact that he's chosen me as the steward of this idea is a pretty convincing motivator for me to pursue excellence. I do so with the belief that I'll be equipped and that excellence in my craft will create opportunities to point people to Christ.



"THE WORK DOESN'T DEFINE US; THE GOSPEL LIBERATES US AND GIVES US A BEAUTIFUL IDENTITY, A WHOLENESS THAT WE CAN'T FIND ANY OTHER WAY."

-MIKE COSPER

*There seems to be a resurgence of the arts in evangelicalism in recent years. How has it impacted the ways you create, and where do you see evangelicals headed in the upcoming years?*

**JW:** I couldn't be happier to see things trending in this direction. In recent years, I've taken on projects

with my church as an opportunity to push myself creatively and take risks in a way that I wasn't able to five years ago. Over the last five to 10 years, we've seen what a design-centered approach can do to set companies like Apple apart in the business world. I think similarly positive results can apply to evangelicals once we've found the right ways to harness that power.

**MC:** I'm not sure how new the resurgence of the arts is in evangelicalism. You can trace threads of interest in the arts throughout the post-Reformation years, though it's focus has shifted. At times, it's in literature and poetry, at other times, music, and still others, in the visual arts. I think the "battles" about the arts will continue—some thinking of them as dangerous, others thinking about them as essential, and everything else in between.

Artists themselves will likely remain somewhat marginal, I fear. This is for three reasons. First, this is the normal space artists seek in society. They tend to want to stand a bit outside of the norm so they can speak prophetically to it. Second, the church's confusion as to the value of the arts makes artists ambivalent about how much they participate in the life of the church. Third, the Christian subculture is rife with problems that make artistic practice difficult. It creates the impression that every piece of art must share the gospel, must not offend, and must make reference to

some other artifact in culture. There's a cheap commercialism that drives all of this, and so long as Christians are willing to settle for art that confirms their biases and doesn't offend, it will continue, and many of the best Christian artists will find acceptance of their work apart from their Christian community.

**LP:** I think there are a few things that contribute to that [resurgence], like the internet and affordable studio tools. You don't have to be famous and have label support to make a professional sounding album. We have more access to what's being created in smaller subsets of the world. We've also seen people interested in the ancient church, language, traditions and liturgy. There seems to be a rise of people discussing deep ideas in art in regards to [their] faith. So is it a resurgence, or is it that we just have better exposure to better art? It could be both. And in the next few years, we're going to see a lot of great art being made around the topics of oppression, freedom, standing up for and loving our neighbors.

*In what ways can the church help support the growth and cultivation of the arts in our communities?*

**MC:** Love your artists. Attend their shows and gallery openings. Support them by buying their art and music. Ask questions when you don't understand, and hold artists to the same standard you'd hold an engineer or a teacher. One doesn't expect an ichthus worked into the design of every Christian engineer, nor do they expect the gospel worked into a lecture on Euclidian Geometry. Likewise, the Christian artist is called to do excellent work that inspires and provokes. Their work may not be explicitly Christian, and that's okay. The church's role isn't to critique this work, but to call the Christian to do their work Christianly: with character,

excellence and humility. Lastly, don't expect artists to contribute their work for free to your congregation. Respect what they do like you'd respect a roofer or a plumber, and when you want work commissioned, pay them a fair price.

**JW:** My former church had an abandoned building on their block that was going unused, so members helped divide it up into studio spaces for local artists to work out of and host art shows. While I realize that few churches have spare buildings lying around, the way they took action sent a loud message to the local art community—they made it clear that artists were wanted members of the community.

**LP:** Support and space. Tell artists that we support them and want to be here to have conversations as they're working out ideas in their art. Allow them to have the space they need to create. Send them notes. Let them know you're praying for them. Send them a meal. Creating something is a lot of hard work and takes a lot of energy and time.

*What advice would you give younger believers who aspire to the arts as a vocation?*

**JW:** What makes artists special is that they see the world through a different lens than most. At times it can feel like you don't "fit the mold" or that you're not as valuable as those with more common, functional roles within the church. Your gift is a blessing, and you've been given those abilities to complement those around you and bring glory to God.

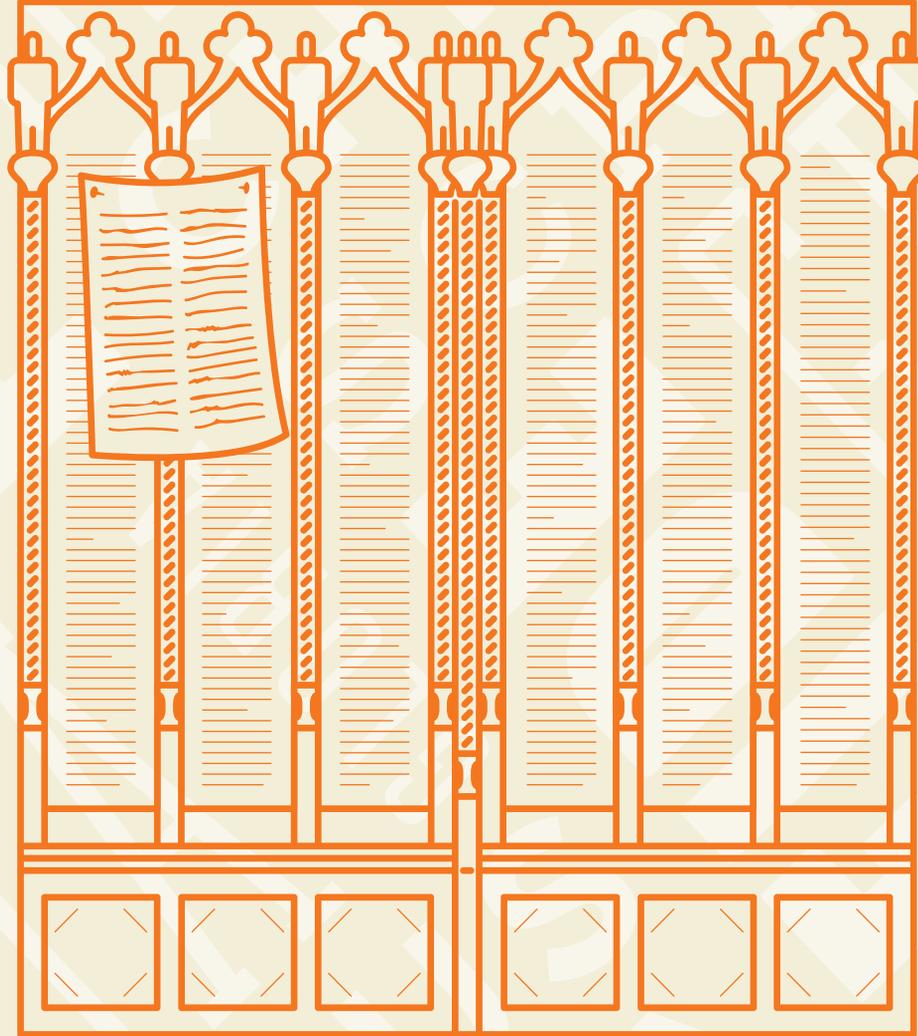
**MC:** Seek to learn from the very best. Work your way up through the channels that have been established in the art world—small film festivals, local art galleries and music venues, small literary journals, etc. Do the work on a small scale, and never stop learning. Beware the instant-gratification and feedback you might get from the Christian subculture. Seek instead to make your way, slowly and steadily, in the world of the arts that you respect the most.

**LP:** Don't be afraid of working hard. Really devote yourself to your craft. It takes time. There's a degree of raw talent that needs to be there initially to make you feel like you have the ability to pursue art, but all of the great artists I've met and known are devoted. There's a reality of time and energy spent on practice that's inescapable. And don't be afraid to really fail. I have records I'm embarrassed exist, but I learned a lot from those records, and I'm still making music. ★

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-JASON WRIGHT

*JASON THACKER is the creative director at The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.*



# WHY SOLA SCRIPTURA MATTERS FOR OUR MORALITY

*Russell Moore*

**I***T'S NOT UNUSUAL THAT* I'm the only evangelical Protestant in the room. I'm used to it, as one who grew up in a predominantly Roman Catholic area,

with half my family being Catholic. And now, I work with people across the spectrum of global Christianity on issues ranging from global persecution to sanctity of human life to racial injustice or sex trafficking. When I'm

the only or one of only a few evangelicals in the room, I can usually predict at least one thing that will happen. Someone—usually a Roman Catholic, though sometimes an Eastern Orthodox Christian—will make a

self-deprecating joke about his tradition's lack of Bible knowledge.

My Catholic or Orthodox friend might make a biblical allusion—say, to Jonah and the great fish or the Parable of the Talents—and then say, “That’s in the Bible, right Russell?” or, “I think that’s in the Bible, but you’ll have to ask Russell about that.”

These jokes are just that, jokes. Often the person making them is quite astute in biblical knowledge. But the joke often works. Some of that is due to the greater emphasis evangelical churches put on preaching than do those churches centered on the Eucharist. Some of it has to do, though, with differing understandings of Scripture that reach all the way back to the Protestant Reformation and the resulting Counter-Reformation, a development we mark on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Martin Luther’s nailing his 95 theses to the Wittenberg door. The issue is that of *sola Scriptura*, of Scripture *alone* as the final authority for the church and for the Christian. The implications of this key doctrine apply not only to doctrine in the abstract—what we believe—but also to Christian ethics—how we live.

## REFORMATION FEARS

Martin Luther’s revolution was a scary one, and we don’t need all that much empathy to see why. Many feared that the Reformation idea of justification *sola fide* (by faith alone) would lead to Christians living immoral lives, convinced that following Christ is unnecessary as long as one has trusted in him for salvation. This was not an accurate reading of the Reformation doctrine, but we have seen this tendency happen in the decisional, transactional view of salvation that assures unrepentant people unconnected with the church that they

are “once saved, always saved” because of a hand raised as a child, apart from one’s present life without faith.

That’s a real peril, but the Reformation did not create it. The reformers carefully taught the organic connection between faith and works. Additionally, the Apostle Paul warned about the “slandrous” tendency to conclude from his doctrine of justification by faith, “Let us sin that grace may abound” (Rom. 3:5-8; 6:1-2).

More troublesome, though, is the charge that *sola Scriptura* leaves the individual Christian or Christian movement adrift when it comes to the question of how to live out the Christian life.

movement, and could recognize them as devilish. For many evangelicals, there was no reference to “abortion” in the Bible concordance, so it took years for some evangelical leaders to show how the Bible does speak directly to abortion—in the commands against murder and in the ways the Bible speaks of pregnant mothers as, just that, mothers and of unborn babies as, just that, babies (Luke 1:43-44).

In more recent years, we’ve seen this phenomenon happen in other ways. I met a doctor in a very conservative evangelical church in Alabama who works on “transitioning” transgender patients from, as the ideology goes,

**A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF THE DOCTRINE WON'T ERASE OUR QUEST FOR PERSONAL AND CORPORATE HOLINESS, BUT SUPPORT IT.**

We have seen this danger realized. For instance, we must ask why Roman Catholics were, from the very beginning, united against the barbarous injustice of the *Roe v. Wade* abortion era when—at the time—most Protestant evangelicals were silent or even supportive of legalized abortion. Part of that had to do with the fact that Catholicism had a developed theology of human dignity and the sanctity of human life, informed not only by the Bible but also supported by philosophy and history.

Our Catholic friends could see the arguments behind the abortion

male to female, or vice-versa. This doctor, a committed Christian, clearly had never thought there were any ethical problems with this because, as the doctor put it, “The Bible doesn’t speak to the transgender issue.” That’s, of course, true, if by “speaks” you mean a direct reference in one passage to the idea of moving from one sex to another. The Bible does speak, repeatedly and canonically, to the concept of male and female as part of our created reality, and to the integrity of our bodies with our psyches.

In the same way, I've seen many evangelical Christians thrown by reproductive technologies that bring horrifying implications for human dignity and for the one-flesh union, or by modern technological ways to conduct warfare or even to torture, because these Christians assume the Bible is silent, and that if the Bible is silent there are no ethical concerns. This, however, is not the Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura*. A right understanding of the doctrine won't erase our quest for personal and corporate holiness, but support it.

### A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF SOLA SCRIPTURA

First of all, *sola Scriptura* does not actually mean that the Bible is our authority. The Bible itself tells us we have many authorities. We have those in authority over us within the church (Heb. 13:7). We are to obey those in authority over us in the governing powers (Rom. 13:1-7). Children are to obey the authority of their parents (Eph. 6:1-2). The Bible itself speaks of things we know not by written revelation but by the revelation embedded in creation, accessible to all. For example, people ought to know not to grab a strange dog by the ears, not because they've read about it in the Bible, but because you can observe that this rarely turns out well (Prov. 26:17).

*Sola Scriptura* means that the Bible is our only *final* authority. Every other authority is bounded, able to be appealed. I should obey the state, for instance (1 Pet. 2:13-17), but in some things if I obey the state, I am sinning (Dan. 6:1-24; Rev. 13:1-18). If I am a child, I should obey my parents—but not if my parents command me to sin against God (see the example of the good kings of the Old Testament who

did not follow in the idolatrous ways of their fathers).

Practically speaking, no one can live as though the only knowledge we have is from the Bible. The Scriptures tell us that the wisdom of agriculture comes from God (Isa. 28:24-29), but does not give us explicit instructions on how to plant and harvest every conceivable crop.

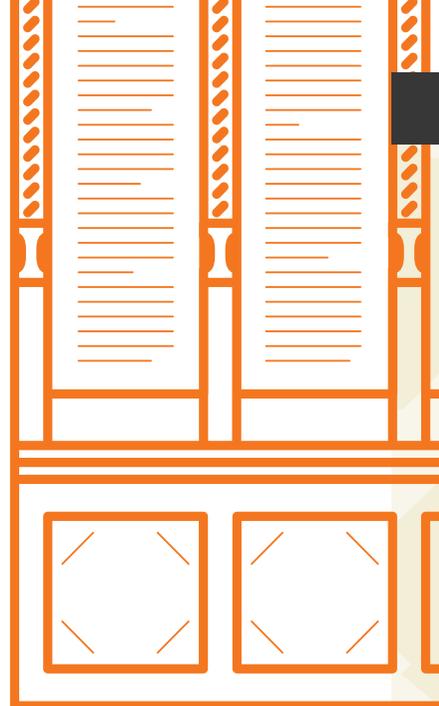
The question is not whether the Bible is the *only* authority in my life. The question is where should I appeal when authorities seem to conflict. What is the Supreme Court to which there is no further appeal when it comes to matters of doctrine or morality? If I want to know how to get from Nashville to Louisville, I consult the satellite map on my smartphone, not the search feature on my phone's Bible app. The mapping system on my phone might be accurate or inaccurate; that I will know by the experience of driving or by consulting other user reviews of the service. But if my phone's mapping system tells me there was never a city of Jerusalem, I know that to be false. The Bible corrects my phone, not the other way around. Scientists may teach me many things about the mysteries of the universe. The Bible doesn't tell us about space-time relativity or about black holes or about genetic mapping or about antibiotics. Science does. If science tells me, on the other hand, that human morality is an illusion, that we are all just selfish genes seeking to protect our genetic material in an amoral universe, the Bible tells me otherwise. The Bible is the ultimate authority.

How do I know that the Bible is my ultimate authority? Jesus tells me so. Jesus honors the authority of his parents (Luke 2:51), but was more than willing at points to appeal to a higher authority and thus not to do what they wished

(Luke 2:49-49; John 2:4). Jesus honors the religious authorities of the priesthood and the temple (Matt. 23:1-3), but he is also more than willing to defy these authorities (Matt. 21:23-27). Jesus is willing to give Caesar his coin when taxed (Mark 12:17), but is not willing to give Pilate his voice when commanded (Matt. 27:11-14).

Jesus, though, maintains the ultimate authority of the Scriptures, which he identifies with the Word of God himself (Mark 12:35-37). Even when in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus seems to be at odds with the Law of Moses, our Lord is quick to say that he is teaching an intensification, not a contradiction, of the Scripture, which he holds to be true and authoritative even in its minutest details (Matt. 5:17-20). The Scripture, Jesus tells us, "cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

The same principle is at work with Jesus' apostles, inspired by his Spirit. Paul, for example, pens entire letters showing how the inclusion of the Gentiles and the passing away of circumcision are taught ahead of time in the Old Testament Scriptures (Rom. 4:1-28; Gal. 3:1-29). Paul is willing to



defy even the authority of an apostle (Gal. 2:11-14), but is not willing to defy Scripture. Peter himself, though willing to argue with Paul personally, is not willing to defy the inspired Scripture written through Paul (2 Pet. 3:14-16).

*Sola Scriptura* does not mean that, as in the days of the Judges, “There is no king in Israel, so everyone does what is right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). There *is* a king in Israel—reigning now from the throne of David over his Body, the church (Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:22). Believers are going to disagree about the interpretations of the text of Scripture. Some of these disagreements will be relatively large (whom do we baptize?); some of them will be less so (should we go to see certain films?). The question is how we adjudicate such things.

## SOLA SCRIPTURA AND THE CHURCH

*Sola Scriptura* does not mean that the church does not have authority, *sola Scriptura* means the church, and even the apostles themselves, have a derivative authority. Jesus can rebuke his disciples, even the closest (the examples with Peter are too numerous to recite here), but not the other way around. And Scripture, Old and New Testaments, claims to be the voice of Jesus speaking (2 Pet. 1:10-11). The church has legitimate authority. When the church rightly discerns a moral failing, and speaks to it rightly, this word is that of Jesus himself (Matt. 18:20; 1 Cor. 5:3-4). But the church can and does err—and can even lose the lampstand of Christ’s presence through disobedience or through false teaching (Rev. 2:5). How do we determine whether a church is exercising authority, or refusing to exercise authority, in a way that is out of step with God’s purpose? We do what the

apostles taught us to do: We judge the church by what has been revealed in Scripture, not the other way around (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:1-4:5).

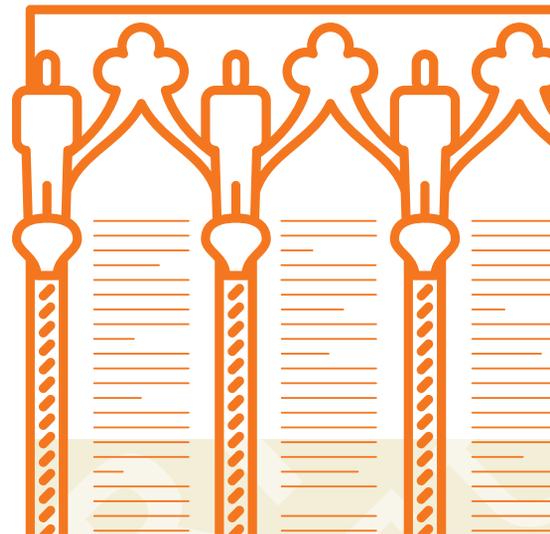
The psalms of David and the proverbs of Solomon are authoritative over us, but not because David and Solomon held the office of king. David also said, “Go get Bathsheba,” and Solomon also said, “What harm can a few idol-worshipping high places do?” The authority of David and Solomon over us comes when God is speaking through them. How has the church recognized Scripture as Scripture? The testimony of the Holy Spirit, working through the church. “My sheep hear my voice, and follow me,” Jesus tells us (John 10:27).

Does this mean that every individual sheep recognizes the voice of Christ speaking in the Scriptures? No. Simon Peter didn’t understand the cross, at first. Paul and Barnabas disagreed over whether Mark could be trusted (Acts 15:36-39). Martin Luther didn’t like the book of James. Our heroes and heroines in church history have gotten things wrong, doctrinally and morally. Parts of the church were wrong—satanically wrong—on issues of righteousness and justice, such as the Spanish Inquisition and the scourge of human slavery. Over the long run, though, the people of God recognize the Scriptures, not because the church creates the Scriptures but because the Scriptures create the church.

We are to teach and admonish one another (Eph. 5:19). We are to bear one another’s burdens, with the strong bearing up the weak (Gal. 6:1-6). We don’t discern our morality by reading the Bible alone, as though we were the only ones to read it. We read the Bible together with the rest of the church, living and dead. We allow ourselves to

be corrected in our interpretations, and in our moral and ethical decisions. *Sola Scriptura* means, though, that no interpretation can be the final word simply because of an individual’s charisma or a church’s history or a ruler’s power, an intuition’s interiority, or even a teaching’s antiquity. All of these claims may be valid, or they may not be. We judge them—even sometimes before we know what the right direction or decision is—by what will be the last Word, the Word of God.

That’s why the Reformation was right to see the whole church as needing the Bible, not just a priesthood or monastic orders. This isn’t because every individual is his own interpretive authority but because the church must be held accountable to Scripture. How? The church is held accountable by the repentance and redirection of the people in obedience to the Word of God (Rev. 3:2-3). It’s also true that at some times one following Christ according to the Word of God will seem to stand alone. Elijah did (1 Kings 19:14). Paul did (2 Tim. 1:15). Jesus certainly did. Right and wrong is



# WE READ THE BIBLE TOGETHER WITH THE REST OF THE CHURCH, LIVING AND DEAD. WE ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE CORRECTED IN OUR INTERPRETATIONS, AND IN OUR MORAL AND ETHICAL DECISIONS.

not determined by majority vote but by the Word of the living God.

## **SOLA SCRIPTURA, MORALITY AND ETHICS**

*Sola Scriptura* speaks to our moral norms in several ways. First, we must have churches and Christians familiar with the whole Scripture. We cannot simply go to the Bible for instruction when we face a dilemma of, say, whether I should do in vitro fertilization or whether our church should speak out about the mistreatment of immigrants in our community. We should have our moral intuitions shaped not just by the verses, one-by-one, in the Bible but also by the Bible as a whole. Jesus answered the devil in the wilderness with an already-internalized Scripture, in which Jesus had memorized not just proof-texts but the narrative of the Bible such that he recognized that where he stood then was where Israel had stood before (Matt. 4:1-11). You may think you need only the New Testament epistles and some Psalms of celebration. You will, however, one day need Psalms of lament, Leviticus, Song of Solomon,

Ecclesiastes and Obadiah. We should cling to it all, all of us.

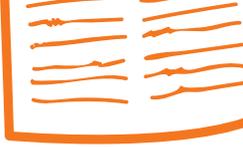
*Sola Scriptura* also means we should know how to fit the Bible together, not just for right doctrine but also to make the right moral decisions. The Bible does not, in a verse, lay out the concept of the Trinity in terms of one God in three persons. The church has recognized, though, that the Bible, all together, speaks both of the unity of God and of the distinctions between Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The heretic Arius could speak to individual proof-texts that seemed to present the Son as subordinate to the Father. Those passages, though, had to be understood within the whole of the biblical teaching.

The same is true of ethics and morality. I knew a young man once who justified his sexual promiscuity by pointing to the example of King Solomon's many wives and concubines. The overall biblical narrative, however, points us to creation and to the Christ-church union, to lifelong monogamy in the marriage covenant (Gen. 2:24; Mark 10:6; Eph. 5:33-34), as well as to a condemnation

of extramarital sex. I knew another man who insisted that his church follow the Old Testament dietary codes. He could quote chapter and verse about why it was wrong to eat pork. A canonical understanding of Scripture, though, shows us that these laws were temporary and that we are in a different covenant from that of the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:1-21).

Some moral issues will be immediately clear to us in Scripture (at least to the church as a whole, even if individuals among us talk ourselves into seeing a wrong as a biblical right). I don't need to pore through the Bible to find out whether I can leave my wife for a woman I met on a train. The Bible is clear on that. You might, though, wonder whether the Bible would allow you to marry a person who was previously divorced. That is a harder question. I don't need to pray and search the Scriptures to see if I can steal from my neighbor's bank account when I come across his personal code number. I might, though, grapple with whether my business' practices, though standard practice in my field, are harming the poor. I am held accountable for seeking out such an answer.

*Sola Scriptura* means some issues are clear-cut. On other issues, the Bible gives us general principles to make moral decisions but does not lay out specifics. I can give you a biblical view of parental responsibility to enable you to decide how much, if any, video gaming time to give your children. I have no authority to tell you, definitively, that it is immoral for you to give more than four hours a week for your children's screen time. There are also some things the Bible doesn't speak to at all. *Sola Scriptura* doesn't just tell us where we must speak to one another's moral lives. *Sola Scriptura* also tells us when to stop.



Jesus speaks directly to the rich young ruler's hoarding of his possessions (Mark 10:17-27), but refuses to say who is right and who is wrong in an inheritance dispute among brothers (Luke 12:14). Likewise, the Apostle Paul gives clear moral directions on any number of fronts, but leaves to the individual conscience the question of whether one should eat meat or vegetables only (Rom. 14). As a matter of fact, Paul writes that for the church to bind a conscience, either way, on that and similar questions is to overstep its bounds in a way that transgresses the authority of the church (Rom. 13) and can actually cause believers to sin against their own consciences (Rom. 14:23).

Some evangelical Christians believe observing Lent is a good way to see the rhythms of feasting-and-fasting taught in Scripture, and that recognizing Lent is no more troublesome than recognizing other parts of the Christian calendar such as Christmas and Easter. Other evangelical Christians believe this sort of communal fast shouldn't be practiced because God hasn't commanded it in Scripture and because, for them, it would violate the spirit of what Jesus taught about fasting in secret. We can co-exist in such disagreement. We wouldn't, however, be able to co-exist if we consigned one another to hell over something to which the Bible does not speak clearly. The non-Lent-observer shouldn't force the Lent-observer to eat Marshmallow Peeps during the Lenten season, and the Lent-observer shouldn't conclude that her sister in Christ is spiritually immature because she does not.

One Christian may believe that saying a colloquialism such as "gosh" is just a loophole way to take the name of the Lord in vain. Another Christian may believe that such language is

harmless and just part of the cultural furniture. They don't disagree about the third commandment, just about whether it applies to this highly debatable situation.

*Sola Scriptura* means free consciences. We learn from the Bible what to care about, but we don't impose rules on the outside world because of Bible passages. The Bible is a covenant word, and those outside the covenant owe us no accountability for the shape of their souls. We instead owe them witness to the gospel that can bring them into this covenant. *Sola Scriptura* shows us that the authorities that compete for our attention—whether Washington

in his Word. We do this by building our lives and our churches around that Word, whatever the cost in social acceptability or personal pleasure or cultural belonging. And when we are confused by the whirling moral options around us—in our own feelings or in the culture in which we are embedded—we go back to the Bible.

This doesn't mean simple, proof-texted answers (although sometimes it will). This means that we wrestle—with the rest of the church, living and dead—with what the Bible teaches us, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly. Our end goal is to judge our cultures, our governments, our

## OUR END GOAL IS TO JUDGE OUR CULTURES, OUR GOVERNMENTS, OUR CHURCHES AND ESPECIALLY OUR FEELINGS—BY THE WORD OF GOD.

or Hollywood or Wall Street or Nashville or Rome or Wittenberg—are not ultimate authorities. This means that, even within the church, we speak clearly where the Bible speaks clearly and we do not seek to lasso one another's consciences where it does not.

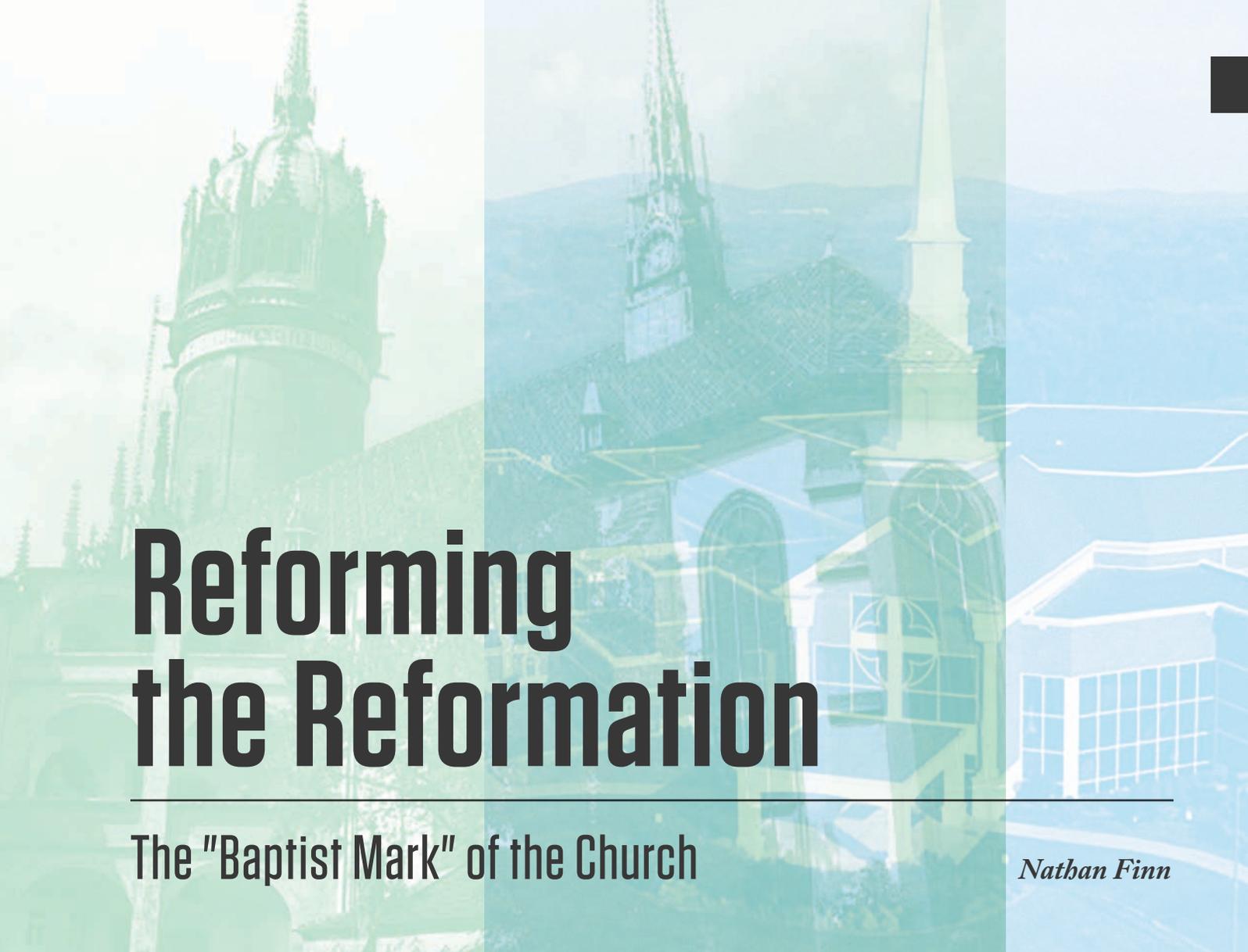
But it is not enough to refuse to be conformed to the pattern of this world; we must be transformed by the renewing of our minds, "that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:1-2). We do this by listening where God has spoken—

churches and especially our feelings—by the Word of God. A free conscience is important, but a free conscience is not enough.

In the end, for a conscience to be free the conscience must be bound. The question is to what are our consciences bound? Martin Luther was correct, when he said that the right answer is a conscience bound to the Word of God. ★

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# Reforming the Reformation

## The "Baptist Mark" of the Church

*Nathan Finn*

**M**ARTIN LUTHER NAILED 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church on October 31, 1517. In 1521, just a few short years after, Luther was excommunicated from the Catholic Church; his followers were soon known as Lutherans. In short order, Ulrich Zwingli was launching the Reformed movement, Anabaptists were rejecting infant baptism and state churches, and Thomas Cranmer was bringing the Reformation to the Church of England.

Baptists were not around in the early days of the Reformation, but they were

heirs of the reformers who affirmed wholeheartedly the five *solas*. But Baptists went further. They built upon the Reformation by applying key reformational insights to the faith and practice of local churches. The most important reform that resulted, and the core Baptist distinctive, was the principle of a regenerate church membership.

### REFORMING THE REFORMATION

Baptists have always struggled a bit with what exactly we should do with the Reformation. Some contend "baptistic" movements have continued in perpetuity since the time of the New Testament, predating the Reformation; modern

Baptists aren't Protestants. Others suggest Baptists are heirs of the Anabaptist movements that rejected state churches and infant baptism. Still others argue Baptists are part of the wider Calvinist tradition that emphasizes God's absolutely sovereignty in human salvation. Though all three of these views are found among Southern Baptists, a fourth view seems most convincing.

There is a long tradition of interpreting the Baptist movement as a reformation of the Reformation. The most famous proponent of this view was the 19<sup>th</sup> century Baptist minister John Quincy Adams, who authored *Baptists, the Only Thorough Religious Reformers* (1854).

Contemporary historian and Baptist layman David Bebbington agrees, noting “Baptists were the people who took Reformation principles to their ultimate conclusion.”

Baptists were third-generation Protestants who attempted to reform the Reformation in at least two ways. First, they consistently applied the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone) to matters of local church order. Second, they expanded the principle of *solus Christus* (Christ alone) to mean not only the sufficiency of Christ’s saving work, but also his definitive Lordship over every aspect of every local church. In so doing, Baptists rejected traditions that had become uniform during the medieval era, including an intentionally mixed membership comprised of believers and unbelievers, infant baptism, clerical authority over the laity, and an overly cozy relationship between church and state.

The earliest Baptists agreed with the core insights of the Lutheran and Reformed traditions when it came to Scripture and salvation. However, they believed those earlier reformers neglected or even rejected many of the emphases that characterized the New Testament churches. For their part, the Anabaptists had attempted to conform their churches to New Testament patterns, but too many Anabaptists remained unclear in their doctrine of salvation and went too far in their separation from the surrounding culture. The Baptists found both trajectories wanting in key ways, so following the Scriptures, the Baptists combined insights from both the so-called Magisterial and Radical Reformers, resulting in a further reformation of the Reformation.

### THE “BAPTIST MARK” OF THE CHURCH

During a time of great turmoil among Western Christians, the reformers were

concerned with the marks of a true church. The Lutherans emphasized that the church is present wherever the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly observed. The Reformed and Anabaptists agreed with those two marks, but over time, added the right exercise of church discipline as an additional mark of the church. The earliest Baptists agreed with the latter view, though they didn’t think the reformers went far enough. For the Baptists, the principle of regenerate church membership functioned as another essential mark of the church, and one that closely intersected with the other three reformational marks. Theologian John Hammett goes so far as to call regenerate church membership the “Baptist mark” of the church.

The Baptists argued that a local church’s formal membership should be comprised only of those who claim personal faith in Christ, have confessed that faith publicly through the rite of believer’s baptism, and who’ve covenanted to walk together with other members of that church for the sake of worship and witness. This principle is sometimes called the “believer’s church,” since the church is intended to be comprised of believers alone. It is a thoroughly reformational principle, since it bases membership on evidence that one has experienced justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. *The First London Confession* (1644), the earliest trans-congregational confession adopted by a group of Baptist churches, defined a local church as

[A] company of visible saints, called and separated from the world, by the Word and the Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the Gospel, being baptized into the





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faith, and joined to the Lord, and each other, by mutual agreement, in the practical enjoyment of the ordinances, commanded by Christ their head and King.

The Baptists weren't the only group to affirm this approach to membership: it was found earlier among the Continental Anabaptists, and later among the English Separatists from whom the Baptists began separating themselves around 1609. But the Baptists were different than both of these groups in important ways. Baptists were more consistently Protestant in their view of salvation and less radical in their critique of culture than the Anabaptists. When it came to their Separatist forebears, the Baptists rejected infant baptism and, in some cases, their consistent Calvinism.

Numerous biblical texts informed the Baptist commitment to a regenerate church membership. In the Old Testament, the idea of a regenerate community is anticipated in the new covenant prophecies of Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:26–27. God promised a new covenant that would include a new heart for all those in the community of faith, each of whom will know the Lord and be empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit to obey God's commands.

In the New Testament, belief and regeneration are tied together closely. For example, in John 3:3, Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly I tell you, unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In Acts, the consistent pattern is being born again, baptized as a disciple, then belonging to a visible church. For example, in Acts 2:39–47, Peter concluded his Pentecost sermon with a call to repent and be baptized. The new believers then began

to gather together for worship, instruction, fellowship and witness. The New Testament epistles were mostly written to individual churches, or the churches in a particular region, and all of them assumed a regenerate membership as normative. For example, in 1 Corinthians 1:2, Paul writes "To the church of God at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints, with all those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord—both their Lord and ours."

The New Testament churches were never envisioned as mixed assemblies of believers and unbelievers, though sometimes unbelievers passed themselves off as believers. Rather, the earliest churches were meant to be communities of disciples who had been born again and were walking together through this life and into the next.

## RECOVERING A BELIEVER'S CHURCH

Regenerate church membership, though still strongly professed, is not as consistently practiced as it once was in Baptist life. Baptists need to recover the believer's church. Historically, Baptist churches have employed two practices to aid in the pursuit of creating churches that are regenerate communities of disciples. The first is adopting written church covenants.

Until about a century ago, to join a Baptist church meant to voluntarily embrace the church's covenant as a general guide for life and godliness. Individually, each member covenanted with the wider body; corporately, the whole body covenanted with Christ. Church covenants help to combat head-on what Dietrich Bonhoeffer once famously characterized as cheap grace: "grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ." While covenants were neglected for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

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## NUMEROUS BIBLICAL TEXTS INFORMED THE BAPTIST COMMITMENT TO A REGENERATE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.

there has been renewed emphasis on covenantal church membership over the past couple of decades. Both established “legacy churches” and newer church plants are requiring covenant affirmation as part of their membership and discipleship processes. This renewed attention to covenants bodes well for the health of local Baptist churches.

The second historic practice is redemptive church discipline, which safeguards regenerate church membership by protecting sound doctrine, promoting godly living, and pronouncing judgment on cheap grace and its effects. Though church discipline is clearly taught in New Testament passages such as Matthew 18:15–20, 1 Corinthians 5:1–13, and Galatians 6:1, the practice has fallen on hard times among many Baptists. In part, this is because we live in a hyper-individualistic culture where we assume our business is our own. We also live in a hyper-litigious culture, so many churches are also scared of lawsuits. Even many relatively healthy churches are skittish about discipline, no doubt in part because they’ve seen it or heard of it being practiced in unbiblical, sometimes even vindictive ways.

It’s important to remember that church discipline is never intended to be punitive, but redemptive. When practiced according to biblical procedures and undertaken in the right spirit, discipline is meant to bring about one of two results. Sometimes

it results in conviction and repentance in the life of the offender, whether that means drawing a true believer back to Christ or awakening a false believer to his or her need for the gospel. This is always the outcome we hope and pray for when we practice church discipline.

Unfortunately, church discipline sometimes helps to expose potentially unregenerate individuals who ignore loving correction from the Scriptures and refuse to repent of sin in their lives. In these cases, Scripture commands us to remove the offender from membership according to biblical procedures. Withdrawing membership from unrepentant sinners protects the purity of the congregation and the integrity of the church’s witness to the watching world. It also clearly communicates to the disciplined individual his or her need to repent and seek reconciliation with Christ and the church. The hope is always to see repentance, not to see the person hardened in their sin. Unfortunately, sometimes repentance doesn’t result; yet, we must resolve to obey Christ’s commands and show neighbor love to unrepentant, hardened sinners by refusing to treat them like everything is okay spiritually when there is significant evidence that it is not well with their soul.

As with church covenants, church discipline has been revived in recent years. At their 2008 annual meeting, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a resolution

titled “On Regenerate Church Membership and Church Member Restoration.” The resolution urges all Baptist churches to practice redemptive church discipline, according to biblical procedures, for the spiritual good of those disciplined, and for the cultivation of a regenerate church membership. This is an encouraging trend that conforms to Scripture and thus honors the Lord Jesus Christ.

### CONCLUSION

Baptists should rejoice in the Reformation and its legacy. The Bible alone is our supreme authority for faith and practice, and our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness. But we should also be grateful that our Baptist forebears were willing to reform the Reformation by applying those principles to the life of the church, especially the practice of church membership. The church must always be reformed according to Scripture. In a generation, may we look back on the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the era when Southern Baptists recommitted themselves to understanding local churches as communities of disciples who walk together for the sake of worship, witness and service. ★

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# THE



# REFORMATION

# & RELIGIOUS

# LIBERTY

A CONSCIENCE  
BOUND TO  
GOVERNMENT  
OR GOD?

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*Andrew T. Walker  
and Casey Hough*

**O** N OCTOBER 31, 1517, an Augustinian monk with a carpenter's mallet called for a public debate over the sale of indulgences. This monk, whom we know as Martin Luther, dared to assume that the doctrines and practices of the medieval church were not above biblical scrutiny. Luther's conscience, as he would later declare, was held captive to the Word of God, not the institutions and traditions of men.

Luther's conviction regarding the primacy of Scripture led him to recognize two different realms (or kingdoms) of authority. There was

the kingdom of Christ, which was a spiritual realm, and there was the kingdom of world, which was a natural realm. Luther believed that Christians lived in both realms and had to learn to navigate life in both without conflating the two.

Luther, however, was not the only reformer who recognized and affirmed distinct realms of authority. John Calvin, a second-generation French reformer, carried the torch that Luther's lit, arguing not only for two kingdoms of



authority but also for the freedom of the believer's conscience to willingly embrace the commands of the Lord in joyous obedience without compulsion by the law. When Luther's understanding of two overlapping, yet distinct realms of authority was combined with Calvin's understanding of the freedom of conscience by later generations of Christians, the foundational principles of religious liberty emerged.

### INCONSISTENCY ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

During their lifetimes, however, neither Luther nor Calvin can be considered consistent champions of religious liberty. While both developed theologies of the two-kingdoms and argued for certain principles of freedom, they, like all people, were prone to inconsistency and were men of their era. Neither man could be considered a child of the Enlightenment, whose emphasis on individual rights helped pave the way for modern paradigms of religious liberty. For example, on one hand, Luther can be found arguing for the separation of the church from the empire, while on the other, he can be found attempting to use officials in the government to further aspects of his reformation. Such was true of Calvin as well, even though he ministered during a different generation of the Reformation.

Luther and Calvin's views of the relationship of the government to the church seemed to develop over time. As the reformers transitioned from being a persecuted minority to a popular majority in their regions, their views on the distinctions between church and state began to blur. Luther did not want the empire, who was inextricably tied to the Roman Catholic Church at the time, to have any influence in the life of the Lutheran churches. He also seemed, however, to have no real opposition to the persecution and execution of the Anabaptists, who were attempting to follow Zwingli's reforms to their logical conclusion. Calvin was also complicit in blurring the lines of church and state. This was especially evident in his later writings. In Calvin's final edition of the *Institutes*, the divine appointment of the state's role in the life of the church is clear. Heresy and blasphemy were not simply destructive to the life of the church; they were also a threat to the stability of the state. Hence, when the anti-Trinitarian Michael Servetus stood trial in Geneva, in spite of his personal pleading for him to repent of his heresy, Calvin still endorsed his execution.

In sum, Luther and Calvin's understanding of religious liberty tended to vacillate depending on their situations.

Their example is an important reminder to those of us who admire their contributions to theology and modern society. While there is much to be thankful for in their lives and ministries, especially as it relates to the principles of religious liberty, Luther and Calvin were both flawed and inconsistent men.

### LESSONS FOR TODAY

As modern observers of the Reformation—and even more so, as Reformation Christians in the Baptist tradition—we must be mindful of the inherent dangers of wedding the church to the government or a political power. Government has the responsibility to reward workers of righteousness and deter workers of unrighteousness. However, when Paul spoke in Romans 13 regarding righteousness and justice, he was not thinking that Rome was to apply the Mosaic law to its citizens. Those laws were for a specific people during a specific time of redemptive history for a specific purpose. Instead, Paul had in mind a more natural understanding of good and evil as understood by all post-Flood societies and preserved in the Noahic covenant. A government that rewards good and punishes evil in its natural realm of authority is a good government that should be obeyed by God's people (1 Pet. 2:14). On the other hand, the church operates in a spiritual realm with the delegated



authority of the risen Christ himself. To be sure, these realms of authority will overlap and interact with one another. One cannot affirm the sovereign lordship of Christ, whose lordship shapes consciences, and deny its impact upon people's relationship to the state as citizens. The gospel is

Scriptures alone, and the freedom of man's conscience, they also used the government to further aspects of their reformation and condoned the executions of those "guilty" of heresy and blasphemy. Using the power of the state to uphold distinctly ecclesial concerns is not a Reformation practice that

Rome's control over earthly empires, became a movement all too willing to use the coercive power of the state.

In the end, the lesson for present-day readers is that we need to think deeply about how the principle of religious liberty should shape and inform our practice of religious liberty advocacy. As Luther and Calvin demonstrated, no degree of theological precision or biblical conservatism is immune to the temptation afforded by political power. Even when one claims that "Scripture alone" is their final authority, it is still easy to forget what belongs to God and what belongs to Caesar (Matt. 22:15-22). Failure to think clearly and consistently in this regard will compromise one's principled stance on religious liberty. We do not advocate for religious liberty so that we can become the dominant religious influence in a culture or advance our religious ideals alone. We advocate for religious liberty because the conscience of every person belongs to God, not the government. ★

**AS LUTHER AND CALVIN DEMONSTRATED,  
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TEMPTATION AFFORDED BY POLITICAL POWER.**

fundamentally a public truth with real implications for our relationship to the natural or political order. Even still, the lines of delineation between the two kingdoms must not be blurred. To be a citizen of the United States is not the same as being a citizen of the Kingdom of Christ. The latter is fundamentally more important than the former.

Luther and Calvin's greatest contributions to religious liberty were in principle, not practice. For while both extolled the sovereignty of God, the ultimate accountability of man to the

contemporary Christians should mimic. As demonstrated by their early lives and writings, it is often those of the persecuted minority who make the greatest ideological contribution to religious liberty. Sadly, as the persecuted minority gained more political influence, they had an awful tendency to become the persecuting majority. For Luther and Calvin, the sobering irony of their journey is that, in a very real sense, at least politically, they became what they protested. Their movement of protest, which sought independence from

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THE ROLE OF THE

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*ANABAPTISTS*

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IN THE REFORMATION & TODAY

*Jason G. Duesing*

**O**NE MAN'S NOISE IS another man's symphony. Indeed, the Anabaptists are more often thought of as clanging nuisances of history many have sought to mute or dismiss. In the years following Martin Luther's first strides toward reformation, the sirens of the Anabaptists concussed in strident discord to Huldreich Zwingli and the Swiss reformer's idea of a Magisterial Reformation. Many were stamped with the label of Münster revolutionary, a mischievous sect, who many solemnly swore were up to no good.

Yet, as William Estep argued in *Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533): A Source Book*, the main and most influential

stream of "Anabaptism might well be, outside the Reformation itself, the most influential movement the sixteenth century spawned" for "concepts such as religious liberty and its concomitant, the separation of church and state, may be directly traced to sixteenth century Anabaptism." G. H. Williams sought to recognize the Anabaptist movement

as a "Fourth" Reformation as distinct as "Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Anglicanism" in terms of significance for the "rise of modern Christianity."<sup>1</sup> Williams identified three groups of Anabaptists: revolutionary, contemplative and evangelical—with the latter most theologically close to the Magisterial Reformers in terms of their doctrines of the



sole authority of Scripture and justification by faith alone.

### “THE FALL OF THE CHURCH”

The early evangelical Anabaptists in Zurich were trained by Zwingli in the humanist tradition of returning to the original sources for doctrinal development. This careful study of the Bible in its original languages led several of the Anabaptists to press Zwingli for New Testament fidelity when it came to ecclesiology. The basis for much of this disagreement arises over the placement of what the reformers called “the fall of the church.” For the Anabaptists, they concluded and maintained that the point at which the church fell or entered into a period of sustained corruption was the point at which “church and state were united under Constantine.”<sup>2</sup> Estep explains in *The Anabaptist Story* that the reformers by and large saw the Constantinian era “as a period of the church’s triumph” and thus did not come to see the church as ever achieving a complete fall. Rather, they focused on Papal corruption and sought to reform the existing structure from within.

### DISAGREEMENT OVER BAPTISM

An obvious area of disagreement, of course, occurred over the doctrine of baptism. However, when the Anabaptists moved to embrace believer’s baptism (not yet

immersion), it was a move they felt was obligatory not because they saw baptism now as participating in the act of salvation, but rather because they saw it intrinsically linked to the establishment of a free church separate from the state. As Estep explains, “Each of the terms [they] used was intended to convey the meaning of baptism as the deliberate, voluntary act of a committed disciple of Jesus Christ. Therefore, baptism for the believer symbolizes his newness of life and his determination to follow Christ even unto death. . . . Without it, the visible church could not exist.”<sup>3</sup> Further, the Anabaptists saw the recovery of the church as intrinsically connected to the recovery of the gospel itself. Estep says in *The Anabaptist Story*, “The nature of the gospel and of man’s response to it are also reasons [for rejecting the baptism of infants]. Faith, man’s response to the proclaimed word, is the foundation of the church. Only the faithful are qualified for baptism and church membership.”

Thus, it was in Zürich on January 21, 1525, the first Anabaptists left the prevalent and state-mandated tradition of infant baptism and followed their biblical convictions that true baptism should be administered solely to believers, and that such believer’s baptism should function as the entrance into membership of the local church.

Estep recounts the significance of this event:

On this fateful night the concept of a Believers’ Church based upon a voluntary confession of faith confirmed by the act of public baptism found concrete realization in history. Thus, from a handful of radicals in Switzerland and South Germany who preferred to call themselves Brethren in Christ, the Free Church movement sprang.<sup>4</sup>

Signaling the reemergence of the Free Church, these were songs of harmonic precision providing the motivating accompaniment for the beginnings of an ecclesiastical revolution.

### DEVELOPING ENEMIES

The Anabaptists developed multiple enemies for their actions. Leonard Verduin describes the developments among the Anabaptists as the “second front” of concern for Magisterial Reformers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin. On the one hand, the Magisterial Reformers’ first front of concern was clearly the actions and reactions of the Roman Catholics to their call for church reformation. The Magisterial Reformers desired to *reform* the Catholic Church in all areas of corruption by rightly establishing the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ by faith alone as the center of faith and practice. On the other hand, the Magisterial Reformers were concerned with the Anabaptists’ desire to move beyond church reform to complete *restoration* of the church to its New Testament origins.

There is an episode in the great early 2000s television series, *The West Wing*, that depicts the Ivy-League-PhD-President, attempting to boil down complex arguments of foreign relations and the economy into pithy 10-word statements in order to show his ability to play political ball with his homespun, down-to-earth, challenger for his re-election. After attempting over several weeks, the president finally concludes that some things are just too complicated for 10-word statements. He says, “It is not the first 10 words that matter anyway. It’s the next 10. And the 10 after that.” Such is the case when attempting to formulate a concise answer for why the Anabaptists were hunted and put to death. In truth, there were many factors, and like much of the history of persecution, even dating back to the death of Jesus, there are lies, misunderstandings and overall failures to agree exactly why it is that Group A is seeking the death of Group B. However, if I were to attempt to boil it down to one word, that word would be treason.

THE PRICE TO BE PAID FOR DEFENDING  
BIBLICAL CHURCH DISTINCTIVES IN  
THIS CLIMATE WAS MORE OFTEN  
THAN NOT THE ULTIMATE PRICE.

The Magisterial Reformers saw the economic and political ramifications of separating the church from the state and looked at the melding of these two under Constantine as a fit exercise for Christian civil and religious expression. For them, membership in the church (as well as recognition of citizenship with the state) was contingent upon one's baptism as an infant. Just as the state carried the sword for the purpose of maintaining and establishing justice, so too did the church support the sword for the purpose of maintaining and establishing truth. Capital punishment was the sentence for acts or beliefs that many evangelicals today freely endorse, but the reformers considered treasonous.

While Western theologians today are quick to place doctrines such as ecclesiology, eschatology and perhaps even variances of anthropology on the lowest rungs of what is essential for 21<sup>st</sup> century New Testament Christianity, it is a mistake to view the cultural climates of past centuries, such as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as operating under the same doctrinal classifications. To be sure, in modern America where differences over the doctrine of the church do not merit the sentence of capital punishment, such issues do not seem as essential as to how one answers the contemporary evangelical question, "If you died tonight, how certain would you be that you would be in Heaven?" However, because the Anabaptists' cultural milieu was far more complex and costly, ecclesiological distinctives became the battleground for conserving the gospel essentials.

## SEEING TODAY'S VALUE

What value do the Anabaptists have for evangelicals today?

First, the Anabaptists of the 16<sup>th</sup> century are helpful lenses through which to find instruction and encouragement, but cannot serve as the *de facto* path for church structure and interaction with the civil and popular culture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nor should those of us in the Baptist tradition expend

effort to build or rebuild a case for some kind of historical connectedness from Augusta in 1845 to Zurich in 1525. Rather, contemporary Baptists, and truly all free church evangelicals, share an indebtedness to the Anabaptists for the ecclesiological principles they pioneered and founded on New Testament truth. Herein lies the basis of a connection to them.

Second, the Anabaptists can serve as a model for how to endure and face suffering and persecution, especially when it's due to misunderstanding of one's beliefs or through blatant injustice. As we have seen, in Switzerland and South Germany in 1525

the distance between believer's baptism, the believers' church, the gospel and death was short. The price to be paid for defending biblical church distinctives in this climate was more often than not the ultimate price. Yet, these believers were standing under the conviction of what they perceived to be the biblical means for protecting gospel essentials: The preservation and right articulation of the gospel can only be accomplished through the preservation and right articulation of the church.

When thinking about the role of the Anabaptists in the Reformation and today, I am encouraged by Timothy George's conclusion regarding the Anabaptists in his *Theology of the Reformers*. He affirms that despite "the shadow of opprobrium cast over them by their sixteenth-century opponents" the Anabaptist movement "gave birth to a new form of Christian faith and life." In short, what many have found cacophonous noise, should now be heard as symphonious. ★

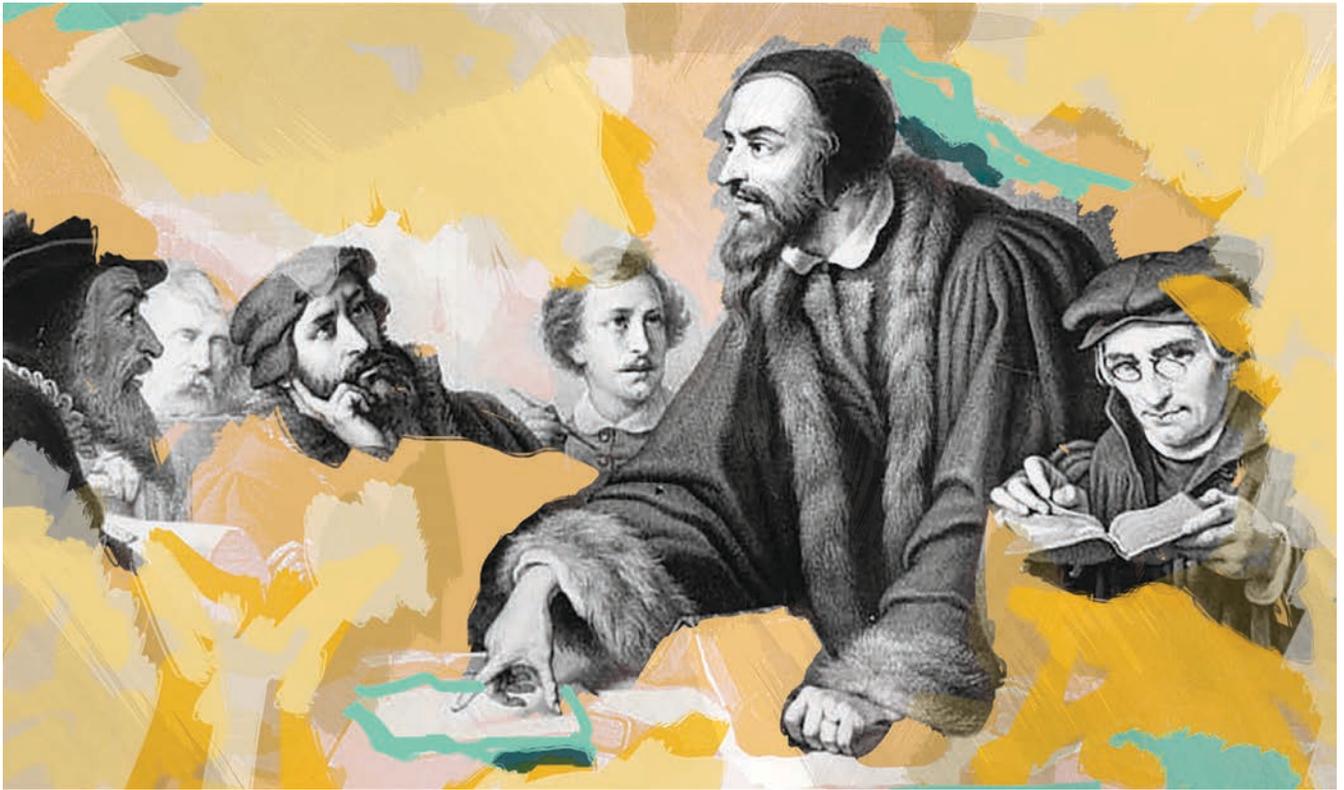
<sup>1</sup> George H. Williams, ed., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers (Westminster John Knox, 1957)*, 19.

<sup>2</sup> W.R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, (Eerdmans, 1996), 241.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>4</sup> William R. Estep, "A Believing People: Historical Background," in *The Concept of the Believers' Church: Addresses from the 1967 Louisville Conference*. Ed. James Leo Garrett, Jr. (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1969), 45.

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*HOW THE*  
*Reformation*  
*Cultivated*  
*THE Best Kind*  
*OF Citizen*

*Joey Cochran*

**O** *N FEBRUARY 23, 1542*, two pack saddle makers named Jaques Eymn and Robert Breysson appeared before something called the Genevan Consistory. John Calvin and seven others, made up of pastoral and municipal leadership, presided over the Consistory that day.

Because of their trade, Eymn and Breysson frequently drew the business of merchants from distant countries, who came under the hospitable influence of their households. In light of that, Eymn was reprimanded by the members of the Consistory for the “course of his household” and the “words they used among themselves.” He was instructed to learn the Apostles’ Creed and the Lord’s Prayer and to return in three weeks to demonstrate this learning. Breysson received a similar reprimand.

The following Thursday, Pernete and Tevenete, Breysson’s wife and Eymn’s

wife respectively, appeared before the Consistory. It asked Pernete about the manner of her home, of her spiritual condition, her servants' and maids' spiritual condition, and whether household worship and devotion took place. Likewise, the Consistory expected Pernete to articulate her faith by demonstrating knowledge of the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer. It admonished her to

## THE STRONGEST NON-VERBAL WITNESS CHRISTIANS CAN GIVE THEIR NEIGHBORS AND CITIES AT THIS STAGE IN HISTORY IS A DISTINCTIVE DEMONSTRATION OF A STRONG CHRISTIAN ETHIC AT WORK AND IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

replace playing board games, cards and dice—all of which entailed gambling—with Bible reading. The Consistory encouraged Tevenete to purchase a Bible for her home, to show it to her guests and to make sure that her servants and maids did not blaspheme or offend God with their conversation.<sup>1</sup>

Before we come to the preconceived notion that John Calvin, Pierre Viret, Theodore Beza or any other leader in Geneva went to some sort of extreme or crossed a line in dealing with these pack saddle makers and their wives, we need to remember that there was a very real fear and opportunity with these two households. The fear was that their homes could be hovels for conspiracy against Protestant Geneva. Much of the world outside of Geneva was

Roman Catholic, and during this time, it wasn't just ideas that were at war. Rather, people were in violent conflict with one another. Environments like these two homes could be a staging place for plots against the city.

There was also an opportunity: If these pack saddle makers had a sincere faith in Christ, they might be a great influence to all their commercial clients coming into Geneva for their product. They could plant seeds of Protestantism by their virtue, ethic and piety—both with their work, how they lived their lives in the home and how they spoke the gospel to their clients.

### THE ROLE OF THE GENEVAN CONSISTORY

The Genevan Consistory that interacted with

families like Emyn's and Breysson's played a crucial civil and sacred function for the city-state of Geneva. Those pastors and magistrates, who served weekly on the counsel, collaborated on a project to create a Christian city that would be a model to continental Europe and beyond. We typically think of a single figure, a Magisterial Reformer like John Calvin, when we think of the Reformation, and we forget that it was a collaborative project involving every citizen.<sup>2</sup>

The Geneva Consistory was a strategic effort of Christian leaders to bring the work for the city and for heaven together as a single initiative. Thus, it was a collaboration of city officials and pastors. Those building the city of heaven wanted it planted on earth,

and Geneva was, for Calvin and his colleagues, ground zero of their project. This involved fostering Christian virtue, ethics and true spirituality in every citizen.

One instrument they used to accomplish this aim was catechesis—primarily starting with the Apostles' Creed and the Lord's Prayer—two resources upon which Roman Catholics and Protestants agreed. All the content of the gospel is found in the Apostles' Creed, and knowledge of it is a valuable measure to see if individuals have an earnest interest in the gospel. The Lord's Prayer taught people in what way to pray. The Consistory also employed church discipline as an instrument to hold citizens accountable to the values of Christian virtue and ethic found in the Scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

The project of Christendom in Geneva was but one project of many in continental Europe—like those in Zurich, Strasbourg or the Dutch Republic—that informed what would become the Puritan movement in England and would inspire those who migrated to America.

### THE DETERIORATION OF BUSINESS AND HOUSEHOLD ETHICS

The reformed household and work ethic represented in this project functioned to offer credibility to the gospel, and where the gospel flourished, it seemed apparent that businesses and households also flourished. This Christian work ethic is fundamentally rooted within the Reformation. Business and household practices in America were originally shaped by these ethical and spiritual values, but America is in a desperate plight because of the deterioration of these ethics. As evidence of this plight, secular institutions like

state colleges recognize this and now require business ethics courses in their curriculum. Furthermore, organizations like *Healthy Families America* have to exist to fill the need of protecting children of abuse.

## HOW TO BE THE BEST CITIZENS

In light of this deterioration, sincerely converted gospel-loving Christians, who live the gospel and practice a Christian business and household ethic, have a tremendous opportunity to bear witness and produce fruit. The strongest non-verbal witness Christians can give their neighbors and cities at this stage in history is a distinctive demonstration of a strong Christian ethic at work and in the household. Simply put, Christians ought to be the best citizens.<sup>4</sup> Here are a few suggestions for how we, as believers, can do this:

**1. Change the way we view our professions.** Christians have accidentally elevated pastoral and non-for-profit vocations above “secular” vocations. The Reformation viewed every vocation as a special, holy calling, and workers viewed their profession in that way. So, we should fall in love with our vocations.

**2. Tie our performances and efforts to our calling as Christians.** We’re called to “work heartily for the Lord.” Our hard work comes from a desire to love and glorify God, so we should make that known to our colleagues.

**3. Live distinctively from our colleagues.** We should stop affirming their moral failures for the sake of being sympathetic. When one of our colleagues tells you he is getting a divorce or has had an affair, plead with them to turn

from sin and reconcile with God and his or her spouse.

**4. In our homes, we ought to catechize our children.** We should be intentional about discipling them ourselves. Yes, we let the church help, but we need to take the primary responsibility for nurturing our kids’ spiritual development in the home.

**5. When we offer hospitality in our homes, we should consider inviting our friends or extended family member to participate in family catechesis.** We may not have a house-staff for our home, but we may have someone who cleans the home, treats the lawn with fertilizer, controls pests or delivers our mail. We should treat them with courtesy and neighborly love. We can give them a tip or a Christmas bonus, telling them it’s because of God’s generosity to us.

And, as with anyone we’re seeking to share the gospel with, a non-verbal witness, like a strong business and household ethic, is insufficient. All of this has to be reinforced with the proclamation of the gospel, for this was the distinctive mark of the Reformation—the Word of God proclaimed.

The Reformation shaped how Christians led in the marketplace and managed the home. It elevated a person’s sense of vocation, stimulated literacy and learning and rekindled moral and ethical virtues that fell to the wayside during the Late Medieval era. Though late moderns don’t view themselves as barbaric and ignorant as late medieval people, we’re not that far removed by moral and ethical standards.

We can learn from the way pastors and city leaders during the Reformation collaborated for the sake of the common good and how they emphasized that each home was a space for catechesis and Christian witness. The best kind of citizens convey their heavenly citizenship to others by their ethical practices in their homes and at their work places. Combined with proclaiming the gospel, these practices will certainly bear fruit for both Christ’s kingdom and the common good of American society. ★

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<sup>1</sup> Robert M. Kingdon, Thomas A. Lambert, and Isabella M. Watt, eds; M. Wallace McDonald, trans; Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin, Volume 1: 1542-1544 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 8-13.

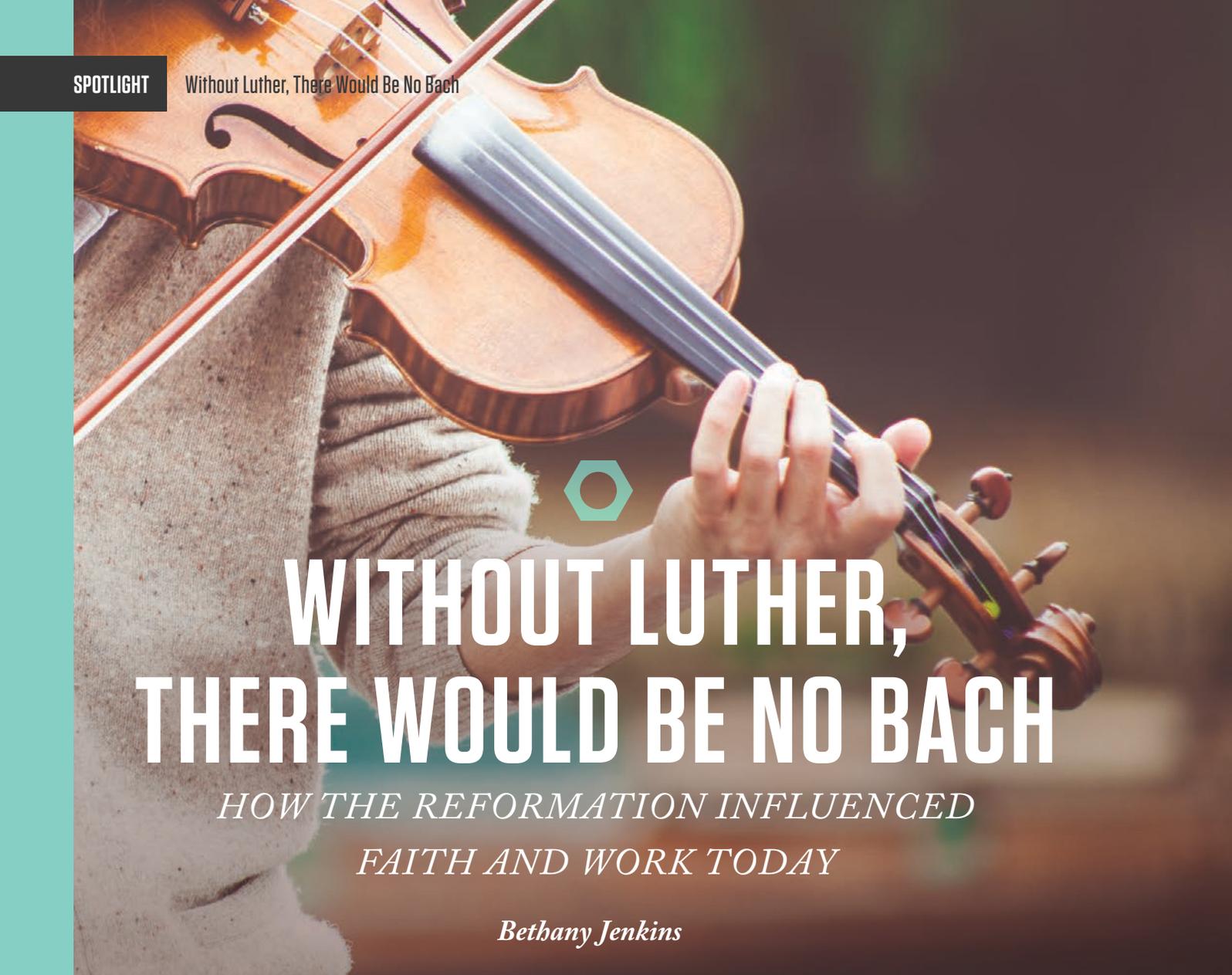
<sup>2</sup> The best introduction to Calvin’s leadership in Geneva, his company of pastors, and the consistory is: Scott M. Manetsch, Calvin’s Company of Pastors: Pastoral Care and the Emerging Reformed Church, 1536-1609 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. John Witte, Jr., The Reformation of Rights: Law, Religion, and Human Rights in Early Modern Calvinism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 43-45 for Calvin’s early two-kingdoms view and pp. 56-58 on his mature view on rights that blur the two kingdoms.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Bucer, the Strasbourg reformer, made this very argument for Protestants in One Should Not Live for Oneself Alone (Steven E. Ozment, The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-Century Germany and Switzerland [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975], 64-66).

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# WITHOUT LUTHER, THERE WOULD BE NO BACH

*HOW THE REFORMATION INFLUENCED  
FAITH AND WORK TODAY*

*Bethany Jenkins*

**M**ARTIN LUTHER NEVER MET JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH. THE TWO GERMANS WERE BORN MORE THAN 200 YEARS APART. BUT WITHOUT LUTHER, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO BACH.

*AT 48 YEARS OLD*, when Bach received a copy of Luther's translation of the Bible, he made extensive notes in its margins, allowing it to shape his theology of music. Near 1 Chronicles 25, a listing of David's musicians, he wrote, "This chapter is the true foundation of all God-pleasing music." By 2 Chronicles 5:11–14, which speaks of temple musicians worshipping God, he wrote, "At a reverent performance of music, God is always at hand with his gracious presence."

Embodying a Lutheran theology of work, Bach viewed all of his music—whether sacred hymns or secular cantatas—as a calling from God. He believed his work had two purposes: "The final aim and reason of all music is nothing other than (1) the glorification of God and (2) the refreshment of the spirit." Thus, he signed all of his church music and most of his secular music with the letters "S.D.G."—*Soli Deo Gloria*, Glory to God Alone.

Without Luther, Bach wouldn't have understood the dignity of all work—both sacred and secular—nor the idea of work as a means to love one's neighbor.

But how did Luther come to understand these things?

## **THOSE WITH A 'CALLING'**

Luther was born into a church culture that celebrated religious work above all else. In the late middle ages, only priests and other church workers had "callings"

and “vocations.” They were part of the “spiritual estate.” Everyone else—from farmers to lawyers to kings—had necessary but worldly occupations.

The rise of monastic spirituality, which called religious workers out of the everyday world and into the desert or the monastery, only reinforced this perspective. The laity was second-class. Life was divided into the “sacred” and the “secular.” And the priesthood of all believers was marginalized.

This problem was not lost on Luther.

### LOVE GROWS BY WORKS OF LOVE

Luther wanted to connect faith and everyday life. All of us, he reasoned, are priests—no matter how ordinary our lives:

It is pure [fiction] that the Pope, bishops, priests, and monks are called the “spiritual estate” while princes, lords, artisans, and farmers are called the “temporal estate.” This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy. Yet no one need be intimidated by it, and that for this reason: all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there is no difference among them except that of office. . . . We are all consecrated priests by baptism, as St. Peter says: “You are a royal priesthood and a priestly realm” (1 Pet. 2:9). The Apocalypse says: “Thou hast made us to be kings and priests by thy blood” (Rev. 5:9–10).

“Vocation,” then, included religious work as well as nonreligious—domestic duties, civic engagement and ordinary employment. What made work “Christian” wasn’t the type of work being done but the



faith of the one doing it. Luther writes in *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*:

The works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they may be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks, but all works are measured before God by faith alone.

Such faith, he believed, was evidenced by our everyday work. “Love grows by works of love,” Luther posted to the doors of All Saints’ Church in Wittenberg (Thesis 44). For him, work was one of the best ways to love one’s neighbor. As Tim Keller summarizes in *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Word*,

When we work, we are, as those in the Lutheran tradition often put it, the “fingers of God,” the agents of his providential love for others. This understanding elevates the purpose of work from making a living to loving our neighbor.

### LABOR OF VARIOUS KINDS

John Calvin and those in the Calvinist tradition, like Abraham Kuyper, further enriched our understanding of work. Not only is it as a means to love one’s neighbor, it’s also a means to love and glorify God. In light of the narrative arc of Scripture as creation, fall, redemption and restoration, every Christian has a calling to create and bring forth the wonders of the created order. Keller explains in *Every Good Endeavor*:

Yes, we must love our neighbor, but Christianity gives us very specific teachings about human nature and what makes human beings flourish. We must ensure that our work is done in line with these understandings. Faithful work, then, is to operate out of a Christian “worldview.”

In other words, our faith informs how we approach our work itself—not merely how we approach our neighbor. It is an arena in which we can love and glorify God himself, offering our work by faith to him (Col. 3:23). Practicing law, for example, isn’t merely a way to love one’s neighbor; it is also a way to



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advance biblical justice in our communities. Put another way, God doesn't just care about lawyers; he also cares about the law (Prov. 8:15; 11:1).

### TOOLS IN A TOOLKIT

Although some pit Luther and Calvin against each other in their views on faith and work, the two reformers are closer than we might imagine. Both championed the dignity of all work and denied distinctions between the "sacred" and the "secular." They both clung to the priesthood of all believers, celebrating the ordinary work done by all people.

Where Luther focused on work as a means of neighbor love, though, Calvin focused on work as a means of loving and glorifying God. As Greg Forster helpfully explained to me:

Luther strongly resisted any direct connection between our work and God, fearing that would be works righteousness. God put a calling on our works, Luther reasoned, because he wants us to serve our neighbors, not because he wants us to serve him. As Luther once said, "God doesn't need your good works,

but your neighbor does." And he meant it. But Calvin insisted our daily work must love and serve and glorify God himself, directly, in addition to loving our neighbors.

Although this is a sharp point of contrast between the two, the ideas aren't opposed to one another. We might think of them as tools in a toolkit—useful in different contexts.

In places where work is more static—where people stay in their jobs for many years or do the same activity day after day (often so-called "blue collar" work)—the Lutheran idea of work as a means of neighbor love can be life-sustaining. Indeed, it encourages all of us to be faithful in our everyday jobs—even when we can't see everything God is accomplishing through our labor.

People in different vocational seasons, too, may find endurance in Luther's idea of work as neighbor love. Last year, for example, when I was turning 40 and asking existential questions about whether my work mattered, Luther's theology sustained me. Even on the days I felt most disconnected from any larger effect of my work, I knew I was loving my

neighbors—my readers, my students, my colleagues—through my everyday work.

But in places where work is more *dynamic*—where people change jobs and pursue various expressions of calling (often so-called "white collar" work)—Calvin's emphasis on work as a means of loving and glorifying God is life-giving. It can help those who wonder how their faith affects their work in, say, acting or advertising. Calling Christians in such workplaces to search the Scriptures for applicable principles is a necessary part of discipleship and sanctification.

### OFFERED BY FAITH

Of course, Luther, Calvin and the other reformers touched on many other aspects of faith and work, which we continue to discuss and debate today.

Yet the life and work of Bach can teach us what the Reformation so beautifully captured—that our jobs can both love neighbor and glorify God. Through them we can embody the great commandments (Matt. 22:36–40). May we, therefore, offer our work to God by faith. ★

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# PROTESTANTS AND CATHOLICS IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

AN INTERVIEW WITH PRINCETON'S ROBERT P. GEORGE

*Andrew T. Walker*



**B**ecause this issue of *Light Magazine* focuses on the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation, I interviewed the esteemed Catholic and conservative intellectual Robert P. George, McCormack Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University. While Catholics and Protestants disagree on important matters related to theology, both find themselves as allies on social issues facing the culture. I interviewed Professor George about the relationship between Protestants and Catholics working together on issues in the public square. The interview has been edited.

**ANDREW T. WALKER:** Protestants and Catholics have many points in their respective theological systems where they disagree with one another but have often found themselves united together as co-belligerents when it comes to issues in the public square. What does it mean to be a co-belligerent? And what has been your experience in working with Protestants around issues that are likewise important to Catholics?

**ROBERT P. GEORGE:** Protestants and Catholics certainly have important

points of disagreement, but even theologically they have profound points of agreement, too, beginning with the historic Christian creeds. The same is true of the Eastern Orthodox. And even some apparent points of disagreement turn out on close inspection and careful reflection to be rooted in historic misunderstandings (and, regrettably, antipathies) rather than in actual substantive disagreement. I say all this not to downplay the important points of disagreement but to put them in perspective. Historically, I believe, the points of disagreement have been exaggerated by people on both sides and the points of agreement underappreciated. All of this makes me a bit unenthusiastic about our relating to each other merely as “co-belligerents,” as opposed to relating to each other as Christian brothers—which is what I think we are.

Speaking very personally, I cannot think of Russell Moore as a mere “co-belligerent.” He’s a brother. My brother. My Christian brother. Sorry if anyone is offended by that, but that’s what he is. Jesus Christ, crucified, risen and ascended to the Father, is the third person in our relationship. It is our shared faith in Christ and our mutual desire to serve him that is at the heart of the work we do together, and the bond that has formed between us. Now, that work can, without exaggeration, be analogized to warfare. We are “fighting” for the sanctity of human life in all stages and conditions; for marriage as the conjugal union of husband and wife; for religious freedom and the rights of conscience. So, yes, we are “co-belligerents,” in that sense. But please note that we are not two guys fighting on the same side for different reasons. We are fighting on the same side for the same reasons. We stand together, we fight side by side, for justice and human rights because we believe that human beings are precious—they are creatures fashioned by God himself in his own image and likeness. Christ suffered and died for their sins. Their dignity and flourishing matter. And Russell and I both understand that as disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to take up our cross and follow him in self-sacrificial love.

**ATW:** What are the limits (or boundaries) to this kind of cooperation?

**RPG:** I’m not sure there are limits, beyond the obvious obligation not to compromise one’s convictions even for the sake of good fellowship. Basically, that is a duty of truth-telling and personal integrity. It applies to everybody.

**ATW:** Regarding ethics, one area that Catholics have tended to emphasize and Protestants minimize is the topic of natural law—the teaching that there is an objective moral order discernible through human reason. Why do you believe that natural law should be a priority in how Protestants and evangelicals defend the sanctity of life, marriage and religious liberty? How do you respond to Protestant

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HIMSELF IN HIS OWN IMAGE AND LIKENESS.

objections that natural law isn't persuasive in the public square?

**RPG:** The most influential modern exponent of natural law was a Protestant—a Baptist—named Martin Luther King. Like his namesake, Martin Luther, he believed in natural law. King articulated the case for natural law beautifully in his famous Letter from a Birmingham Jail. Protestants and Catholics alike should read it—often. It teaches what Christian natural law theorists, such as St. Thomas Aquinas, have always understood, namely, that faith and reason are not in opposition or even tension. Reason, though fallen and fallible, is a gift of God to be used to support faith and to understand all that is to be understood by human inquiry, investigation, and deliberation regarding the orders of creation—including the moral order. What is more, disciplined thinking—reasoning—can help us more fully grasp the meaning even of moral truths revealed in Scripture.

Take, for example, the teaching of Genesis 2 that marriage is a one-flesh union. What does that mean? How can two separate human beings, a man and a woman, become “one body” or “one flesh”? Does the Bible intend that image merely as a metaphor to describe



an especially intense emotional bond? Or is it literally true? The answer is that it is literally true. But to grasp that, it is necessary to think philosophically about the question, as Sherif Girgis, Ryan Anderson, and I do in our book *What is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense*.

And then take the issues of abortion and embryo-destructive research. Are human embryos and fetuses actual human beings, or merely “potential” human beings? If they are human beings, are they “persons,” or merely “potential” persons? Is killing them wrong, despite the fact that abortion and embryo-destructive research are nowhere expressly mentioned in the Bible? These questions are answerable, but we need to do the science and philosophy—and do them right—to get to the correct answers. (In case you want to know, human embryos are, as a matter of scientific fact, human beings, not mere “potential” human beings, and all human beings are persons bearing a profound, inherent, and equal dignity—which is why abortion and embryo-destructive research are grave injustices and moral evils.)

**ATW:** Who have been some of the greatest Protestant and evangelical Christians who you've worked with on matters related to the public square?

**RPG:** I have already mentioned my dear brother Russell Moore. It was my very high honor to work closely on many projects with the late and very great Chuck Colson. He was like a big brother to me. Through Chuck and his Catholic pal Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, I got to know another Southern Baptist who became a dear brother and collaborator: Timothy George. Chuck assigned Timothy and me the task of drafting the Manhattan Declaration. I have also had the honor of working closely with James Dobson, who is truly a hero to me. There is a man who stands up for what is right and cannot be bought or bullied into yielding an inch! When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we beg God to spare us from temptation. That's important, because in our weakness we know that most of us would fail the test. But if there is one man I can say with confidence would not fail, it is Jim Dobson. If witnessing to Christ would cost him his life, he would willingly lay it down. He is an inspiration.

**ATW:** What strengths do you notice in Protestantism that make it an effective witness in the public square?

**RPG:** Protestants and Catholics share their gifts with each other. It is a great strength in the current struggle, and we must continue doing it. Catholics have helped Protestants to recover the concept of natural law and to understand the value of philosophical analysis in ethics and in other domains. Protestants have helped Catholics to understand the importance and power of Scripture, especially in our personal devotion and spiritual lives. Protestants have also helped Catholics to see something that the Second Vatican Council expressly teaches but Catholics have not fully taken on board, namely, the obligation of the lay Christian to take the lead in working for the sanctification of the world. Part of what makes Evangelical Protestants effective witnesses is their understanding—in their bones—that witnessing to Christ and standing up for what is right is primarily the job of each believer. It is not an obligation that can be handed off to the institutional church.

**ATW:** In what seems like the unceasing advance of secularism in America, where do you see the future of Protestant-Catholic co-belligerency headed in the coming years?

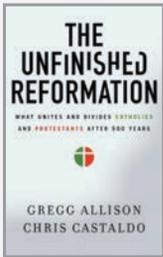
**RPG:** Liberal secularism is a pseudo-religion—it functions as an alternative to religious faith in the lives of its true believers. In the past decade, it has become clear that it is a totalizing religion. It is aggressive and, if you'll excuse the expression, strongly evangelical. It has no intention of tolerating competing points of view. It seeks social hegemony and is willing to use harsh tactics to achieve it. Those who refuse to yield to it must be destroyed or driven to the margins. If you don't believe me, just go to a place where liberal secularism is firmly in control, like Middlebury College, and say something like, “You may call him ‘Caitlin’ if you like, but Bruce Jenner is a man.” Or even something entirely impersonal, such as, “Men cannot give birth to babies.” You'll see just how “tolerant” liberal secularism is!

And let's be clear: Liberal secularism more or less calls the tune in most of the institutions of our society today, from big city governments to big business corporations to major philanthropies to educational institutions to the news and entertainment media to the mainline churches. So never was it truer to say that we Protestants and Catholics must “either hang together or hang separately.” It's a dire and, in many ways, desperate situation. But God is in charge, and the victory must come in his time and on his terms. Our obligation as Christians is simply to be faithful—to do the will of the One who sent us, no matter the cost. ★

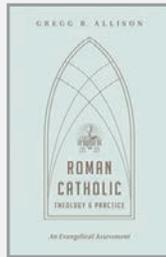
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# RESOURCES



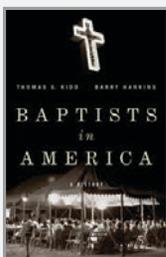
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*Gregg Allison and  
Christopher A. Castaldo*  
Zondervan, 2016



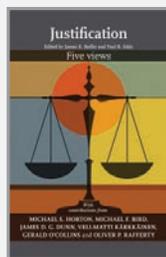
**Roman Catholic  
Theology and Practice:  
An Evangelical Assessment**  
*Gregg R. Allison*  
Crossway, 2014



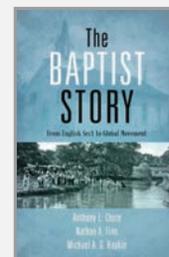
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*David F. Wells*  
Eerdmans, 2008



**Baptists in America**  
*Thomas S. Kidd  
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Oxford University Press, 2015



**Justification:  
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*James K. Beilby,  
Paul Rhodes Eddy, and  
Steven E. Enderlein, editors*  
IVP, 2011



**The Baptist Story:  
From English Sect  
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*Dr. Anthony L. Chute,  
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