

UNLEASHING GOD'S TRUTH, ONE VERSE AT A TIME

# DYNAMIC RESOURCES

*Special Edition Celebrating  
500 years of the Reformation  
1517-2017*

*"Faith cannot be inherited or gained by being  
baptized into a Church. Faith is a matter  
between the individual and God."*

*Martin Luther*

WHY  
REFORMATION?



John Cheeseman

AGAINST  
COMPROMISE



John MacArthur

WHAT CAUSED THE  
REFORMATION?



Nathan Busenitz

RETHINKING THE  
REFORMATION



C. Buettel & J. Johnson

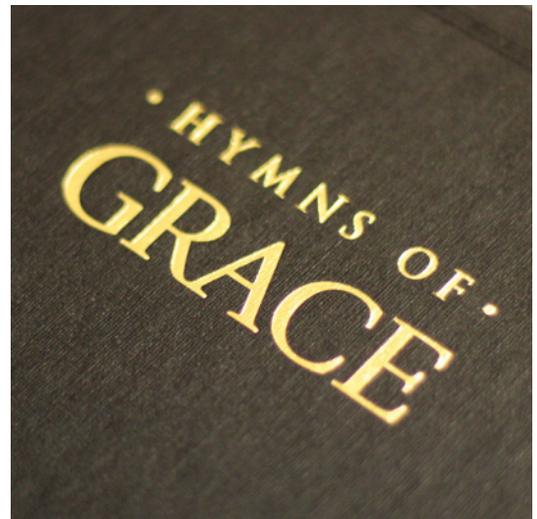


## HYMNS OF GRACE

A hymnal featuring the greatest hymns from church history & today.

*“Hymns are wonderful didactic tools, filled with Scripture and sound doctrine, a medium for teaching and admonishing one another, as we are commanded to do in Colossians 3:16. We are in danger of losing a rich heritage of hymnody as some of the best hymns of our faith fall into neglect. Let’s revive some of the great hymns that have fallen into disuse, and along with the best hymns written today, delve deeply into this rich Christian hymnology.”*

John MacArthur



# £13.75

Hardcover  
Product code: 451210

(discounts available for 6 or more copies)  
Order direct from the Grace to You Europe office

# Why Reformation?



By John Cheeseman



This year marks the 500th anniversary of that momentous event in the history of the world when Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk and Professor of biblical literature, nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg in Saxony on 31st October 1517

This was the beginning of the great movement known as the Reformation, when the church was delivered from the spiritual darkness which had prevailed throughout the Middle Ages. In this article I want to highlight the main features of this movement, but let me first explain why the Reformation was such an indispensable necessity.

## *Christ's Representative?*

The Mediaeval church was in thrall to Roman Catholicism, under the supreme authority of the

Pope. Without the Pope, there could be no church, and indeed without the Church of Rome there could be no salvation. The Pope was held to be Christ's representative on earth, and he alone was the channel through whom God's grace flowed. It was the Pope who ordained the bishops, who in turn ordained the priests, and the priests, acting under the authority of the Pope, dispensed the grace of God to the laity by means of the seven sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Extreme Unction, Penance, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. It was through the strict observation of these sacraments that men and women earned their salvation. Of course, it was accepted that no one ever died in a righteous enough state to fully merit salvation, but that didn't matter, because the belief in purgatory meant that Christians would be subject to a indeterminate period of punishment after death which would enable them to eventually atone for all the sins they committed whilst alive, and to thus obtain sufficient merit to enter heaven.

## *The Sale of Indulgences*

This pernicious doctrine led to a money-making racket known as the Sale of Indulgences, which assured people that upon payment of a fee the Pope would release dead relatives from purgatory. And what son or daughter wouldn't want to do whatever was possible to shorten a beloved parent's time of suffering in order to enter the bliss of heaven? Consequently, the sellers of these Indulgences exploited both the people's ignorance of scripture, and their emotional vulnerability.

### *Johann Tetzel*

One particularly notorious seller of Indulgences, the Dominican friar Johann Tetzel, was authorised by the Roman Catholic Church to travel around Martin Luther's home area of Germany with a coin box, inviting people to release loved one from purgatory. Tetzel used a rhyming couplet to encourage people to empty their pockets and purses into his box: 'As soon as a coin in the coffer rings the soul from purgatory springs.' Another of Tetzel's popular jingles was: 'Place your penny on the drum, the pearly gates open and in strolls mum.' With the vast sums of money raised by the selling of Indulgences the Pope was able to re-build the Basilica of St Peter in Rome. Of course, any discerning reader will realise by now that any relationship between Mediaeval Roman Catholicism and New Testament Christianity was purely coincidental, and this is why Reformation of the church was such a vital necessity. The truth and glory of the gospel had been buried beneath a dreadful welter of ignorance and superstition.

### *Counter Reformation*

Now it is perfectly true to say that in the light of the stand taken by Luther and the other Protestant Reformers, the Church of Rome took stock and re-grouped in what was termed the 'Counter Reformation'. (There were, to their credit, some on the Roman Catholic side who, like the Protestants, wanted to see the church cleansed of immorality and corruption

but their influence was not sufficient to bring about significant changes.) The famous 'Council of Trent' in 1545 produced a new systematic formulation of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice, but sadly, this was by no means the start of a return to the teaching of the Bible, as we shall see in a moment. And let it be said loud and clear – the findings of Trent are still binding on all Roman Catholics today. I emphasize this because there is a common view, even amongst some evangelical Christians, that since the Second Vatican Council (11th October 1962 – 8th December 1965) the doctrines of the Church of Rome have changed. This is far from being the case. The packaging may be different, but a careful study of contemporary Roman Catholic teaching will demonstrate that there has been no significant departure from Trent.

### *Areas of Disagreement*

So let me now mention three main areas of disagreement between Roman Catholicism and historic Reformed Christianity.

#### *1. The Authority of the Church*

First of all, there is the whole issue of authority in the church. What is the final authority for what I believe as a Christian? The Westminster Confession of Faith affirms: 'The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequences may be deduced from Scripture, unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelation of the Spirit or traditions of men'. (Chapter 1, paragraph 6) The Church of Rome, on the other hand, insists upon the supreme teaching authority of the church. To hear the mind of God, we should consult the church's historic tradition. What the church says, God says. Admittedly, the Church of Rome does affirm that the Bible is authoritative and God-given, but at the same time it insists that Holy Scripture alone is not a sufficient authority. Rome asserts that God continues to speak His infallible truth through the traditions of



the church. This explains why Roman Catholicism promulgates doctrines, or continues to permit certain practices, which are not found in the Bible. For example: veneration of Mary, the invocation of saints, purgatory, prayers for the dead, and infallibility of the Pope.

At this point it is worth pausing to ask two very important questions:

1. Who says that the Church of Rome has got it all wrong on these issues?
2. Upon what basis do Reformed Christians believe that the Bible is our all-sufficient and final authority?

In John 14:25,26 Jesus says, *'These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to You.'* Clearly our Lord is addressing the apostles here. They were the ones who heard the original message from the lips of Jesus, and so they and they alone, were the ones whom the Holy Spirit was to remind. You and I were not present in the upper room, and thus He cannot remind us. Jesus

is therefore exclusively addressing the apostles, and He promises that the Holy Spirit will teach them 'all things', not some things. In John 16:13, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will guide them into *'all the truth'*, not some of the truth. So it's not a case of the apostles being given some of the truth, and then subsequent generations of Mediaeval popes and 21st Century charismatic prophets filling in the rest of the picture! The promise of Jesus is that the Holy Spirit would give a total revelation to the apostles. This means that what we have in the New Testament is God's final word to the world. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing can be taken away from it. In 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, we read these words: *'All Scripture is breathed out by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.'* Notice, the apostle here doesn't say, 'partially equipped'. No – if we have the Scriptures, we are equipped for 'every' good work. The Bible is all-sufficient. We have no need of further revelation. In Jude 3 we are encouraged to 'contend for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints.' The Greek word translated 'once and for all' is highly significant. It means that the apostolic faith cannot be added to, or subtracted from. It was a unique, once

for all revelation, never to be altered or modified.

So here is the first fundamental division between Roman Catholicism and Reformed Christianity, and from this, everything else follows. Because once you say that it is possible to add doctrines to the Bible, then you open the floodgates to all kinds of heresy and nonsense. This is how many false religions such as Islam and Mormonism have arisen. They both hold that additional authoritative teaching came from God after the completion of the New Testament canon e.g. The Qur'an and the Book of Mormon, this is a very serious error. The Bible is our full and final authority and we must test everything we believe and do by this yardstick alone.

## 2. The Doctrine of the Sacraments

The second great area of disagreement concerns the doctrine of the sacraments – Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In fact, as we saw earlier, the Church of Rome teaches that there are seven sacraments, but that was not the core of the dispute. The real nub of the argument is that Rome maintains that God actually

conveys grace through the sacraments in a mechanical fashion. The technical term for this is 'ex opere operato'. In other words, by the very performance of the act, grace is given by God to the recipient. The Reformed position, on the other hand, is that the sacraments in themselves do not convey grace. They are signs or visual-aids, symbolising spiritual truth, and it's only as we respond to these signs in repentance and faith that blessing is received.

### Baptism

And so, for example, Rome teaches that the act of baptism, in itself, actually washes away original sin and causes a person to be born again of the Holy Spirit. This is why a Roman Catholic priest will rush along to a hospital to baptise a sick baby, in case that baby dies unbaptised. However, the New Testament teaches that baptism in itself makes no difference at all to a person's salvation. One of the thieves on the cross died unbaptised, and yet, because he trusted in Christ, Jesus said, *'Truly I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'* (Luke 23:43). As far as salvation is concerned, it's not the actual act of baptism which ultimately matters, but the inward state of a person's soul. The apostle Peter says that baptism saves us,



*'not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.'* (1 Peter 3:21). The apostle Paul is equally emphatic on this point. He says, *'neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision.'* (Galatians 6:15). How tragic it is that based on their observance of mere outward rituals the Church of Rome gives false assurance of salvation to countless multitudes.

## *The Lord's Supper*

The same principles apply to the Lord's Supper. Rome teaches that as you eat the bread and drink the wine, you automatically receive a blessing. Moreover, according to Roman Catholic theology, the consecrated bread and wine become, in some mysterious way, the actual body and blood of Christ. This is known as the doctrine of transubstantiation. The argument in favour of this is predicated on our Lord's words of institution: *'This is my body ... this is my blood.'* Here, it is claimed, is a clear and unambiguous statement by Jesus Himself that a miracle has taken place, and so the bread is literally His body, and the wine is literally His blood. Against this extraordinary interpretation of our Lord's words, we need to note that the Lord Himself was present in the flesh at the Last Supper. Furthermore, it was not in the glorified humanity which He had after His resurrection, but the body of flesh and blood which He had received from His mother. Are we then to say that He, whilst present in human flesh, actually held His own body in His hands? Surely what we have here is figurative language. When Jesus said, *'I am the door'*, or *'I am the vine'*, are we to believe that our Lord was literally a door and a vine? Obviously, this is absurd! But such a belief in transubstantiation does explain the veneration and even adoration of the consecrated elements which takes place in Roman Catholic churches. Linked to this is the idea that during the communion the Roman priest is actually offering again the sacrifice of Christ on the altar, on behalf of the congregation. It is because of the alleged change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ that such a sacrifice is possible.

## *Once For All*

Of course, this is a most appalling heresy, which strikes at the very root of Christ's once and for all sacrifice on the cross. If you read the book of Hebrews you will be left in no doubt at all that Christ's work on the cross was a finished work. *'He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself... Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many.'* (Hebrews 9:26-28). There can never be any re-enactment of Calvary. Indeed, this whole business of a sacrificial priesthood disappeared with the passing of the Old Testament dispensation. A Christian minister under the New Covenant is not a sacrificing priest. He is a pastor and teacher. The New Testament affirms the priesthood of all believers (see 1 Peter 2:9). Unlike the saints of the Old Testament, we are no longer dependent upon a privileged class of priests to mediate between us and the throne of grace. Through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, it is now possible for all believers to come directly into the presence of God. *'Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God ... let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.'* (Hebrews 4:14-16).

The Reformed doctrine of the Lord's Supper is that the bread and wine are symbols, nothing more and nothing less. Christ's body is at the right hand of the Father in heaven, not on the Lord's Table. As with baptism, as far as receiving grace is concerned, it all depends on our attitude of heart. We don't receive any automatic blessing through partaking in communion. There is nothing magical about the bread and wine. The words of administration, which Archbishop Cranmer composed for the Church of England communion service, call upon believers to *'feed on Christ in their hearts by faith with thanksgiving.'*

## *3. The Way of Salvation*

The third main area of disagreement (and this is the most important of all) concerns the way of salvation. How can a human being be justified in God's sight?

Upon what basis can I have any assurance of salvation?  
How do I know that if I were to die, I would go to be  
with Christ in heaven?

## *Grace Alone*

The Reformed position, following the teaching of the New Testament, is that salvation is *'by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.'* (See Romans 3:28 and Ephesians 2:8, 9). If I am putting my trust in Jesus as the one who paid the penalty for my sins on the cross, then God says to me, 'Not guilty. Your sins are forgiven. From now on, I will regard you as righteous.' (See 2 Corinthians 5:21). This is the glorious doctrine of justification by faith alone, which the Church of Rome denies. Indeed, the Council of Trent goes so far as to say that 'If any one says that by faith alone the impious is justified ... let him be anathema.' (Chapter 16, Canon 9). According to Roman Catholic theology, a man is justified by faith and works. Therefore, my salvation does not depend entirely upon the finished work of Christ - it also depends upon what I happen to contribute in the way of good deeds. This of course leads to a considerable lack of assurance. After all, how can I ever be sure that I am good enough for God? I may hope that I will be accepted, but I can't go further

than that. In fact, if you talk to the vast majority of Roman Catholics, they don't have any real assurance. They will probably say that it is presumptuous to be sure of one's eternal destiny. Well of course, if my salvation depended upon me and the kind of person I am, then it would be presumptuous for me to be sure. Thank God, it doesn't! Rather, it depends entirely upon the completed work of Christ on the cross. This is the great glory of the gospel!

## *Good Works Are Fruits*

Lest there be any misunderstanding, I am not suggesting that good works are unimportant. If someone is a genuine Christian, the fruit of the Holy Spirit will become evident in his life. (See Galatians 5:22, 23). But good works don't play any part in my justification. The Church of Rome has confused the fruit with the root. Good works are the fruit of justification, not the root of justification. To put it another way, good works are the result of justification, not the cause. And this is fundamentally important. After all, what could be more important than the question of how a human being can be put right with his Maker? Surely this has to be the most important issue in the world? And yet the tragedy is



*“Good works do not  
make a good man,  
but a good man  
does good works.”*

*Martin Luther*

that the Church of Rome is confusing and misleading countless millions of people by its unbiblical teaching on the matter. In so doing, it is corrupting and emasculating the glorious New Testament doctrine of free grace.

## *Unity with Rome?*

I'm aware that the above sentiments may seem harsh and unloving to some. But we need to heed the words of the apostle Paul in Galatians 1:8, *'Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.'* In the context of Galatians Paul is arguing against precisely the same heresy as that being propagated by the Church of Rome today, namely that works are an indispensable condition of justification. Now there are many evangelicals who say that we have much in common with the Church of Rome. They say, for example, that we can agree with them on the virgin birth, the divinity of Christ and the bodily resurrection. Yes indeed we can. But just the same would have been true of the apostle Paul and the false teachers in Galatia. They too would have agreed with one another about many fundamental truths. Yet the fact remained that those teachers were perverting the gospel of grace by insisting on works as a condition of justification. And as far as Paul was concerned that was so serious it demanded the most severe censure and condemnation.

We are living in days when there is great pressure to sweep such differences under the carpet. We are constantly being told that Rome should be seen as an ally, not as an opponent of Protestants. No doubt some of us still remember the statement in 'Evangelicals and Catholics together' in 1994, when we were being urged to move on from the Reformation. But let us be crystal clear, there can be no real unity at the expense of truth. If people foolishly imagine that the cause of Christ will be advanced by linking arms with those who proclaim 'another gospel', they are seriously deluded. The real path to Christian renewal lies in a return to the doctrines of Scripture – those doctrines for which our Reformers laid down their lives in the 16th Century. Are we daring to suggest that the Reformation was a mistake, and that those many great and godly men,

which include William Tyndale, Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, died in vain? Perish the thought!

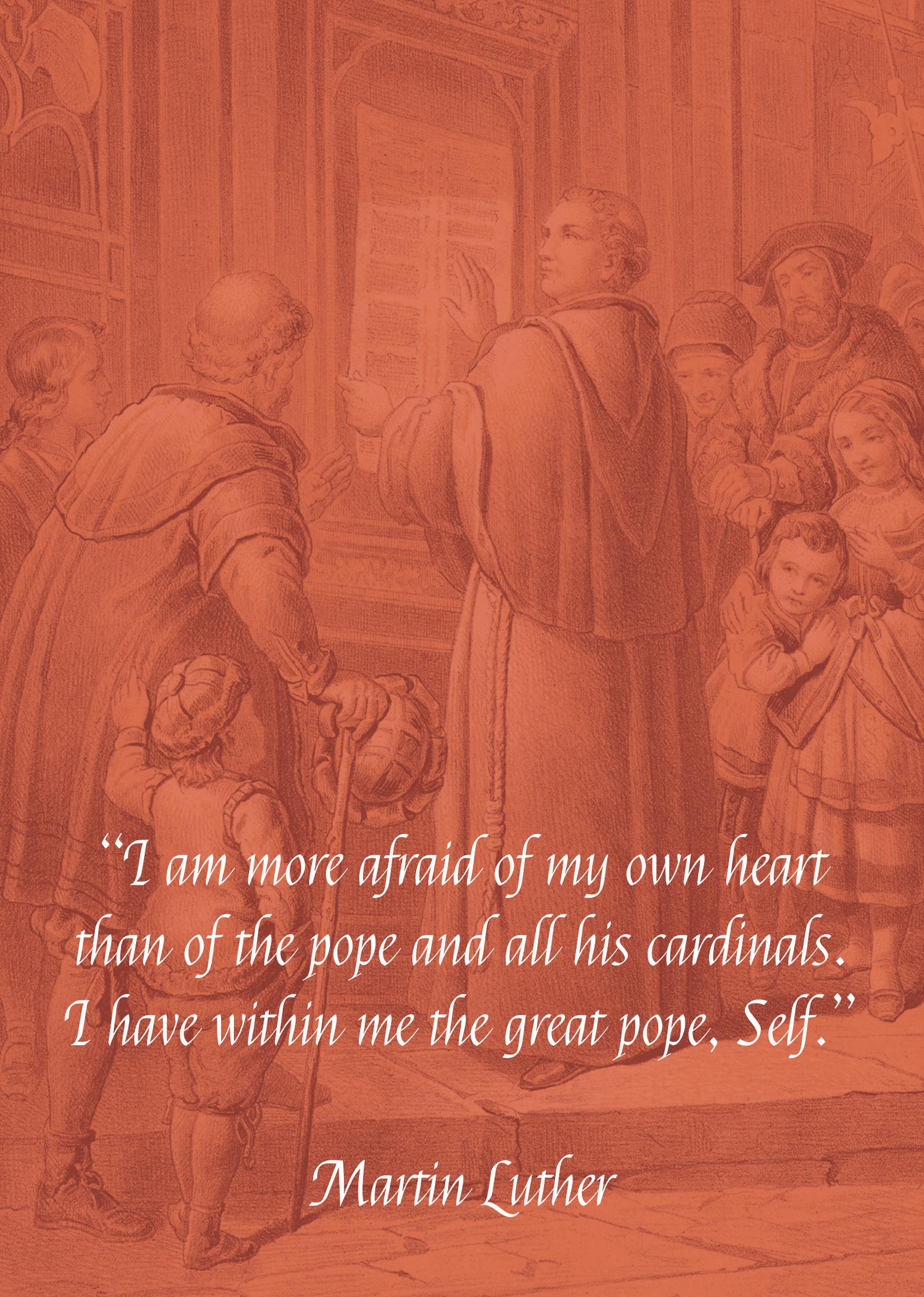
## *Stand Up*

In conclusion, let us follow the example of our notable Reformed forebears, and boldly nail our colours to the mast. In our own generation, there are numerous assaults on the teaching of the Bible, not just from the Church of Rome, but from the tidal wave of political correctness, which is infecting even evangelical Christians. The church today needs, as it did 500 years ago, to be continually reforming (Semper Reformanda) in the light of Scripture. Are we prepared to stand up and be counted for the sake of truth and righteousness? Or are we going to take the line of least resistance and trim our sails to the prevailing theological wind? Do we love the praise of men more than the praise of God? Do we avoid suffering, by compromise? Fellow Christian, remember the Reformation!

All Bible quotations are taken from the English Standard Version.

John Cheeseman went to school at Epsom College in Surrey and embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour at the age of 17 during a Scripture Union houseparty, having never previously attended church or Sunday school. He received his call to the ministry whilst a Classics student at Oxford University. After theological studies John was in full-time ministry from 1976 to 2010, pastoring churches in London, Margate and Eastbourne. For the past six years he has engaged in an itinerant preaching and Bible teaching ministry, serving churches both here in the U.K and abroad.

John is the author of four Christian books: Saving Grace, and The Priority of Preaching, both published by the Banner of Truth. His other two books, Elijah, Man of fire, Man of faith, and Elisha, Man of mission, Man of miracles are published by Day One.



*“I am more afraid of my own heart  
than of the pope and all his cardinals.  
I have within me the great pope, Self.”*

*Martin Luther*

# Against Compromise

By John MacArthur

It was Martin Luther who said:

*“The world at the present time is sagaciously discussing how to quell the controversy and strife over doctrine and faith, and how to effect a compromise between the Church and the Papacy. Let the learned, the wise, it is said, bishops, emperor and princes, arbitrate. Each side can easily yield something, and it is better to concede some things which can be construed according to individual interpretation, than that so much persecution, bloodshed, war, and terrible, endless dissension and destruction be permitted.”*

*“Here is lack of understanding, for understanding proves by the Word that such patchwork is not according to God’s will, but that doctrine, faith and worship must be preserved pure and unadulterated; there must be no mingling with human nonsense, human opinions or wisdom.”*

*“The Scriptures give us this rule: ‘We must obey God rather than men’*

Acts 5:29

It is interesting to speculate what the church would be like today if Martin Luther had been prone to

compromise. The pressure was heavy on him to tone down his teaching, soften his message, and stop poking his finger in the eye of the papacy. Even many of his friends and supporters urged Luther to come to terms with Rome for the sake of harmony in the church. Luther himself prayed earnestly that the effect of his teaching would not be divisive.

When he nailed his 95 Theses to the door, the last thing he wanted to do was split the church.

Yet sometimes division is fitting, even healthy, for the church. Especially in times like Luther’s—and like ours—when the visible church seems full of counterfeit Christians, it is right for the true people of God to declare themselves. Compromise is sometimes a worse evil than division. Second Corinthians 6:14-17 isn’t speaking only of marriage when it says,

*“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”*

*“Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord.”*



# What caused the Reformation?

*By Nathan Busenitz*



Many people might answer that question by pointing to Martin Luther and his 95 Theses.

But if you were to ask Luther himself, he would not point to himself or his own writings. Instead, he would give all the credit to God and His Word.

Near the end of his life, Luther declared: *“All I have done is put forth, preach and write the Word of God, and apart from this I have done nothing. . . . It is the Word that has done great things. . . . I have done nothing; the Word has done and achieved everything.”* Elsewhere, he exclaimed: *“By the Word the earth has been subdued; by the Word the Church has been saved; and by the Word also it shall be reestablished.”*

Noting Scripture’s foundational place in his own heart, Luther wrote: “No matter what happens, you should say: There is God’s Word. This is my rock and anchor.

On it I rely, and it remains. Where it remains, I, too, remain; where it goes, I, too, go.” Luther understood what caused the Reformation. He recognized that it was the Word of God empowered by the Spirit of God preached by men of God in a language that the common people of Europe could understand and when their ears were exposed to the truth of God’s Word it pierced their hearts and they were radically changed. It was that very power that had transformed Luther’s own heart, a power that is summarized in the familiar words of Hebrews 4:12: *“The Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword.”*

During the late middle ages, the Roman Catholic Church had imprisoned God’s Word in Latin; a language the common people of Europe did not speak. The Reformers unlocked the Scriptures by translating them. And once the people had the Word of God, the Reformation became inevitable. We see this commitment to the Scriptures even in the

centuries prior to Martin Luther, beginning with the Forerunners to the Reformation: In the 12th century, the Waldensians translated the New Testament from the Latin Vulgate into their regional French dialects. According to tradition, they were so committed to the Scriptures that different Waldensian families would memorize large sections of the Bible. That way, if Roman Catholic authorities found them and confiscated their printed copies of Scripture, they would later be able to reproduce the entire Bible from memory.

In the 14th century, John Wycliffe and his associates at Oxford translated the Bible from Latin into English. Wycliffe's followers, known as the Lollards, went throughout the countryside preaching and singing passages of Scripture in English.

In the 15th century, Jan Huss preached in the language of the people, and not in Latin, making him the most popular preacher in Prague at the time. Yet, because Huss insisted that Christ alone was the head of the church, not the pope, the Catholic Council of Constance condemned him for heresy and burned him at the stake (in 1415).

In the 16th century, as the study of Greek and Hebrew were recovered, Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, with the New Testament being completed in 1522.

In 1526, William Tyndale completed a translation of the Greek New Testament into English. A few years later he also translated the Pentateuch from Hebrew. Shortly thereafter he was arrested and executed as a heretic—being strangled and then burned at the stake. According to Fox's Book of Martyrs, Tyndale's last words were "Lord, Open the King of England's Eyes." And it was just a couple years after his death that King Henry VIII authorized the Great Bible in England—a Bible that was largely based on Tyndale's translation work. The Great Bible laid the foundation for the later King James version (which was completed in 1611). The common thread, from Reformer to Reformer, was an undying commitment to the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, such that they were willing to sacrifice everything, including their own lives, to get the Word of God into the hands of the people.



They did this because they understood that the power for spiritual reformation and revival was not in them, but in the gospel (cf. Romans 1:16-17). And they used the Latin phrase *Sola Scriptura* ("Scripture alone") to emphasize the truth that God's Word was the true power and ultimate authority behind all they said and did. It was ignorance of Scripture that made the Reformation necessary. It was the recovery of the Scripture that made the Reformation possible. And it was the power of the Scripture that gave the Reformation its enduring impact, as the Holy Spirit brought the truth of His Word to bear on the hearts and minds of individual sinners, transforming them, regenerating them, and giving them eternal life.

Dr Nathan Busenitz is an Assistant Professor of Theology at the Master's Seminary. He completed his doctorate in church history, with a specific focus on patristic theology. From 2003 to 2009, Nathan served as a full-time member of the pastoral staff at Grace Community Church. During this time, he worked as the director of the Shepherds' Fellowship, the managing editor of Pulpit magazine, and also as the personal assistant to John MacArthur.



# Rethinking the Reformation?

*By Cameron Buettel & Jeremiah Johnson*



Four years ago, as the Roman Catholic Church was preparing to elect its current pope, the Grace to You blog published several articles from John MacArthur exposing the heresies of the Catholic Church. With the papal election dominating the news cycle and public conversation, we wanted to help our readers understand the true nature of the Catholic Church and its doctrinal distinctives.

As you might suspect, that series was met with plenty of resistance. Surprisingly, though, the majority of the criticism did not come from Catholic apologists, but from evangelicals. Many men and women who were sympathetic to the Catholic Church - including some with significant influence in evangelical circles - were critical of the firm biblical stance we took, wishing that we were more accommodating and conciliatory.

Of course, ecumenism is nothing new. Satan always works to mingle the truth with error, and the evangelistic co-belligerence of evangelicals and Catholics is just one example. But for some reason, this unlikely doctrinal mashup has been growing in popularity for the past two decades.

## *Evangelicals and Catholics Together?*

One significant flashpoint was the development of the Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) document in 1994. That incongruous union was presented as an accord between Evangelicals and Catholics regarding their agreement on various social issues. But much of the twenty-five page document was more about affirming doctrinal similarities,



not shared social goals. In effect, it painted over several important doctrinal differences and blurred the distinctions of two antithetical views of justification - the doctrine of how a person is made right with God.

Perhaps worst of all, built into ECT was an agreement to halt evangelistic efforts between evangelicals and Catholics. Under the heading "We Witness Together." It said,

"In view of the large number of non-Christians in the world and the enormous challenge of our common evangelistic task, it is neither theologically legitimate nor a prudent use of resources for one Christian community to proselytize among active adherents of another Christian community."

In effect, signing ECT was agreeing to disagree on the true means of justification, but agreeing that either means was valid for salvation. What better way for Satan to cut off millions from the reach of the gospel? In a landmark interview titled "Irreconcilable Differences," alongside Dr. R.C. Sproul and Dr. D. James Kennedy, John MacArthur explained the biblical problems with ECT this way:

"To borrow the language of the apostle Paul, any attempt at self-righteousness, no matter how noble the effort, no matter how frequently the God vocabulary is used and the

divine is brought into it, any attempt to self-righteousness Paul classifies as skubalon in Philippians 3. That word is about as vivid a word as he could possibly use. It can be translated rubbish, the most accurate translation is dung. . . . And what you've got is a whole system built on skubalon, and you can't throw your arms around that system. You can't embrace it and simply say, "Well, they talk about Jesus and they talk about God and they talk about faith and they talk about grace and we've got to embrace them. And if we don't embrace them, we're violating the unity of the body and we're being ungracious to other disciples." That is a frightening misrepresentation of the distinctiveness of justification by faith and faith alone."

When it comes to the means of justification, there is simply no way to biblically bridge the vast chasm between evangelical and Catholic teaching. In fact, from the Catholic perspective, such tenuous partnerships have damning consequences.

## *Nothing Has Changed Since Trent*

Modern audiences may believe that time has blurred the doctrinal lines that were drawn during the Reformation, but the official dogma of the Catholic Church indicates otherwise. In response to the Reformers' relentless assault, Rome formed its own Counter-Reformation, hoping to regain the authoritative ground it had lost. One key facet of their response was the Council of Trent, convened by Pope Paul III from 1545 to 1563. Trent was an opportunity for Rome to clarify and codify its dogma, specifically regarding salvation and other doctrines that were under fire from the Reformers. In that regard, Trent stands as one of the most influential and important councils in the history of the Catholic Church.

In short, the Council of Trent pronounced damnation on every major aspect of soteriology that the Reformers taught. In particular, it denies justification by faith alone.

"If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema." (Canon IX)



Anathema, according to Catholic theology, means the excommunication and exclusion of a sinner from the members of the faithful. Roman Catholic theology therefore pronounces a curse of excommunication and damnation on anyone who preaches or believes that you are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus.

Trent was certainly not framed by postmodern philosophers. They were explicitly clear in their rejection of the gospel that born-again Christians love and cherish:

“If any one saith, that the justice received is not preserved and also increased before God through good works; but that the said works are merely the fruits and signs of Justification obtained, but not a cause of the increase thereof; let him be anathema.” (Canon XXIV)

Trent anathematized every core doctrine of the Reformers. And regardless of Rome’s current attempts to extend olive

branches to the evangelical church, the doctrines established at Trent are still binding on all Catholics.

## *Setting Sanity Aside for the Sake of Unity*

Roger Olson, professor of theology at Baylor University, is widely regarded as an expert in historical theology. His 652-page tome, *The Story of Christian Theology*, is a highly decorated literary work and required reading in many Bible colleges and seminaries.

But Olson, like many other evangelical scholars, abandons plain reason when discussing the viability of unification between Catholics and evangelicals. On the one hand, he admits that the Council of Trent condemned the core

## *Missing the Mission Field*

Protestant doctrines as damnable heresies (Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 444). He also admits that the teachings of the Council of Trent are still binding on all Catholics, and to reject any of them is to renounce Catholicism and apostatize from their religion (*Ibid.*, 445).

But in complete disregard of his own assessment, Olson contends that the boundaries between Catholicism and Protestantism are becoming “more elastic and flexible” (*Ibid.*, 598). He looks “forward to a day when Catholics and Protestants will enjoy full communion and fellowship” (*Ibid.*, 599). This is clear defiance against the law of non-contradiction. If rejecting the Council of Trent is an act of renouncing one’s Catholic faith, then it is impossible for Catholics and Protestants to “enjoy full communion.” Anathematizing your guests makes for an awkward “Kumbaya” around the ecumenical campfire. The only way Catholics and Protestants can come together is if one or the other - or both - renounce their faith.

Olson’s inconsistencies are not that surprising - he has a track record of leaning liberal on key theological issues. But far more vexing is the behavior of renowned Reformed theologian J.I. Packer. Packer has written some truly great works on Christian soteriology. His book, *Knowing God*, is rightly treasured by Bible-believing Christians all over the world. Packer has a tremendous grasp of the fundamental doctrines advanced by the Reformers - salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, on Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone. His shorter work, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, is a helpful and clear testimony that the doctrines of grace no way mitigate fervent evangelism.

In light of Packer’s sound and robustly Reformed theology, his signature on the ECT document is troublesome. The thought of him setting aside such precious and glorious biblical truths for the sake of a unity that undermines those very truths is scarcely believable.

Roger Olson and J.I. Packer are just two examples of influential theologians who should know better than most that, given Roman Catholic dogma, there is no way to reconcile Catholicism and Protestantism. And yet they join many others in an endeavor that undercuts the very saving gospel they proclaim.

Today we live in a time of enormous compromise, driven by the postmodern version of tolerance. Wavering on the fundamental soteriological differences between Catholicism and evangelicalism for the sake of superficial unity is foolishness.

Twenty years ago, during the “Irreconcilable Differences” interview, John MacArthur warned the church about prizing ecumenical unity over doctrinal integrity. His words are just as poignant today:

“In a time like this of tolerance, false teaching will always cry intolerance; it will always say you’re being divisive, you’re being unloving, you’re being ungracious because it can only survive when it doesn’t get scrutinized. And so it cries against any intolerance. It cries against any examination, any scrutiny, just “let’s embrace each other, let’s love each other, let’s put all that behind us.” False doctrine cries the loudest about unity. And listen carefully when you hear the cry for unity because it may be the cover of false doctrine encroaching. And if ever we should follow 1 Thessalonians 5 and examine everything carefully, it’s when somebody is crying “unity, love, and acceptance.”

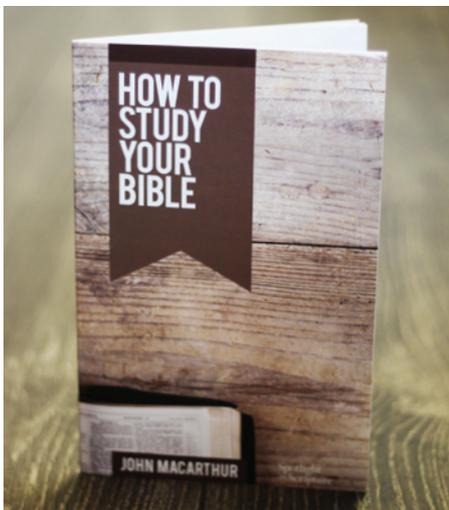
The church must be bold and clear about exposing the heresies of the Catholic Church. We must protect the flock from the ecumenical overtures of Catholics who want to suggest that we all play for the same team.

Furthermore, we must do so out of a sincere desire to reach the vast mission field right on our doorstep. There is perhaps no mission field more ripe for spiritual harvest than the Catholic Church. Ecumenical capitulation won’t save anyone - if anything, it’s a spiritual impediment to those most in need of God’s truth.

We who have been rescued from spiritual blindness must not contribute to the confusion of those who still cannot differentiate the light from the dark. Compelled by our love for the Lord and our commitment to the purity of His church, we must hold fast to the truth recovered during the Reformation, and resist the pressures to compromise with Rome’s false gospel.

# Recommended Reading

Visit our online store at [www.gty.org.uk](http://www.gty.org.uk) to view our entire range of Study Bibles and books by John MacArthur



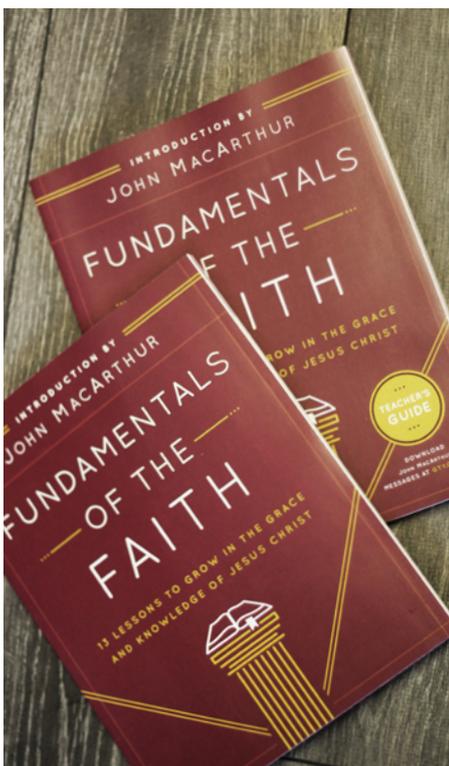
## HOW TO STUDY YOUR BIBLE

John MacArthur writes, *"I don't know if you've very really thought about the magnificence of the Bible and what a privilege we have in studying it, but I hope that because of this study you'll be able to focus on some of the tremendous truths that await you in Scripture as you break it open."*

Learn specifically how to read, interpret, meditate on, and teach the Bible in this life-changing study!

Booklet  
Product code: 45STUDY

**£1.00**



## FUNDAMENTALS OF THE FAITH

13 Lessons to Grow in the Grace and Knowledge of Jesus Christ. Every Sunday morning at Grace Community Church (and throughout the week), small groups of people gather together around this manual for "Fundamentals of the Faith" classes. Thirteen lessons blend basic biblical truths with personal obedience and service. Many young believers take these classes to grow in their understanding of biblical truths. With topics ranging from the character of God to church participation, it's an ideal study for discipling new believers or returning to the basics of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

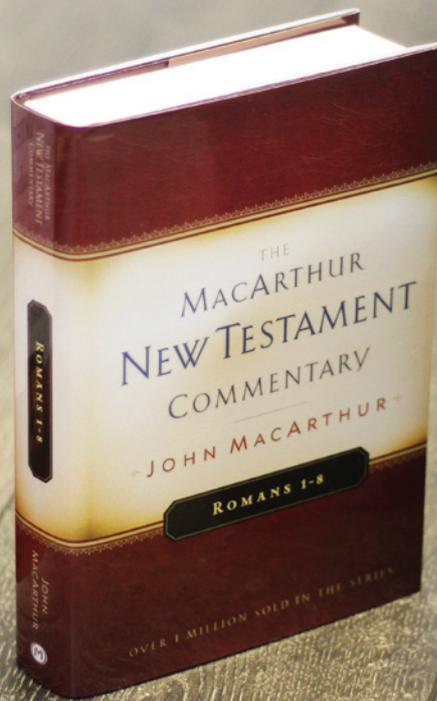
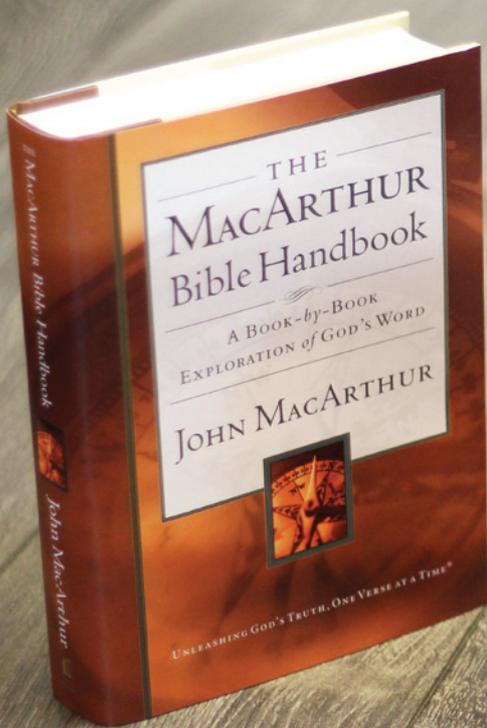
Disciples Edition (Softcover)  
Product code: 451300

Teacher's Edition (Softcover)  
Product code: 451301T

**£6.50**

**£10.00**

Free Teachers Guide with every 6 copies of the Disciples Edition



## THE MACARTHUR BIBLE HANDBOOK

John MacArthur has made the careful study and verse-by-verse exposition of the Bible the major emphasis of his pulpit ministry, with special attention devoted to the historical and grammatical background behind each passage. The MacArthur Bible Handbook is designed to make the sometimes daunting task of Bible study simpler and more accessible – one book at a time, from beginning to end.

This unique reference tool, which includes many charts, graphs, and illustrations, will help you easily understand each book of the Bible, its historical context, and place in Scripture.

Hardcover

Product code: 45MBH

**£12.00**

## ROMANS 1-8 COMMENTARY

Romans speaks to Christians today just as powerfully as it spoke to believers of the first century. It speaks to moral, intellectual, social, and spiritual issues. But most importantly of all, it lays the theological foundation for the Christian faith – that God has made it possible through Christ for sinners to be made right before Him.

Join John MacArthur as he explains each verse in a way that is both doctrinally precise and intensely practical.

Hardcover

Product code: 431027

**£9.75**

## ESV MACARTHUR STUDY BIBLE

For years, the spiritual lives of countless men and women all over the world have been strengthened with the help of The MacArthur Study Bible. This all-in-one spiritual library contains John's personal study notes below the full-length Bible text. Virtually every Scripture has a matching study note with detailed information, explanation, and helpful insight. Here are some of its main features: Complete ESV Bible text, Nearly 25,000 explanatory notes from John MacArthur, More than 140 maps, charts, timelines, and illustrations, Complete introductions to each Bible book, 80,000 cross-references, An extensive concordance, Bible reading plans, Concise articles on "How We Got the Bible" and "Introduction to the Bible"

TruTone Leathersoft

Product codes:

44ESVTBL Blue/Charcoal

44ESVTBR Brown/Woodcut

44ESVTBT Black/Tan Trail

44ESVTCB Brown/Crimson

44ESVTFT Forest/Tan

**£40.00**



**facebook**

Why not take a look at the Grace To You Europe Facebook page? You can find regular updates here about news, products, videos, etc. Once you have connected with us please encourage any of your friends to join who you think may be interested too. You can find our page by simply searching in Facebook for 'Grace To You Europe'

# MISSION STATEMENT

**GRACE TO YOU EUROPE USES MASS COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA TO EXPOSE JOHN MACARTHUR'S BIBLE TEACHING TO AS WIDE AN AUDIENCE AS POSSIBLE. WHY?**

*"For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12-13)*

**ONE OF OUR PRINCIPAL TASKS IS TO PROTECT BELIEVERS FROM BEING...**

*"tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming" (Eph 4: 14)*

We accept the God-given responsibility of *"speaking the truth in love"* (Ephesians 4:15) and strive for the growth of the church and the glory of the Lord, rather than the praise and honour of men.

Our role is not to supplant the local church's ministry, but to support it by providing additional resources to those hungering for the truth of God's word. Media ministries can never substitute for involvement in a biblical church, group Bible study, or interaction with a teacher. Yet we sense the need for more in-depth resources, evidenced by the many Christians and Christian leaders worldwide who depend on our ministry to supplement their own study. Our desire is that God be glorified through Grace to You's radio broadcasts, CDs, DVDs, MP3s and publications. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of this ministry, and we desire to perform our work as unto Him, to reflect Him to all those we encounter, and to operate not in our strength but through His power (Philippians 4:13).

## GRACE TO YOU EUROPE

5 Caxton House, Wellesley Road, Ashford, Kent, TN24 8ET

Tel: 01233 662262 Fax: 01233 638810 Email: [info@gty.org.uk](mailto:info@gty.org.uk)

**[www.gty.org.uk](http://www.gty.org.uk)**

Grace to You Europe is a charity registered with the Charity Commission for England & Wales (Reg. NO. 1150277)

Brochure designed by

**RTgraphics**

[www.rtgraphics.co.uk](http://www.rtgraphics.co.uk)