



Volume 9 Issue 5

West Suffolk Epistle West Suffolk Baptist Church



May 2022

Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant

Holding to Sound Doctrine

One of the Devil's more subtle schemes is leading believers away from sound doctrine. He knows that his best chance of immobilizing an effective Christian witness is through distraction with unscriptural, questionable, irrational, and shifting doctrines.

Even if we are not affected by any particular infiltration of false doctrine, our Christian walk can be greatly hampered by laziness, lack of vigilance, and simple ignorance regarding doctrinal basics. Bad doctrine or a weak understanding of sound doctrine makes us vulnerable to all sorts of bad practices, including a weak or non-existent standard of integrity.

The author of Hebrews reminds us where our anchor is and again urges us along the right path: "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings*" (Hebrews 13:8-9).

False doctrine in various forms has plagued the church from the earliest days. False teachers weakened the early church, most notably the legalistic Judaizers in Galatia who distorted the Gospel. During the past 200 years theological liberalism (a fancy way of saying unbelief) and skepticism has undermined the church and caused many people to abandon essential doctrines such as the deity of Christ, the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and salvation by faith alone through grace alone.

And today the professing evangelical church is weakened by many influences including subjectivism, pragmatism, psychotherapy, a misplaced sense of tolerance, a sloppy understanding of the Gospel and ecumenism that wants to dilute and de-emphasize doctrine.

What has changed is that the warfare is no longer conventional. Whereas the old-school liberals of the past engaged in outright denial of the doctrines we cherish, postmodernists now engage in stealth attacks where doctrines are rarely rejected but constantly redefined. Doctrinal purity gives us an accurate early warning system against attacks from within the camp.

But how can the average layman possibly develop a firm grasp of every new false doctrine that's heading down the pike? Being properly equipped is actually a lot simpler than it may first appear. The enemy's primary strategy has remained unchanged since he appeared in the garden questioning God and His Word—"*Indeed, has God said . . . ?*" (Genesis 3:1). Every damnable heresy throughout church history has attacked either God's character, His Word, or His gospel. If we remain steadfast on those essential doctrines we can withstand the attacks and even adopt an offensive footing in the doctrinal battles ahead.

During his apostolic ministry, the encroachment of false doctrine into the lives of Christians in the new churches was the Apostle Paul's greatest fear. He knew that doctrinal impurity was the underlying source for all kinds of ungodly behavior. Typical of Paul's fears was his deep concern for the Corinthians' spiritual welfare: "I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).



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Paul was also greatly exercised about the precarious status of believers in Galatia:

“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” (Galatians 1:6–7)

He realized that false teachers can be sincere, persuasive, believable, and even kind and likable. But Paul was also convinced that superficial, subjective measurements are not how we are to judge doctrine. The supreme standard is always the Word of God: *“Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what which we have preached to you [according to the Word], he is to be accursed.” (Galatians 1:8)*

Purity of doctrine is the crucial foundation upon which everything else in the Christian life rests. If we would be people who practice personal holiness and show forth true integrity, our doctrine must be sound and unwavering. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

The transgender revolution and the death of truth

One day in the future, Americans will come to realize that the great denial of truth can be traced to a swimming pool. Just days ago, the University of Pennsylvania athlete identified as Lia Thomas won an NCAA championship in women’s swimming. This came after a season of controversy in which Thomas, who had previously competed on Penn’s men’s swimming team, dominated many women’s competitions, soundly defeating other swimmers.

Of course, those other swimmers were women. The participation of Lia Thomas, formerly known as Will Thomas, on the women’s swim team was only possible because of an exercise in mass delusion and ideological corruption. All it takes is one photograph to make the point clearly. Lia Thomas is a constructed identity, affirmed by the University of Pennsylvania, the NCAA, and the cultural powers that be. Lia Thomas is a man, a confused man to be sure, but a man nevertheless.

The case of this collegiate swimmer reveals the deep insanity that now grips our culture. The cultural elites, including the administrators of universities, the leaders of organized sport, the media, Hollywood, the therapeutic industry, and all manner of self-declared influencers now insist that spectators look at a man swimming on a women’s team and call the man a woman. They also demand that women who have committed their lives to women’s athletic competitions must give way on the victory stand to a man who now declares himself to be a woman.

Furthermore, the elites demand that the entire society must join in the exercise in mass delusion and celebrate Thomas’ wins as a great civilizational achievement. The perfectly named professor Cheryl Cooky of Purdue University, who teaches “American studies and women’s, gender, and sexuality studies,” declared that Thomas must be “embraced in the history of progress that sports represent and recognized as the trailblazer that she is.”



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The transgender revolution and the death of truth

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Clearly, some of Thomas' teammates did not get the memo, nor did their friends and parents. These women, who had worked for years to achieve success in athletic achievement, saw their years of hard work and dedication to women's sports drowned in a deep pool of ideological insanity. Many of them offered a public protest. Some of their parents raised protests of their own. Famous women of the sports world demanded a return to sanity and the restriction of women's sporting events to biological women.

But sporting authorities, who had for decades demanded both respect and support for women's athletic teams, had already caved to the sexual revolutionaries and the gender theorists. Having surrendered so many times in the past, how could they resist surrender now?

Consider a school like the University of Pennsylvania, whose motto, ironically enough, is *Leges sine moribus vanae*, which means "Laws without morals are useless." That motto assumes a rational world in which, for example, the distinction between male and female is clear and honored. But the academic world has already abdicated right reason and now manufactures the mass delusion. Denizens of the corporate boardrooms surrendered long ago. Except for a few conservative governors and courageous voices, most politicians want to avoid taking any stand on the issue.

Furthermore, many of those who declare themselves utterly shocked and appalled by the sight of a transgender swimmer taking a women's swimming championship demand nothing more than a carve-out for women's sport. Many insist that they are all for the LGBTQ revolution, except not for this.

Of course, if you buy the revolution you get revolution, and the revolt is going to run right over your cherished world of women's athletics. Professor Cooky, by the way, describes the premise of sporting teams restricted to women and girls as undergirded by "claims of biological difference." Biology is now just a claim. Everything is socially constructed. Reality is just an argument. Oh, but "trust the science."

Identity politics, therapeutic technique, claims of sexual liberation, and the ideologies of critical theory come together in a broad-shouldered possessor of XY chromosomes who catapulted from the middle ranks of male swimmers to the top rank among women by claiming to be a woman.

In a Sports Illustrated cover story (of course), Thomas expressed relief in now being able "to finally live an authentic life." That definition of authenticity, however, requires the abandonment of the authenticity revealed in creation, of the authenticity that underlies human social order, and of any authentic rendering of girl's and women's sports.

Christian concern requires that we see the swimmer identified as Lia Thomas as a human being made in God's image, deserving of our concern. But that concern cannot justify a blatant attempt to undermine the very order of creation. The Bible reveals that any attempt to subvert creation ends in disaster, not in human liberation.

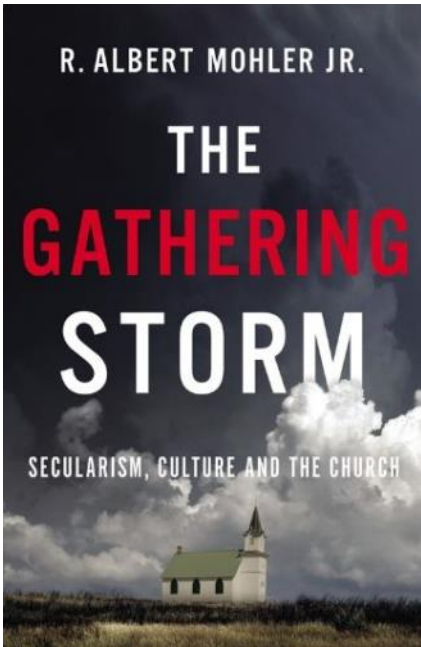
Our society stands on the brink of that disaster. The great question remaining is whether there is enough sanity and courage left in our society to avoid the total abdication of truth. It is now plain to see that we face a demand to jump into the deep end of a pool of mass delusion. Whatever it takes, summon the courage to resist that dive. ~ **Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr.**



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The Gathering Storm *Secularism, Culture and the Church*



A storm is coming. Western civilization and the Christian church stand at a moment of great danger. The storm is a battle of ideas that will determine the future of Western civilization and the soul of the Christian church. The forces we must fight are ideologies, policies, and worldviews that are deeply established among intellectual elites, the political class, and our schools. More menacingly, these ideas have also invaded the Christian church.

From threats to religious liberty and redefinitions of marriage and family to attacks on the sacredness and dignity of human life, the perils faced by the West and the church are unprecedented. How should Christians respond to this challenge? *The Gathering Storm* provides the answer, addressing each dimension of culture and showing Christians how to give an answer for the hope that is within them and how to contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints.

The Salvation of Knowledge

The postmodern era is coming to an end, and a new age is beginning. In this new era, pluralism is considered simplistic and elementary. Whereas pure relativism was the reigning mind-set in the postmodern era, in this new age, conceptualism has become the accepted system by which we determine what we know and what we believe. As far as I know, conceptualism has not been formulated by any philosophers or sociologists, but can be defined, at least in the way I conceptualize it, as that system of thought by which an individual, or a society, determines reality based upon his own, subjective suppositions of reality and, having determined reality, imposes his created reality upon everyone and everything.

Our culture has put aside the philosophy that suggests truth can differ from one person to another. The adherents of conceptualism have demonstrated that there is no longer any need for our culture to be “united” based upon the governing ideal that truth is relative and that knowledge is in the mind of the beholder. These proponents of conceptualism have labored long and hard to prove that when it comes down to it, concepts rule the day. Therefore it is no longer necessary for a person to say “I believe” or “I know.” According to conceptualists, such statements are no longer necessary, no longer valid; they possess no value whatsoever in this age of conceptualism. Today, one needs only to say: “I conceptualize.”



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The Salvation of Knowledge

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In order for something to be true, it is no longer necessary to have knowledge of a particular something, and it is no longer required that we qualify everything we say with the statement: “What may be true for you is not necessarily true for me.” In this new era, to conceptualize is to validate truth. That is to say, in order to propagate truth, a person needs only to conceptualize.

As Christians we are called to stand firmly in truth, yet it is not our own conceptualized reality in which we are to establish ourselves. Rather, we are called to establish ourselves in the reality that God almighty has set forth. His reality is founded upon truth — His truth. For we are only established if the truth upon which we stand is God’s truth and not some system of reality that is a result of our own vainly fantasized suppositions. Indeed, the truth of God is founded in God Himself and has been revealed to us so that all men are without excuse: “For what can be known about God is plain” (Romans 1:19a). Paul does not say, “What can be fantasized about God is plain.” Rather, it is what is “known” about God that is plain. At the heart of our sustained existence on earth is knowledge that has been revealed to us by God; at the heart of our relationships with one another is knowledge from God, and at the heart of our relationship with God is knowledge from God.

While many attempt to slander the pursuit of knowledge, we must stand our ground on the Word of God and defend the right use of knowledge. For it is through knowledge that truth is confirmed as truth, and it is through knowledge that reality is understood as reality.

At the beginning of his second epistle, Peter confirms the importance of knowledge. In verses 2–8, Peter uses the word knowledge five times. In verse 2, he writes, “May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” Then, in verse 3, he writes, “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.” At this point, Peter has used the word knowledge as a means through which grace and peace are provided and as a means through which God has granted to us all things pertaining to life and godliness.

In verse 5, Peter charges us to supplement our faith with virtue and virtue with knowledge. It is no small matter that Peter includes knowledge as a “quality” of the Christian life, for he promises that “if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 8). If we possess the qualities that Peter lists in verses 5–7, we will be sustained in our effectiveness in the knowledge of Christ.

While knowledge can indeed “puff up,” it is mere human knowledge that puffs up. Knowledge without God is not knowledge, it is cerebral correspondence that has no meaning beyond itself. But, knowledge, true knowledge from God almighty, is the foundation of virtue, the establishment of love, and the means by which we are able to glorify God as He has revealed Himself.

At the very end of his epistle, Peter writes: “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (3:17–18). We are commanded to know God — to know His Word, and we have been summoned by God almighty to know the truth in order to be set free from our bondage to our own, subjective reality so that we might glorify God and enjoy Him forever. ~ **Dr. Burk Parsons**



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What would Jesus say about your Church?

In the book of Revelation, Jesus wrote seven letters to cities in Asia Minor. He didn't write them to city hall; He wrote them to the church.

Let that sink in for a moment. In the closing chapters of Scripture, the Lord did not set His church on a mission to "redeem the culture." He didn't advise His people to leverage political power to institute morality, or to protest the rule of immoral men. In fact, He didn't launch a social revolution or devise a political strategy of any kind.

The church today—and particularly the church in America—needs to understand that God has not called His people out of the world simply to wage a culture war with the world. We're not meant to gain temporal ground, like some invading force working to superficially "turn this country back to God." We need to shed the illusion that our ancestors' morality once made America a "Christian nation." There have never been any Christian nations—just Christians.

Believers need to understand that what happens in America politically and socially has nothing to do with the progress or the power of the kingdom of God. Cultural change can't accelerate the kingdom's growth; nor can it hinder it (see Matthew 16:18). Christ's kingdom "is not of this world" (John 18:36).

That's not to say I'm dismissive of our democratic process or ungrateful to have a voice in it. It's a great blessing to have a vote and to be able to support biblical standards of morality. Many Christians throughout the history of the church have lived through far worse circumstances than ours, with no legal means to do anything about it.

But the presumption that a social movement or political clout could make a significant spiritual difference in the world is evidence of a severe misunderstanding of sin. Believers need to put our energies into ministry that can transform lives, not laws. The work of God's kingdom is not about overhauling governments, rewriting regulations, or rebuilding society into some version of a Christian utopia. Political and social justice efforts are, at best, short-term, external solutions for society's moral ills, and they do nothing to address the personal, internal, dominant matter of sinful hearts that hate God (see Romans 8:7), and can be rescued from eternal death only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Morality Damns

Morality on its own is no solution; it damns just like immorality. Morality cannot turn the stony heart to flesh, it cannot break the chains of sin, and it cannot reconcile us to God. In that sense, morality alone is as empty to save as any satanic religion.

Jesus went head to head with the most religious and outwardly moral people in His world, particularly with the priests, scribes, and experts in Old Testament law. He said, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:17). And in Matthew 23, He unleashed His most searing accusations against the religious right of His day, the party of the Pharisees.



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These were the most pious men in the nation, who fastidiously kept the law of God and faithfully followed rabbinical tradition. Jesus says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites” (Matthew 23: 13). The word “woe” is the equivalent of saying “curse you.” He’s pronouncing damnation and judgment on them. He repeats the same phrase over and over in the subsequent verses. He calls them “blind guides” in verse 16, as they led Israel astray through their empty, pious morality.

Neither social change nor moralism was ever the message of the Old Testament prophets. They were never the message of the Messiah or the New Testament writers. Such has never been God’s message to the world at all. In fact, Isaiah tells us that “all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (Isaiah 64:6). Man’s morality at its apex is nothing more than foul, defiled rags.

Moreover, Romans says, “There is none righteous . . . there is none who does good, there is not even one” (Romans 3:11–12). So whatever imaginary righteousness man has, whatever superficial morality he exhibits, is just a charade. There is no one righteous, no matter what kind of pious façade people put up.

People can change their lives. They can have a moment of crisis and decide they’re going to turn away from immorality or addiction and start living a better life. People can, to some degree, clean up their act simply by applying extraordinary human effort and resolve. If enough of them do it, there can be a slight moral upgrade in human society. But behavioral reform has no bearing on people’s relationship with God. It has no means to deliver them out of the bondage of sin into the kingdom of Christ. The best that morality can do is turn people into another batch of condemned Pharisees. Morality can’t save anyone from guilt or fuel genuine godliness. Pharisees and prostitutes share the same hell.

The push for cultural morality or even social justice is a dangerous distraction from the work of the church. It wastes immense amounts of precious resources, including time, money, and energy. Ephesians 5:16–17 urges believers to “[make] the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” And the will of the Lord is not a culture governed by social equity or even institutionalized Phariseism.

The word evangelical is derived from the Greek word for “gospel.” It originally signified Christians who understood that the gospel is the core and the very essence of Christian doctrine and therefore must be guarded at all costs. But it has been so painted over with social and political colors as to have become a political term, rejected by most of society and even most professing Christians.

The True Calling of the Church

The will of God is not that we become so politicized that we turn our mission field into our enemy. Christians are right to repudiate sin, and to declare without equivocation that sin is an offense to our holy God. That includes sins like abortion, homosexuality, sexual promiscuity, and any other sins that our corrupt culture says we must accept. But a culture sold out to sins such as those is not going to be turned around—much less won over—by angry protests and partisan politics. It’s futile to think the solution to our culture’s moral bankruptcy is a legislative remedy. There is no law that can make fallen sinners righteous (see Galatians 2:21).



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Timothy ministered in a culture that was at least as bad as ours. Nothing in Paul's instructions to his younger disciple suggested that Timothy should try to redeem the culture. Indeed, he told Timothy things would get even worse (2 Timothy 3:13). What the people of this depraved world need is the gospel. They need to be told that their sins can be forgiven and they can be set free from the chains of sin and this world's system. Believers have no right to regard lost sinners with contempt or loathing. Our attitude toward our neighbors should be a reflection of Christ's love for them, not an expression of our disagreement with their politics or even their morality. We have no right to withhold the good news of salvation from them, like Jonah tried to do with the Ninevites. We ought to make sure that the lost sinners in our lives know that we love them enough to offer them God's forgiveness. There is a holy hatred for sin, but Christ wept over the lost in sympathy, and so must we.

The world is the way it is today because it is the world, and the church must confront it with the full truth. It's hypocritical for Christians to berate the secular world for the way unbelievers behave when so many churches are validating that either by believing in its ability to be redeemed by human power or by putting on a worldly circus of entertainment and cheap distractions from the real issues. It's time for the church to be about the ministry of reconciliation—for God's people to boldly and faithfully proclaim His gospel and for His church to be salt and light in this dark and desperate world (Matthew 5:13–16). That was the Lord's message to the churches in Revelation. He commanded them to put off worldliness and corruption, to renew their love for Him, and to guard the purity of His gospel and His church. Virtually every admonition, rebuke, warning, and call to repentance our Lord makes in these letters is applicable to the church in the twenty-first century—including many of today's best known and most influential evangelical churches. It's time for us to pay attention to the letters to those churches in Revelation and heed Christ's call to reform of His church. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**

Hindrances to Peace

Just as righteousness and truth are the noble companions of peace, so sin and falsehood are its great hindrances. The prophet Jeremiah said, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately [evil]; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). Jesus said, "Out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

People with sinful hearts create a sinful society that resists true peace. Ironically, many who talk of peace will also pay huge sums of money to watch two men beat the daylights out of each other in a boxing ring! Our society's heroes tend to be the macho, hard-nosed, tough guys. Our heroines tend to be free-spirited women who lead marches and stir up contention. Psychologists and psychiatrists tell us to stand up for our rights and get everything we can for ourselves. That breeds strife and conditions people to reject the peace of the gospel.

Beyond that, the unbelieving world has never tolerated God's peacemakers. Christ Himself often met with violent resistance. His accusers said, "He stirs up the people" (Luke 23:5). Paul's preaching frequently created conflict as well. He spent much time under house arrest and in filthy Roman prisons. On one occasion his enemies described him as "a real pest . . . who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world" (Acts 24:5).

All who proclaim the gospel will eventually meet with opposition because sin and falsehood have blinded people's hearts to true peace. That's why Paul warned us that all who desire to be godly will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**



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If you have a May birthday or anniversary that is not posted here or is listed in error, please e-mail Walt at gwlcf10415@gmail.com.

Birthdays and Anniversaries Corner May 2022

Birthdays

Elyse T. (1)
Patrick D. (2)
Jackson T. (22)

Mike M. (22)
Brian R. (26)
John H. (30)

Anniversaries

Tom and Marcie S. (22)
Ben and Charlene S. (25)



On our first Sunday (May 1, 2022) we welcomed our newest members into our fellowship at West Suffolk Baptist Church. They are Malcolm and Amber Homeyer. It is our tradition that we as a church read our church covenant together to symbolize our unity with the the Homeyer's and a promise as covenant members.



West Suffolk Baptist Church Leadership

The West Suffolk Epistle is a monthly publication of West Suffolk Baptist Church.

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

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