



Volume 1, Issue 3

West Suffolk Epistle

Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

West Suffolk Baptist Church

“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”



June 2014

Doctrines of Grace Bible Conference

May 2 - 4, 2014

Pastor Brian Russell



There is no question that we live in an age of weak theology and casual Christianity. We have substituted intuition for truth, feeling for belief and immediate gratification for enduring hope. Evangelicalism desperately needs to return to the doctrines (Doctrines of Grace) that once before reformed the world: Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement, Irresistible grace and Perseverance of the saints.

West Suffolk Baptist Church had the distinct privilege and honor to host a “Doctrines of Grace” conference on May 2 - 4, 2014. Our guest speaker was Pastor Brian Russell, who studied at the University of South Africa and the Baptist Theological College in Johannesburg before entering the pastoral ministry in 1962. On Friday Pastor Russell preached an exposition on portions of Ephesians 1 which had to do with “*Spiritual blessings in Christ.*” Then on Saturday we heard Pastor Russell give us a brief autobiographical sketch of his walk with the Lord and how his faith as a Christian was tested over and over again. Then on Sunday morning Pastor Russell concluded the conference with another exposition on portions of Ephesians 2 which was entitled “*Saved by Grace through Faith.*” Following our service on Sunday morning everyone in attendance were invited to join us for our *First Sunday Fellowship* which was a meal and fellowship together.



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Our Church Family Enjoying Fellowship during our “Doctrines of Grace” Conference





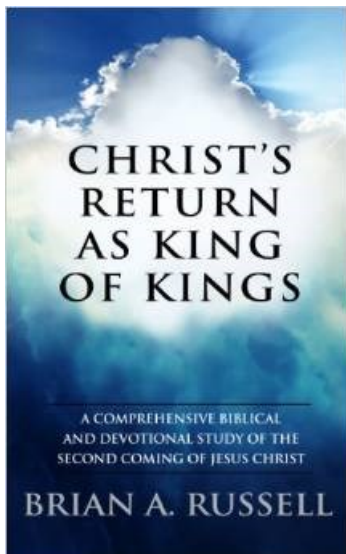
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Book Reviews

Christ's Return As King of Kings

Brian A. Russell



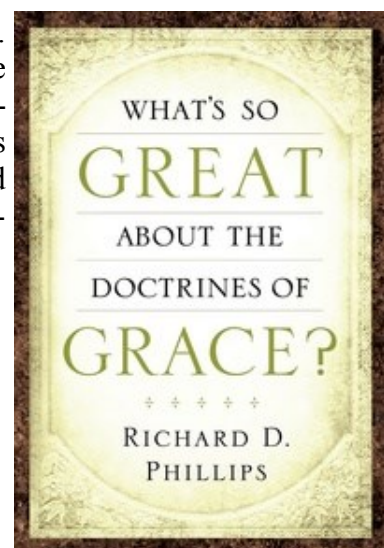
Few subjects have generated as much heat as eschatology, but what is often missed is the precious and incontrovertible truth that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day return in glory. From the author's introduction: The world is moving on, not to chaos, but to Christ; to the glorious return of our Lord whose first coming to the world forever settled its destiny. That is what the Biblical doctrine of the second coming guarantees: the manifestation of the victory of God over sin, death and Satan, bringing greater glory to His Name and greater good to humankind. History is the outworking of God's purpose, and all God's purposes center on the first and second comings of Christ to the world.

Brian A. Russell was born in South Africa and was converted at the age of seventeen. After working in the gold-mining industry for six years, he studied at the University of South Africa and the Baptist Theological College, Johannesburg, before entering the pastoral ministry in 1962. He has served churches in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Virginia, USA (where he now lives). He and his wife, Muriel, have three grown children.

What's so Great about the Doctrines of Grace?

Richard D. Phillips

In *What's So Great about the Doctrines of Grace?*, the Reverend Richard D. "Rick" Phillips shows that "the doctrines of grace," those theological tenets more popularly known as "the five points of Calvinism," are comforting, faith-strengthening, and humbling teachings. In six short chapters, Reverend Phillips demonstrates conclusively from Scripture that this view of salvation exalts God and makes plain His great love for man, which drove Him to do all that was necessary to redeem a people for Himself.





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“I Feel Super Great About Having an Abortion” — The Culture of Death Goes Viral

Emily Letts is a 25-year-old abortion counselor at the Cherry Hill Women’s Center in New Jersey whose video has gone viral. These days, videos go viral on a daily basis, and most are soon forgotten. But not this one. Emily Letts decided to make a video about her own abortion, and the result is one of the most disturbing video messages ever presented to public view.

“I feel super good about having an abortion,” Letts told Philadelphia Magazine. *“Women and men have been thirsting for something like this. You don’t have to feel guilty.”*

Her video follows her through her first-trimester abortion, undertaken at the clinic where she counsels other women. About a year after she began working at the women’s center, she found herself pregnant. As she told her story in Cosmopolitan, *“Once I caught my breath, I knew immediately I was going to have an abortion. I knew I wasn’t ready to take care of a child.”*

She was, however, ready to produce a video about her own abortion. *“I searched the Internet, and I couldn’t find a video of an actual surgical procedure in the clinic that focused on the woman’s experience,”* she wrote. *“We talk about abortion so much and yet no one really knows what it actually looks like. A first trimester abortion takes three to five minutes.”*

She chose a surgical abortion, rather than an abortion by pill, just in order to be able to tell the story. *“I could have taken the pill, but I wanted to do the one that women were most afraid of. I wanted to show it wasn’t scary — and that there is such a thing as a positive abortion story,”* she recounted. *“It’s my story.”*

So Emily Letts set out to make a video of her own abortion in order to create “a positive abortion story” that would show the world that women seeking an abortion should feel no guilt. Over and over again, she suggests that she feels absolutely no guilt about terminating the life within her.

And make no mistake — guilt is her major focus. In her words: *“I know there are women who feel great remorse. I have seen the tears. Grieving is an important part of a woman’s process, but what I really wanted to address in my video is guilt.”*

Actually, what she wants to address is her argument that the guilt women feel in having an abortion is simply imposed upon them by society. *“Our society breeds this guilt. We inhale it from all directions,”* she asserted. *“I didn’t feel bad,”* she insists. Her purpose in her video is to eradicate the link between abortion and guilt. *“I am thankful that I can share my story and inspire other women to stop the guilt.”*

She is unlikely to be successful in that aim, and her article in Cosmopolitan about the video makes that point. *“Even women who come to the clinic completely solid in their decision to have an abortion say they feel guilty for not feeling guilty,”* she acknowledged. *“Even though they know 110 percent that this is the best decision for them, they pressure themselves to feel bad about it.”*

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“I Feel Super Great About Having an Abortion” — The Culture of Death Goes Viral

Our post-Christian society has been working hard for well over a century to bury guilt in the cultural backyard and deny that guilt can be morally significant. In the wake of Sigmund Freud and the therapeutic revolution, the modern secular worldview demands that guilt be understood as the lingering residue of the Christian conscience, an experience merely forced upon us by a society that imposes oppressive moral judgments. It is to be overcome and denied, never heard.

But the Christian worldview affirms that guilt is inescapably moral, and that our experience of guilt comes from the fact that we are made in God’s image as irreducibly moral creatures. We cannot not know of our guilt, which exists as God’s gift to drive us to the knowledge that we are sinners in need of a Savior.

If Emily Letts truly believes that there is no guilt rightly associated with abortion, she would not have to insist, over and over again, that she feels no guilt. When she tells of women who *“feel guilty for not feeling guilty,”* she testifies to the fact that they are moral creatures who cannot stop making moral judgments, especially about themselves, even when they insist there is no moral judgment to be made. And this must be especially true when a woman has sought to terminate the unborn life within her.

And Emily Letts knows that the baby within her was a life. In an absolutely haunting narrative, she described her abortion in these terms:

“I knew the cameras were in the room during the procedure, but I forgot about them almost immediately. I was focused on staying positive and feeling the love from everyone in the room. I am so lucky that I knew everyone involved, and I was so supported. I remember breathing and humming through it like I was giving birth. I know that sounds weird, but to me, this was as birth-like as it could be. It will always be a special memory for me. I still have my sonogram, and if my apartment were to catch fire, it would be the first thing I’d grab.”

So her abortion was “as birth-like as it could be,” except for the fact that the entire procedure was intended to terminate the life so that the birth would never take place.

And her comments about her affection for the sonogram image of her baby? What moral sense can be made of a woman speaking her pride in the sonogram of a baby she would abort? She told Philadelphia Magazine, “I have a special relationship with my ultrasound. People say it sounds weird, it’s my process. I realize it was potential life, and I love it in my own special way. I’m not glib and cavalier. I’m comfortable with my decisions.”

She actually states that she loves the baby she aborted (while filming the process) *“in my own special way.”* In a comment posted at Cosmopolitan, she said that she did not want to give birth to the baby and then allow someone else to adopt the child because if she ever gives birth to a baby, *“I would need to be the main source of love and support for the child throughout its life.”*

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“I Feel Super Great About Having an Abortion” — The Culture of Death Goes Viral

In the case of the child she aborted, that life was very short indeed.

Her most chilling words of all are those with which she ends her video:

“It is about a month and a half after the procedure. I feel like I talk to women all the time and of course everyone feels bad about this; everyone’s going to feel guilty. It’s a given how people should feel about this, that what they’re doing is wrong. I don’t feel like a bad person. I don’t feel sad. I feel in awe of the fact that I can make a baby. I can make a life. I knew that what I was going to do was right, ’cause it was right for me and no one else. I just want to share my story.”

Friedrich Nietzsche could not have said it more clearly. This is a statement of Promethean self-assertion. It is also a concise statement of an absolutely godless worldview. She feels *“in awe of the fact that I can make a baby. I can make a life.”*

That actually explains her worldview. She grants to herself the power to give life; to “make a life.” What she gives, she can destroy. Emily giveth, and Emily taketh away.

And she is also the creator of her own moral system of value and the judge of her own solitary moral universe — *“I knew what I was going to do was right, ’cause it was right for me and no one else.”* No one else matters. According to Cosmopolitan, Emily Letts won “the Abortion Care Network’s Stigma Busting video competition” with her effort. They evidently believe that this video will help their cause.

So does Carter Eskew, former chief strategist for the Al Gore 2000 presidential campaign. Writing at The Washington Post, Eskew expressed his effusive appreciation for Emily Letts’s “brave actions.”

In his words:

“For too long, those who believe in abortion rights have been playing defense, hiding behind political locations like ‘safe, legal and rare.’ The procedure itself may have come out of the back alleys, but the affirmative case for abortion, the necessary and positive impact it has had on millions of women’s lives who weren’t ready, able or desirous of having a child, has been in a shroud of shame. With her brave actions, Letts lifted it a bit.”

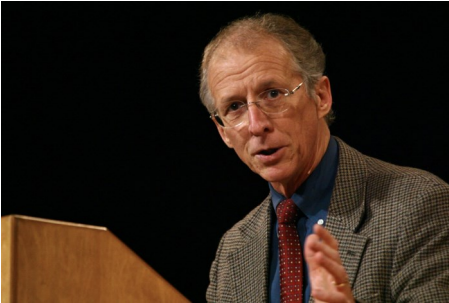
Oh yes, Emily Letts has lifted the “shroud of shame” a bit. And what she revealed is a reality about abortion that is undisguised evil. Those who strive and pray for the end of abortion should hope that this video is viewed and that her comments about it are read by millions. This video reveals the truth about abortion in a far more powerful way than its maker intended. She is, after all, the maker of a video — and not the maker of life. ~ **Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. - President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary**



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Who are some of the contributors to our Newsletter?



John Stephen Piper was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee to Bill and Ruth Piper January 11, 1946. When John and his older sister were still small the Pipers moved to Greenville, South Carolina where John spent the rest of his growing-up years. His father was an itinerant evangelist who is still actively ministering through international radio and Bible courses. John has written a tribute to his mother, who died in 1974, in the booklet, "What's the Difference" (Crossway Books, 1990) which is also chapter one of the book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Crossway Books, 1991).

At Wheaton College (1964-68), John majored in Literature and minored in Philosophy. Studying Romantic Literature with Clyde Kilby stimulated the poetic side of his nature and today he regularly writes poems to celebrate special family occasions as well as composing story-poems (based on the life of a Biblical character) for his congregation during the four weeks of Advent each year. At Wheaton John also met Noel Henry whom he married 1968.

Following college he completed a Bachelor of Divinity degree at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California (1968-71). While at Fuller, John took as many courses as he could from Dr. Daniel Fuller, the most influential "living" teacher in his life. Through Dr. Fuller he discovered the writings of Jonathan Edwards, his most influential "dead" teacher.

John did his doctoral work in New Testament Studies at the University of Munich, Munich, West Germany (1971-74). His dissertation, *Love Your Enemies*, was published by Cambridge University Press and Baker Book House. Upon completion of his doctorate he went on to teach Biblical Studies at Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota for six years (1974-80). In 1980, sensing an irresistible call of the Lord to preach, John became the senior pastor of Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota where he has been ministering ever since. Together with his people, John is dedicated to spreading a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ. John and Noël have four sons, a daughter, and an increasing number of grandchildren.

Dr. Derek W. H. Thomas is originally from Wales and is the Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at RTS Atlanta and Minister of Preaching and Teaching at First Presbyterian Church, Columbia, South Carolina. After pastoring for 17 years in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Dr. Thomas returned to the USA in 1996 where, in addition to his service to the Jackson campus as the John E. Richards Professor of Systematic and Practical Theology, he served as the Minister of Teaching at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson until 2011. In addition to serving in the pastorate, Derek has served as editor of the *Evangelical Presbyterian*, a monthly denominational magazine. A graduate of RTS in 1978, he gained a Ph.D. from the University of Wales, Lampeter in Calvin's preaching on the book of Job. He has written or edited 15 books and has contributed to commentary series by Banner of Truth and Evangelical Press.



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Who are some of the contributors to our Newsletter?

In 2004, Dr. Derek Thomas became Editorial Director for The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals and the editor of its ezine, Reformation 21 (www.reformation21.org). His interests include the music of Richard Wagner, Anton Bruckner, and Gustav Mahler, and he has a passion for good coffee and blue cheese! He has been married to his wife, Rosemary, for more than 30 years. They have two adult children, Ellen and Owen, and two grandchildren

What's in a Name?

“Hallowed be your name” is what Jesus taught His disciples to say in prayer (Matthew 6:9). It expresses a desire that the Father will be revered and praised and spoken about in a manner that befits His resplendent glory and dignity. After hearing God speak and seeing a bush on fire with no apparent sign of being burned up, Moses asked, “What is your name?” In reply, God first said, “I am who I am” (or “I will be what I will be”), then shortened it to “I am,” then to “the Lord” (I AM translates the Hebrew Yahweh or YHWH, known as the tetragrammaton, a Greek term meaning “four letters.” English translations used to render it as Jehovah; Exodus 3:6, 13–16). Thus, God shows himself as the One who exists, eternally and without change, who is utterly trustworthy and dependable.

God’s name is who He is. And Yahweh or YHWH acts as a synecdoche—the part representing the whole. Thus, David sang, “O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens” (Psalm 8:1). And in the Third Commandment, God tells us very clearly that we are not to misuse His name: “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). So seriously do the Jews fear misusing God’s name that they refuse to utter it at all. But that is more superstition than obedience; God wants us to use His name—but with respect and dignity.

The Fine Print

Commandments have positive and negative things to teach us. First, let us consider the negative. The Westminster Shorter Catechism puts it this way: “The third commandment forbids all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God makes himself known” (A. 55). Using God’s name in a frivolous or insincere way is wrong. Take bad language, for example.

Television and movies are so littered with expletives that we have almost become immune to their destructive power. The use of “Jesus,” “Christ,” or “God” as a mere expletive, vocalizing frustration or anger or disgust, is blasphemy, make no mistake about it.

Or, take promises we make. The Old Testament spoke strongly against the practice of adding God’s name to a promise to add extra assurance of its trustworthiness (Leviticus 19:12; Jeremiah 5:2; Zechariah 5:4). And Jesus revealed the Pharisees’ insincerity and hypocrisy, masquerading as pompous piety, when they said promises made that excluded God’s name could be broken with impunity (Matthew 5:33–37). The statement “I give you my word” ought to mean what it says. Christians should make promises guardedly and keep them carefully.

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What's in a Name?

But we are merely seeing the tip of an iceberg. The truth is, we violate the third commandment whenever we invoke God's name lightly on a T-shirt or bumper sticker (if we employ either, we'd better not intentionally be in violation of traffic laws); as a patriotic confirmation that "God is on our side," justifying all ends and means of national and civic involvement; and in a thousand other ways.

Alarming, we trivialize and minimize God in our most sacred acts, producing what David Wells calls a "weightlessness" about God. "La parole a été donné à l'homme pour déguiser sa pensée – the reason for words is to conceal thought," a French diplomat once said to a Spanish Ambassador. This is so true. Too often in worship, we speak without knowing—or caring—what we say. Careless and casual worship is sin:

"Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few." (Ecclesiastes 5:2)

Wonderful Name

What of the positive duties of this command? The Shorter Catechism puts it this way: "The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works" (A. 54).

Think of Jesus as Lord—the Name above all names—at which every knee will one day bow and confess that He is Lord (Philippians 2:10–11). What will be true then ought to be true now. "How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds," John Newton wrote, and Christians agree with all their hearts.

In particular, God is to be thought of and spoken about (and to) in the language of worship:

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. (Psalm 29:2; 96:8)

Sing the glory of his name. (Psalm 66:2)

Blessed be his glorious name forever. (Psalm 72:19)

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! (Psalm 103:1)

That is what we are to aim for—living moment by moment in God's presence, praising His name. Careful, dignified, thoughtful words—said, prayed, sung, listened to, "seen" in the sacraments, expressed with purpose and intent—should characterize our worship. How difficult this is, and how much we need to learn it. ~ **Dr. Derek Thomas** is senior minister at First Presbyterian Church in Columbia, S.C.

Reformed (Covenant) Theology

My theological journey to Reformed theology was not an easy one. For more than two years I fought against the doctrines of grace with all of the free will I could muster, until I came to my knees and admitted that God is God—that God is sovereign and I am not. Coming to grips with the sovereignty of God not only changed my understanding of salvation; it changed my understanding of everything. For two more years, armed with all my dispensational presuppositions, I continued to fight against confessional Reformed theology.

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Reformed (Covenant) Theology

I carefully examined Scripture, and with great scrutiny I studied our theological forefathers on every side of the debate about covenant theology.

But it wasn't until I came to grasp the newness and the nature of the new covenant and the relationship between the old and new covenants that I came to see God not only as sovereign over the salvation of His people, but also as covenantal in the way He relates to, sanctifies, and saves His people. In the end, I came to see that "Reformed theology," as R.C. Sproul has said, is just a nickname for "covenant theology."

The church has always confessed the newness of the new covenant, but Christian thinkers have differed on the nature of its newness. According to confessional Reformed theology, the new covenant is new in that the long-awaited seed of the woman promised by God at the inauguration of the covenant of grace (Genesis 3:15) has come and has fulfilled the old covenant of Moses, thus making it obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). Whereas the first Adam failed to keep the covenant of works (Genesis 3:1–6), the second and last Adam, Jesus Christ, kept it perfectly (1 Corinthians 15:45). Under the old covenant, the people of God saw only shadows, but now we see the One who cast the shadow: Jesus Christ, who is the end—the goal—of the law (Romans 10:4). Under the old covenant, God's people desperately awaited the coming One; now we delightfully celebrate the risen, ascended, and interceding One who perfectly fulfilled all the righteous demands of the law and is coming again. At His first coming Jesus Christ inaugurated the new covenant, and at His second coming He will consummate the new covenant. Only then will we enjoy the fullness of the new covenant and its privileges promised by God through His prophet Jeremiah (31:31–34).

The new covenant is new in that the long-awaited Messiah has come and has fulfilled the old, and the new covenant is superior in its scale, simplicity, and scope. Rather than narrowing the scope of the new covenant, covenant theology consistently portrays the broad and beautiful vista of the new covenant, leading us as God's covenant people to worship our covenant-keeping God, coram Deo, before His face, both now and forever in Christ our covenant head. ~ *Burk Parsons* ~ *Editor of Tabletalk magazine and co-pastor at Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Florida.*

The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

Chapter 3 - God's Decree

1. From all eternity God decreed all that should happen in time and this He did freely and unalterably, consulting only His own wise and holy will. Yet in so doing He does not become in any sense the author of sin, nor does He share responsibility for sin with sinners. Neither, by reason of His decree, is the will of any creature whom He has made violated; nor is the free working of second causes put aside; rather is it established. In all these matters the divine wisdom appears, as also does God's power and faithfulness in effecting that which He has purposed.

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The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

Chapter 3 - God's Decree

2. God's decree is not based upon His foreknowledge that, under certain conditions, certain happenings will take place, but is independent of all such foreknowledge.
3. By His decree, and for the manifestation of His glory, God has predestinated (or foreordained) certain men and angels to eternal life through Jesus Christ, thus revealing His grace. Others, whom He has left to perish in their sins, show the terrors of His justice.
4. The angels and men who are the subjects of God's predestination are clearly and irreversibly designated, and their number is unalterably fixed.
5. Before the world was made, God's eternal, immutable purpose, which originated in the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, moved Him to choose (or to elect), in Christ, certain of mankind to everlasting glory. Out of His mere free grace and love He predestinated these chosen ones to life, although there was nothing in them to cause Him to choose them.
6. Not only has God appointed the elect to glory in accordance with the eternal and free purpose of His will, but He has also foreordained the means by which His purpose will be effected. Since His elect are children of Adam and therefore among those ruined by Adam's fall into sin, He willed that they should be redeemed by Christ, and effectually called to faith in Christ. Furthermore, by the working of His Spirit in due season they are justified, adopted, sanctified, and 'kept by His power through faith unto salvation'. None but the elect partake of any of these great benefits.
7. The high mystery of predestination needs to be handled with special prudence and caution, so that men, being directed to the will of God revealed in His Word and obeying the same, may become assured of their eternal election through the certainty of their effectual calling. By this means predestination will promote the praise of God, and reverential awe and wonder. It will encourage humility and diligence, and bring much comfort to all who sincerely obey the gospel.

The Hardest Place on Earth to be a Christian

While there are many terrible places on earth to be a Christian (Sudan, North Korea, Afghanistan, Bhutan, etc.), Pakistan is arguably the worst. Other nations persecute believers, but in Pakistan the entire country has spent generations forming a world view that values the torturing of those that claim the name of Christ.

Pakistan used to have a noticeable Christian presence. Presbyterians had a sizeable school system, and those schools were largely responsible for the country's relatively high literacy. But in 1973 Islam became the nation's religion and the government seized those schools and replaced their teachers and curriculum.

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The Hardest Place on Earth to be a Christian

Now the Koran is required to be read and recited in all classes at all levels. When little kids learn science, they memorize passages about how Mohammad prophesied modern inventions. When they learn English, they learn it through the Koran. Meanwhile, it is illegal for Christians to touch or own the Koran.

Now, 40 years later, this plan was successful. Literacy in Pakistan is around 50%, but literacy for Christians is less than 10%. Universities require Koran memorization for entrance, so Christians are unable to hold any jobs which require an education. There are only a handful of believers who work for the government at any level. Christians are reduced to living in slums, where they are routinely robbed, and their houses frequently burned.

But that is not the worst of what happens to Christians there. The worst is that their children—particularly their young daughters—are the targets of violence. It is estimated by the few Christian organizations that track these things that around 3,000 Christian girls between the ages of 10-12 are kidnapped every year. Schools make Christians wear different uniforms than the other students, making them easy targets. They are forced to “convert” to Islam and marry Muslims (often becoming a man’s third or fourth wife), and their children are by law considered Muslim. Young kidnapped girls that refuse to convert and marry are beaten, physically tortured, and either killed or simply raped and left to die naked in the wilderness.

Christians do not have access to the legal system in Pakistan. By law, a Christian’s testimony carries only half credibility in court. Police must arrest Christians for any crime they are accused of, and they are really only accused of one crime: blasphemy, which carries an automatic death sentence. In perhaps the most perverse aspect of the legal system there, the government can say that they have never officially executed anyone for blasphemy because it is the lawyers who often carry out the execution before the trial.

Judges in Pakistan have been thoroughly intimidated by Al Qaeda. They know that if they ever find a Christian innocent of blasphemy that the judge’s family will be murdered. A few years ago (when there were still lawyers who would defend Christians) a Christian was convicted of writing blasphemy against Mohamed, and her case was appealed to the Supreme Court. There it was shown that the accused was actually illiterate, and obviously incapable of writing. The judge acquitted her, and he was murdered the next day. Since then there have been no cases of Christians found “not guilty.” They usually don’t even survive to their trial.

This is an important point because in the last few years blasphemy charges against Christians have become more common. Two particular cases are well known by most Pakistanis, and they served as the model for the current wave of persecution. In 2009 two neighbors were having a property dispute—it essentially boiled down to who was responsible for a hole in the fence. One neighbor was Muslim, and the other was a Christian. The Muslim fabricated a charge of blasphemy, the police incited a crowd, and the Christian family was beaten. Eventually the police arrested the Christian woman (Asia Bibi), who was convicted of blasphemy. The mob seized her house and turned it over to her Muslim neighbors.

In 2011 a wedding was being hosted in the house of a Christian family. A group of Muslims wadded up pages of the Koran and threw them over the fence into the yard, and then summoned the authorities who arrested the bride. She was sentenced to 25 years in prison. Those two cases have made a pattern for the rest of the nation to follow. Christians are frequently falsely accused of blasphemy, arrested, and their houses are seized. If they lived in the slums (where most Christians live) it is likely that their entire neighborhood will be burned and turned into a mosque.

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The Hardest Place on Earth to be a Christian

Because judges don't want to hear these cases, and lawyers are afraid for their lives that they will not be seen as sufficiently hard against blasphemy, the most common outcome of these cases is that the accused are murdered by their lawyers.

In one of the most infamous cases, in 2012 a group of Muslims handed an 11-year-old Christian girl a bag with burned pages from a school book. The girl would have simply been kidnapped and forced to convert, but because she had Down's Syndrome, they did not want to marry her to a Muslim. Instead, she was asked her to bring the bag home with her, and a mob then surrounded her house. She was arrested and charged with blasphemy, because the school book contained passages from the Koran. Because this story was picked up by international news, she was not immediately killed. Eventually she was given asylum in Canada.

This kind of extremism has essentially succeeded. Today in Pakistan, Christians cannot read. Their daughters are kidnapped. It is nearly impossible for Christians to get an education, and there are no jobs for them. Their houses are attacked, they have no access to the police, and parents are afraid to teach their children the basics of the gospel—out of fear that their children may say something that will get them killed.

I spoke with a Pakistani pastor this week, and asked him how its possible that so much of the population in Pakistan goes along with something that is so barbarically evil. He pointed out that Christians grow up talking about love, singing about love, and esteeming love. Thus their world view is formed by love. Pakistanis grow up in a school system that talks about Jihad, hates Christians, and from an early age everyone is taught that Christians are deserving of death. It forms their world view.

That observation has been backed by outsiders. In 2011 the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom completed a study of the educational structure in Pakistan. They reported that "all" of the public school teachers they interviewed taught their students that Jihad was the violent struggle against infidels and that it is "compulsory" for Muslims to be violent toward Christians (see pg. 16 of that report). Pakistan is a nation where nearly all—if not all—of the teachers, at every level of education, teach their children to kill Christians.

If you ever meet a Pakistani Christian, ask for his story. Ask how persecution affected his family. Strive to encourage them in anyway possible. There is really no way to give to the church there. They need audio Bibles (because of illiteracy), but other than that, this is not really a problem that money can fix. Instead, please be faithful to pray for the few believers that remain in that dark country. ~ ***Jesse Johnson - Teaching Pastor - Immanuel Bible Church - Springfield, VA***



West Suffolk Epistle

“Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant”



WEST SUFFOLK BAPTIST CHURCH
ASSOCIATION OF REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCHES OF AMERICA

Birthday and Anniversary Corner - June 2014

Gene Arthur - 6/1
Cami Barnes - 6/3
Mike Prince - 6/27

Ben and Carrie Purser - 6/23
Scott and Ruth Thomas - 6/25

The Promise of Heaven

Jesus promised more than answered prayer to His troubled disciples on that night before His crucifixion. He also told them: **“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”** (John 14:2-3) As a child, whenever I traveled away from home for very long, I thought the best thing I could possibly do was go back to my house. The warmth and love of home cannot be found anywhere else. Heaven is like that for you as a Christian. Going to heaven won’t be like going into a giant palace where you have to be formal with people you don’t know very well. When you go to heaven, it will be like going home. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

The Church Covenant

The biblical call for a membership of mutual accountability in a local body of believers suggests the need for believers to make a covenant with one another. This is simply implied in agreeing to hold each other accountable to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord.

The church covenant is a written summary of biblical practice that a church agrees should be the basis of its accountability. The covenant allows for freedom of conscience in areas where the Bible is not definite in its guidance. The covenant focuses on principles, especially as they relate to our corporate life together. ~ **Dr. John Piper**

Disclaimer

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



West Suffolk Baptist Church

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