

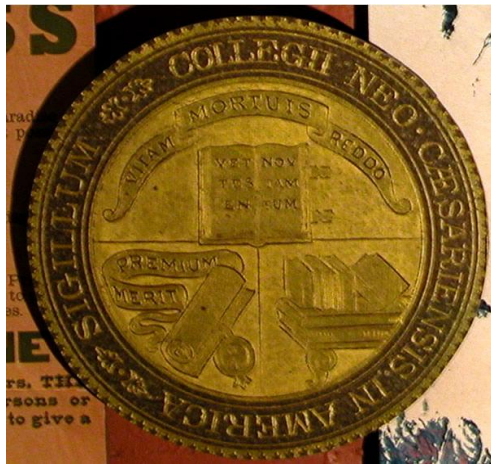
By now, most of you know that on or around Reformation Sunday I share a Christian biography with you. I do this for several reasons. One, is to remind us that we all stand upon the shoulders of faithful Christian men and women who have come before us. We're not alone and we can learn from their lives. We can and must learn from men like Martin Luther who stood boldly upon the Word of God. Second, this is a reminder to read more and specifically to read Christian biographies. We have all four volumes of Hero Tales in our church library that have dozens and dozens of great stories. Please take advantage of them for you and your children.

It's hard to believe that this is my tenth year of doing this. Here is the list of people I have covered in past years.

William Tyndale, b. 1536  
Ulrich Zwingli, b. 1484  
David Brainerd, b. 1718  
George Whitefield, b. 1714  
Amy Carmichael, b. 1867  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, b. 1906  
Benjamin Rush, b. 1746  
Fanny Crosby, b. 1820  
Richard Baxter, b. 1615

This is obviously a departure from my normal preaching through books of the Bible. This is why I stand up here behind a music stand and not holding my Bible. So it's not a sermon per se but I

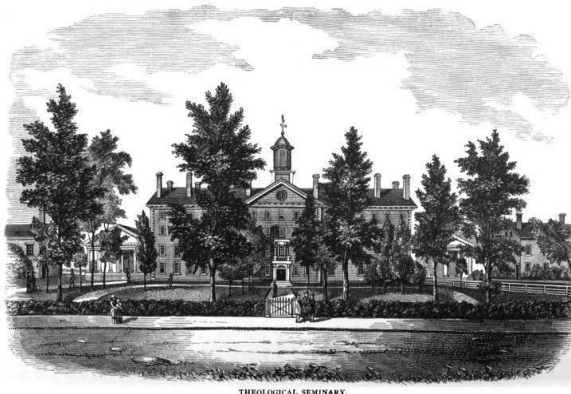
do intend to pull Biblical principles from the lives of each person we examine. I enjoy doing these every year and I hope you glean much from this morning's biography.



Here is the seal of a College with the typical Latin phrases. In the center of the seal is an open Bible with the words, "Old and New Testament." Above the Bible is banner with the phrase, "I restore life to the dead," referring of course to the resurrection power of the gospel. One of the founders of the college described the school like this. "Though our great Intention was to erect a seminary for educating Ministers of the Gospel, yet we hope it will be useful in other learned professions."

Does that sound like a school you might want to attend? Any guesses as to the name of the school? This is the seal for The College of New Jersey, later renamed Princeton University. It was founded on the heels of the

Great Awakening, the greatest revival to ever sweep our nation. At the time, Yale and Harvard were both opposed to the Great Awakening. "The faculty of Harvard College denounced Whitfield, the itinerants, and the Awakening generally as "tending very much to the entire Destruction of the Order of these Churches of Christ."<sup>1</sup>



The original founders of Princeton were "disappointed by Yale and Harvard's opposition to the Great Awakening and [so] they devised a plan for the establishment of a new college."<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Edwards, the key figure in the Great Awakening, was the third president of Princeton, but died shortly after taking office from small pox. So there is no doubt that Princeton was founded upon the Scriptures for the purpose of "educating Ministers of the Gospel."

John Gresham Machen spent 27 years at Princeton, first as a student and then as a professor of New Testament. When he arrived in 1902, Princeton was nearing the end of its conservative roots. At the time, Woodrow Wilson was the president of the University and a friend of the family. Machen went to dinner at Wilson's home on many occasions.<sup>3</sup> Princeton was part of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, which was also quickly moving to a state of Liberalism. Machen had a successful career at the seminary but there came a time when the stench of Liberalism was so great that he felt he had to cut ties with the historic school.



As a result, he founded a seminary in 1929<sup>4</sup>, Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, which is still going strong today.<sup>5</sup> In 1933 he further broke away from the Presbyterian Church USA and founded the Independent Board of Foreign Missions. Finally, following a bitter church trial which made the front page of the New York Times, he left the denomination itself and founded a new denomination, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1936. The Stalsberg family currently attends an OPC near Green Bay.

You don't start a seminary, a mission board and a denomination without a lot of prayer, blood sweat and tears. In fact, Machen died seven months after founding the OPC. He was worn down and he died of pneumonia in Bismark, North Dakota while trying to help a small church there. By drawing on some key parts of his life and writings, I will pull out some principles that I think are as fresh today as they were eighty years ago.

I gave this biography of Machen the title "Doctrinal Fences" because I believe that is a summary of his life. Liberal Christianity sought to pull down any and all fences that had been the foundation of Christianity for the previous nineteen centuries. In his infamous sermon, *Shall the Fundamentalists Win?*, Harry Emerson Fosdick laid down his own summary of Machen and other conservatives. "Such are some of the stakes which are being driven to mark a deadline of doctrine around the church." So Fosdick was saying, "Look, these conservatives want to make a fence around Christian doctrine and we can't let them win."



So what's the big deal. It was just one pastor in one sermon blowing off some steam, right? Fosdick was not your average pastor. he appeared no once, but twice on the cover of TIME magazine. He was the liberal equivalent of Billy Graham in his day, so people paid attention to what he said. Think of this as "theological smack talk." His sermon was given in 1922. One year later Machen wrote his best known book called *Christianity and Liberalism*. This quote will tell you a good bit about

the fire that burned within Machen.

The type of religion which rejoices in the pious sound of traditional phrases, regardless of their meanings, or shrinks from "controversial" matters, will never stand amid the shocks of life. In the sphere of religion, as in other spheres, the things about which men are agreed are apt to be the things that are least worth holding; the really important things are the things about which men will fight.<sup>6</sup>

Machen was a gentle scholar but he was not afraid of a fight for the sake of the gospel. He saw the doctrinal fences gleefully being torn down. He was convinced that what Christianity in America needed most was strong doctrinal fences. And by fences, I don't mean narrow strips of creeds which confine and restrict us into hopeless legalism. Fences keep certain things out and keep other things within. Machen wanted as broad of fences as possible to protect the gospel

from liberal attacks but within these fences was and is a tremendous amount of freedom and joy in the Lord. With that in mind, here are some principles from Machen's life.

### **1. Faithful men and women have faithful moms and dads.**

Machen's father and two brothers were all successful lawyers. His Mom came from a wealthy family<sup>7</sup> in Macon, Georgia, made rich off of cotton and railroad investments.<sup>8</sup> Both of his parents were committed to raising their three boys in the "fear and admonition of the Lord." The main religious textbooks in their home were the Bible, the Westminster Shorter Catechism and Pilgrim's Progress. Back then, letter writing was their main form of communication. During his undergraduate studies at John Hopkins University, in a letter to his father he confided, "The ministry I am afraid I cannot think of."<sup>9</sup> He didn't think he was cut out to be a pastor but neither did he realize he would spend 27 years at Princeton and then turn the Christian world on its head.

He seemed to have had an especially close relationship with his mother. In between the founding of the Seminary and the funding of the Mission Board, shortly before she died she wrote, "Mother is feeble but she is with Dassie every step." Dassie was Machen's nickname and his mother supported him to her dying breath in 1931. At her funeral, Machen said of her, "My mother-seems to me at least-to be the wisest and best human being I ever knew."<sup>10</sup>

Do you think that Arthur and Minnie Machen had any idea what impact their son would have upon the evangelical world? Could they have imagined that their son would have started a seminary, a mission board and a denomination, each of which are still going strong eighty years later? Parents, we have no idea what faithful parenting and family discipleship can do for your children. We do have an idea of what an absence of faithfulness can look like, and the results are often not pretty. This is not to say that your kids will make it to the front page of the New York Times, but by and large faithful men and women have faithful moms and dads. I don't mean perfect parents, but faithful parents. There's a huge difference between those two. If you don't have much of a plan for family discipleship, why not read 3-4 biographies from Hero Tales per year as a start? Our kids were never bored by these stories and always wanted us to read another chapter.

### **2. The greatest threat to the church and the gospel has always come from within.**

In Christianity and Liberalism Machen writes, "The greatest menace to the Christian Church to-day comes not from the enemies outside, but from the enemies within; it comes from the presence within the Church of a type of faith and practice that is anti-Christian to the core."

Why did he state this so emphatically? For "It is no wonder, then, that liberalism is totally different from Christianity, for the foundation is different. Christianity is founded upon the Bible. It bases upon the Bible both its thinking and its life. Liberalism on the other hand is founded upon the shifting emotions of sinful men."

And from where did this deadly liberalism come? It was not an attack from outside the church but from within her walls. Here is more of Fosdick's sermon. And remember, he was the liberal Billy Graham of his day.

It is interesting to note where the Fundamentalists are driving in their stakes to mark out the deadline of doctrine around the church, across which no one is to pass except on terms of agreement. They insist that we must all believe in the historicity of certain special miracles, preeminently the virgin birth of our Lord; that we must believe in a special theory of inspiration—that the original documents of the Scripture, which of course we no longer possess, were inerrantly dictated to men a good deal as a man might dictate to a stenographer<sup>11</sup>; that we must believe in a special theory of the Atonement—that the blood of our Lord, shed in a substitutionary death, placates an alienated Deity and makes possible welcome for the returning sinner; and that we must believe in the second coming of our Lord upon the clouds of heaven to set up a millennium here, as the only way in which God can bring history to a worthy denouement. Such are some of the stakes which are being driven to mark a deadline of doctrine around the church.<sup>12</sup>

Did you notice the strategic dismantling of every core doctrine of our faith? In one long paragraph, he tore down miracles, the virgin birth, the inerrancy of Scripture, substitutionary atonement and the glorious return of Christ. Machen summarized, "It may appear that what the liberal theologian has retained after abandoning to the enemy one Christian doctrine after another is not Christianity at all, but a religion which is so entirely different from Christianity as to be long in a distinct category."<sup>13</sup>

The boldness of which Machen and others demonstrated was not without personal cost. Most of the pastors who left the PCUSA to join the new denomination lost their pensions and were locked out of their churches, even if all of the church members were on their side. My own sister had firsthand experience with Machen's denomination. Her family belonged to a Presbyterian Church USA but it was one of the rare conservative churches. They had signed an document condemning the denominations decision to allow the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy. One Monday morning, the local presbytery marched into the senior pastor's office and leveled an ultimatum: either he resign or the presbytery takes over the church building. If you are familiar with such battles, most often, the church loses and the denomination wins. They knew that they could not compromise their stand ,so they immediately scrambled to find a new location to meet for services the following Sunday. The church was averaging about 400 people so it was not an easy task. They found a location and lost their church in the process. During the next several years, the church almost doubles to 700 attenders. In a few years, they moved into a brand new building, much bigger than the old one and quickly swelled to over 1000 people. The irony is that the old building still had over a million dollars in debt and the presbytery was left holding that massive debt with no means to pay it off.

The greatest threat to the church and the gospel has always come from within, which is why our next point is so important.

### **3. Sound doctrine is a necessary fence to protect the gospel.**

Several quotes from *Christianity and Liberalism* illustrate this principle.

- Modern preachers are trying to bring men into the Church without requiring them to relinquish their pride; they are trying to help men avoid the conviction of sin.



- “Christ died”--that is history; “Christ died for our sins”--that is doctrine. Without these two elements, joined in an absolutely indissoluble union, there is no Christianity.”
- It is not the Bible doctrine of the atonement which is difficult to understand—what are really incomprehensible are the elaborate modern efforts to get rid of the Bible doctrine in the interests of human pride.
- In seeming to object to all theology, the liberal preacher is often merely objecting to one system of theology in the interests of another. And the desired immunity from theological controversy has not yet been attained.<sup>14</sup>

Our [Statement of Faith](#), about which two weeks ago we voted to adopt the 2008 version, is a doctrinal fence. Remember [I explained this summer](#) that some of the changes were made in order to prevent heresies like Open Theism from entering our denomination and our churches. You can't build anything on doctrine alone but without healthy doctrinal fences, you have nothing in which to build.



#### 4. The Tolerance Movement is not new.

Most of you no doubt heard about the audacious demand of Houston mayor. She submitted a subpoena requiring all Houston clergy to turn over “all speeches, presentations, or sermons related to HERO, the Petition, Mayor Annise Parker, homosexuality, or gender identity prepared by, delivered by, revised by, or approved by you or in your possession...”<sup>15</sup> That was very surreal to me because I first read about the story on a Wednesday morning after our men's study. I had just got done telling the guys that I think that

any potential for pastors going to jail over this very kind of thing is still twenty years away.

Can I indulge in a little paranoia for a moment? Here is a graph of the number of page views of our church website. Everyone once in a while I will click on the "stats" button pull up this info. I have Never seen this much

traffic on our website. The average number of daily views is 200 with a few spikes just shy of 500. And I have to ask myself, in a church this size, who is spending this much time on our website? Are these friends or could they be some enemies as well? I am not worried in the slightest but in light of the Houston debacle, it's the kind of thing that makes you scratch your head.



Thankfully, the mayor removed her subpoena. But all of this illegal, unethical, immoral and insane political posturing was done under the banner of the "tolerance movement." Of course you know that the tolerance movement tolerates anything except evangelical beliefs and morals. They are the tolerant ones and we are labeled as "intolerant." But this is nothing new. Unfortunately, we have been called intolerant for a long time. here again is another part from Fosdick's sermon.

I do not believe for one moment that the Fundamentalists are going to succeed. Nobody's intolerance can contribute anything to the solution of the situation which we have described.

Nevertheless, it is true that just now the Fundamentalists are giving us one of the worst exhibitions of bitter intolerance that the churches of this country have ever seen.

So, now, when from the terrific questions of this generation one is called away by the noise of this Fundamentalist controversy, he thinks it almost unforgivable that men should tithe mint and anise and cummin, and quarrel over them, when the world is perishing for the lack of the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith.<sup>16</sup>

You get that last reference, don't you. he's calling us Pharisees. So in 1922, the liberal Billy Graham of his day called the conservatives intolerant Pharisees. You see, there's nothing new. I am not saying that we should take comfort in this fact but I think it's helpful to realize, as Ecclesiastes says, "there's nothing new under the sun." Name calling and persecution have always and will always abound until the return of Christ. Furthermore, we should be willing to stand with brothers and sisters who are on the front lines of persecution, which is a good reason to attend tonight's Simulcast for the persecuted church.

Machen made an extremely important point about tolerance. "There are doctrines of modern liberalism, just as tenaciously and intolerantly upheld as any doctrines that find a place in the historic creeds." This is really important to understand when you are in a conversation with someone and the topic of intolerance arises. The tolerance crowd has their own set of beliefs and they are therefore, intolerant of ours. For your own benefit, that's helpful to know, but I don't expect the tolerance people listen to me telling them how intolerant they are. They just don't buy it.<sup>17</sup>

### **5. Unity is imperative but sometimes truth must divide.**

One of the great sins of the church is her disunity. We don't get along very well. We are brilliant at petty squabbles. We get mad at one another and refuse to reconcile. Christians are often known more for their fights than for their fidelity and love. If you have lived in Viroqua for any length of time you are well aware of the number of church splits. When our realtor found out that I was pastor, she said, "The churches in Viroqua are like branches of a tree, splitting off from one another." Sadly, now even the churches in Westby are going through this as we speak.

Ephesians chapter four begins with this clarion call to unity. *"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all*

*humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

Despite the absolute necessity of fighting for unity, sometimes truth must divide. The first Sunday service we had in our new building was two days after the ELCA voted to ordain gay and lesbian clergy. This rightly caused some churches to break off from the ELCA. In other words, there is such a thing as a "good" and necessary church split.

Machen weighs in again.

"If the liberal party, therefore, really obtains control of the Church, evangelical Christians must be prepared to withdraw no matter what it costs. Our Lord has died for us, and surely we must not deny Him for favor of men."

"We shall concern ourselves here chiefly with the former line of criticism; we shall be interested in showing that despite the liberal use of traditional phraseology modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions."

"We would not indeed obscure the difference which divides us from Rome. The gulf is indeed profound. But profound as it is, it seems almost trifling compared to the abyss which stands between us and many ministers of our own Church. The Church of Rome may represent a perversion of the Christian religion; but naturalistic liberalism is not Christianity at all."

"Involuntary organizations ought to be tolerant, but voluntary organizations, so far as the fundamental purpose of their existence is concerned, must be intolerant or else cease to exist."

What Machen is saying is that truth is both inherently unifying and divisive. Our doctrinal fences are incredibly unifying but the same fence also divides us from differing beliefs. We cannot unite with so-called Christians any more than we can unite with Muslims, Buddhists and atheists. But then that shows us how important it is where your fences lie, am I right? Build them too small and all you have is a narrow, legalistic border. Too large of a fence and you may as well not have a fence at all.

## **6. Persecution forms and reveals character.**

Can you imagine what Machen went through on his path to pulling out of the Presbyterian Church? Ever since the Presbyterian Church was formed there had never been a split from it. Presbyterianism came into being early on in the Reformation and had been a core part of the evangelical world for almost 400 years when Machen broke away.<sup>18</sup> Can you see that Machen was like Martin Luther, on a slightly smaller scale? he attempted to bring about reform and renewal from within but the weight of liberalism was more than he and a few others could bear.

Understand that when he started the Westminster Seminary in 1929, he wasn't thinking about completely breaking from the Presbyterian Church. This is another way he was like Martin Luther. Luther did not set out to bring about the Protestant reformation and start Lutheranism. He wanted to purify the church from within and raise up the pure gospel of Christ to its rightful place. Machen knew that even though Princeton had been formed to train ministers of the gospel, she was no longer able to do so. So the seminary was born for that purpose alone.



But then things got worse in other ways. The final straw was a report from the PC-USA entitled, "Re Thinking Missions A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years" funded by John D. Rockefeller. The maybe not so ironic part to this story is that Harry Emerson Fosdick's brother ran the John D. Rockefeller Foundation for thirty years. Harry was also John Rockefeller's pastor from 1924 on. Here is part of that report.

If instead of confining themselves purely to humanitarian work such as education, medical

## PRESBYTERY TO TRY MACHEN AS REBEL

New Brunswick Group Files  
9 Charges—A 'Show-Down'  
on Fundamentalists Denied.

HE ADMITS DISOBEDIENCE

Board Head Attacks 'Taxation  
by Penalty'—Says He Stands  
By Church Constitution.

From a Staff Correspondent.  
TRENTON, N. J., Dec. 20.—The  
Presbytery of New Brunswick, at

service to the poor and the like, they would use these activities of theirs for the purpose of proselytizing, I would certainly like them to withdraw . . . Let me now amplify the bald statement. I hold that proselytizing under the cloak of humanitarian work is, to say the least, unhealthy. It is most certainly resented by the people here. Religion after all is a deeply personal matter, it touches the heart. Why should I change my religion because a doctor who professes Christianity as his religion has cured me of some disease, or why should the doctor expect or suggest such a change whilst I am under his influence? ... In my opinion these practices are not uplifting and give rise to suspicion if not even to secret hostility.<sup>19</sup>

Imagine if the Roman Catholic Church had nailed their own 95 Theses on the Wittenberg door instead of Luther? What if they nailed a document which gutted the gospel of all power and disgraced the name of God? This is what it was like for Machen and this document was the nail in the coffin. he wasted no time in founding the Independent Board of Foreign Missions. Now he was running a seminary *and* a missions agency.



But this was also the final straw for the Presbyterian authorities. They had had enough of the rebel Machen so they brought nine charges of disobedience against him and brought him to church trial. This is what appeared on the front page of the New York Times and countless other newspapers around the nation. He was found guilty on all nine charges and excommunicated from the

Presbyterian Church.<sup>20</sup>

They started with a few dozen ministers but today the OPC has over 500 pastors serving in 269 churches. In his inaugural address, Machen said "We became members, at last, of a true Presbyterian Church; we recovered, at last, true Christian fellowship."<sup>21</sup>

Can you imagine the pressure and persecution he endured? Unlike Luther, no one ever sought to assassinate Machen, but his enemies were legion. The book of James begins, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." Suffering yields Godly character but it also reveals what was already present in the man. Machen came from a wealthy family. His upbringing was not forged in the fires of suffering, but of ease and comfort. Despite his apparent lack of suffering, God had prepared him for these years of bold leadership. He was 5'8" and 150 pounds, so he had an inch of height and five pounds on me, but his moral stature stood much taller and his Christ-loving shoulders much broader than that.

### **7. The greatest impact flows out of simple faithfulness.**

Machen did not set out to be great. His life goal was not to reform the entire Presbyterian Church. His goal, and he succeeded in this, was simple faithfulness. And it was this very faithfulness which allowed him to have such a profound impact.

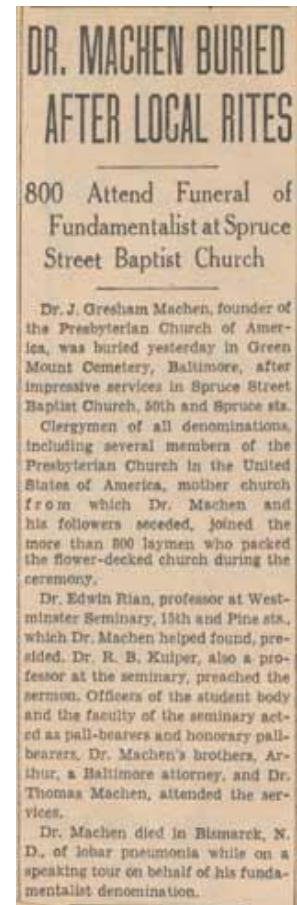
We all need good goals. Our church needs strategic initiatives. In fact, in January, Lord willing, the elders will be at a weekend retreat to talk about the strategic initiatives of our church, to think hard and to pray hard about our future. That's all well and good, because if you aim at

nothing, you are likely to hit it. However, the greatest impact we will ever have--as a church and as individual believers stumbling our way through this world--is simple faithfulness. God does not call us to have an earth-shattering impact on the world, but he does call us to simple faithfulness.

### **8. People die well because they lived well.**

The pressure on Machen was not without its toll. A small church in Bismark North Dakota needed his attention. He ignored his weakened condition and made the long trip at the end of December 1936. He quickly developed pneumonia and died there. His last written words came in the form of a telegram right before he died on January 1, 1937. "I am so thankful for the active obedience of Christ. No hope without it."<sup>22</sup>

Even his some of his detractors had to admit his impact. Albert Dieffenbach was the religious editor of the Boston Evening Transcript and a Unitarian minister said, "out of the historic issue of fundamentalism... (Machen) emerges in death as the theologian and crusader, as learned and valiant a spiritual warrior as the Protestant church has produced in modern times"<sup>23</sup>





A close friend, Ned Stonehouse, wrote in the January 23, 1937 issue of the Presbyterian Guardian. Machen "was far more than a brother to many of us. He was a father in Israel and we have become orphans. We have depended so much upon him in the past, that it might well appear that we could not go on without him."<sup>24</sup>

I love how Tony Reinke described his burial plot. Green Mount Cemetery is a 174-year-old, 60-

acre plot of land in downtown Baltimore. The sea of memorials are scrubbed old by the years, adding to the sense of nostalgia and age. Here on the city soil, tall stone memorials mark the bodies of the famous (Johns Hopkins), unmarked graves mark the bodies of the infamous (John Wilkes Booth), and one memorial marks the grave of theologian and Baltimore native, J. Gresham Machen.<sup>25</sup>

John Gresham Machen was not a perfect man. He was a sinner, just like you and me and just like the other nine men and women I have shared with you in the past ten years. I am not a Presbyterian because I hold some very different beliefs from them. I also have a major point of disagreement with Machen. Ten years before he died he was invited by William Jennings Bryan to serve as lead witness in Scopes Trial, the famous trial defending creationism. By the way, if you ever seen the film, *Inherit the Wind*, you also have to [read this article](#) by David Menton on the subject. The movie got just about every fact completely wrong.

Machen declined to join Bryan on the witness stand because he didn't believe that was a battle worth fighting. His opinion on the matter was as follows. "It is certainly not necessary to think that the six days spoken of in that first chapter of the Bible are intended to be six days of twenty four hours each. We may think of them rather as very long periods of time."<sup>26</sup>

We have to remember that even those who were against evolution probably held a similar view on the days of Creation as Machen did. The Scofield Reference Bible, which was wildly popular at this time, advocated for the Day Age Theory which allowed for millions of years. Even William Jennings Bryan, who argued against evolution in the 1925 Scopes Trial, did not believe in 6 day creation. When asked if he did, he replied, "'Not six days of twenty-four hours."<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, this is hard for me to understand, given the fact that the main doctrinal fence on which Machen leaned was the Westminster Catechism. Chapter four begins:

"It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,[1] for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness,[2] in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good."

It also troubles me that the seminary he started has become the flagship for an anti-young earth belief called the Framework Hypothesis. As far as I can tell, conservative Presbyterians have a strong leaning against the 6 day creation belief. I have strong disagreements with Machen on this

topic. But as I have said before, 6 day creationism is not in our Statement of Faith. Believe me--I am extremely close to wishing it were there.

In another message someday, I will tell you a story about how our denomination recently refused to ordain a pastor who did not hold to the historical view of Adam and Eve, that they were the originators of the human race. I was proud of their decision and I would have been worried had the decision gone the other way. But it was in no danger of having been so. So I am a committed 6-day creationist. I see that as plain as day in Genesis, but at the same time I agree that it should be outside of our own doctrinal fence. We can have healthy discussion about it, but we do not need to divide over it. Machen was truly a hero of the faith but he also had sins and shortcomings.

I also love the fact that he preached again in his final telegram. He was not content merely to die but wanted to send a last message of hope for his followers and for believers everywhere. I told you the content of his telegram: "I am so thankful for the active obedience of Christ. No hope without it." But what Machen mean by "the active obedience of Christ"? Thankfully, we don't have to guess because he preached a sermon by the same title.

That is the reason why those who have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ are in a far more blessed condition than was Adam before he fell. Adam before he fell was righteous in the sight of God, but he was still under the possibility of becoming unrighteous. Those who have been saved by the Lord Jesus Christ not only are righteous in the sight of God but they are beyond the possibility of becoming unrighteous. In their case, the probation is over. It is not over because they have stood it successfully. It is not over because they have themselves earned the reward of assured blessedness which God promised on condition of perfect obedience. But it is over because Christ has stood it for them; it is over because Christ has merited for them the reward by His perfect obedience to God's law.

I think I can make the matter plain if I imagine a dialogue between the law of God and a sinful man saved by grace.

‘Man,’ says the law of God, ‘have you obeyed my commands?’

‘No,’ says the sinner saved by grace. ‘I have disobeyed them, not only in the person of my representative Adam in his first sin, but also in that I myself have sinned in thought, word and deed.’

‘Well, then, sinner,’ says the law of God, ‘have you paid the penalty which I pronounced upon disobedience?’

‘No,’ says the sinner, ‘I have not paid the penalty myself; but Christ has paid it for me. He was my representative when He died there on the cross. Hence, so far as the penalty is concerned, I am clear.’

‘Well, then, sinner,’ says the law of God, ‘how about the conditions which God has pronounced for the attainment of assured blessedness? Have you stood the test? Have you merited eternal life by perfect obedience during the period of probation?’

‘No,’ says the sinner, ‘I have not merited eternal life by my own perfect obedience. God knows and my own conscience knows that even after I became a Christian I have sinned in thought, word and deed. But although I have not merited eternal life by any obedience of my own, Christ has merited it for me by His perfect obedience. He was not for Himself subject to the law. No obedience was required of Him for Himself, since He was Lord of all. That obedience, then, which He rendered to the law when He was on earth was rendered by Him as my representative. I have no righteousness of my own, but clad in Christ’s perfect righteousness, imputed to me and received by faith alone, I can glory in the fact that so far as I am concerned the probation has been kept and as God is true there awaits me the glorious reward which Christ thus earned for me.’<sup>28</sup>

As I said a few weeks ago, doctrine leads to doxology. Sound doctrine will lead you to worship of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. That’s the reason Machen gave his life for good doctrinal fences and why it should be so very important to us as well.

Rich Maurer  
November 2, 2014

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#### EXTRA INFO ON MACHEN I COULDN'T FIT IN THE MESSAGE

##### **A major point of disagreement with Machen-creation & Scopes Trial**

“if there was an entrance of the immediate power of God in connection with the origin of the human life of Jesus, why may there not have been also an entrance of the immediate power of God in the case of the first man who ever appeared upon the earth?” (140).

“...one cannot argue that, since Warfield and Machen were orthodox, we should accept all their teaching. I think it fair to say that Warfield and Machen were generally soundly Reformed. They were great theologians from whom there is still much to learn. Nevertheless, regretfully, they did depart from Scripture in their treatment of evolution. Hence some of their teaching is non-Reformed.”

“...waffling on the Bible to appease mainstream science is futile. The wiser strategy is to firmly uphold the Sola Scriptura of the Westminster Confession, proclaiming all that the Bible teaches. Christian faith is undermined not by biblical consistency but, rather, by unbiblical compromise.

“And if that causes us to lose credibility in the eyes of the worldly intelligentsia, so be it.”<sup>29</sup>

Letter from William Jennings Bryan to Machen  
June 23, 1925

My dear Mr. Machen:

Please let me know whether you can come to the Tennessee trial if we need you as a witness. The trial commences in Dayton the tenth of July.

I enclose a brief statement of the case against evolution. Let me know your opinion on the propositions and any additional suggestions you may have. The statement is confidential and I will ask you not to allow it be seen.

As I must leave for Tennessee in less than two weeks, I hope you will reply at once as we would like to know what we can rely on in way of evidence, if we need evidence.

With good wishes, I am

Very truly yours,

W.J. Bryan

"Creative evolution is, think, a contradiction in terms. Evolution is God's way of working in certain spheres, at least through nature while creation means creation out of nothing. Evolution, by its very idea, cannot explain the origin of the world, and the origin of the world, with those creative acts of God that we call miracles, alone is produced by creation. Nothing is more absolutely more fundamental to Christianity I think, than this sharp distinction between God's word of providence and his work of creation, for upon that sharp distinction, the uniqueness of redemption in Christianity rests."<sup>30</sup>

There are legitimate differences of opinion about how one understands the nature of the language used in the early chapters of Genesis to describe the actions of God in the world. However, our Statement affirms that Adam and Eve were historical figures<sup>16</sup> in the following sense: 1) From these two all other human beings are descended (Acts 17:26).<sup>17</sup> 2) These two were the first creatures created in God's image such that they were accountable to God as responsible moral agents. And 3) these two rebelled against God, affecting all their progeny.<sup>31</sup>

### **Miscellaneous Quotes from *Christianity and Liberalism***

"The movement designated as "liberalism" is regarded as "liberal" only by its friends; to its opponents it seems to involve a narrow ignoring of many relevant facts."

"It is no wonder that that appeal is being criticized today; for the writers of the books in question were no doubt men of their own age, whose outlook upon the material world, judged by modern standards, must have been of the crudest and most elementary kind. Inevitably the question arises



whether the opinions of such men can ever be normative for men of the present day; in other words, whether first-century religion can ever stand in company with twentieth-century science."

"From every point of view, therefore, the problem in question is the most serious concern of the Church. What is the relation between Christianity and modern culture; may Christianity be maintained in a scientific age? It is this problem which modern liberalism attempts to solve."

### **Machen as scholar**

Machen was raised in Baltimore so it was natural for him to have attended John Hopkins University. He was brilliant and all through his college preparatory years, he never scored lower than a 98 on an exam. Here's what John would do to relax. he would pick up a copy of 4th century BC Greek historian, Herodotus, and sit and read it in the original Greek. Fun!

### **Calvinism-Arminianism**

"A Calvinist is constrained to regard the Arminian theology as a serious impoverishment of the Scripture doctrine of divine grace, and equally serious is the view which the Arminian must hold as to the doctrine of the Reformed Churches. Yet here again, true evangelical fellowship is possible between those who hold, with regard to some exceedingly important matters, sharply opposing views." (Christianity and Liberalism)

### **Sanctification and the "little sins"**

"It will hardly be wise to adopt the suggestion... that we must stop treating the little sins as though they were big sins. That suggestion means apparently, that we must not worry too much about the little sins, but must let them remain unmolested. With regard to such an expedient, it may be suggested that in the moral battle: we are fighting against a very resourceful enemy, who does not reveal the position of his guns by desultory (lacking purpose) artillery actions when he plans a great attack. In the moral battle, as in the Great European War, the quiet sectors are usually the most dangerous. It's through the "little sins" that Satan gains an entrance into our lives. Probably, therefore, it will be prudent to watch all sectors of the front and lose no time about introducing the unity of command."

### **Machen's view of Public Education**

Machen testified before Congressional committees against the effort to establish a Federal Department of Education.<sup>32</sup>

### *Christianity and Liberalism*

In the state of Oregon, on Election Day, 1922, a law was passed by a referendum vote in accordance with which all children in the state are required to attend the public schools. Christian schools and private schools, at least in the all-important lower grades, are thus wiped out of existence. Such laws, which if the present temper of the people prevails will probably soon be extended far beyond the bounds of one state, [which will] mean of course the ultimate destruction of all real education. When one considers what the public schools of America in many places already are--their materialism, their discouragement of any sustained intellectual

effort, their encouragement of the dangerous pseudoscientific fads of experimental psychology--one can only be appalled by the thought of a commonwealth in which there is no escape from such a soul-killing system.

A public school system, in itself, is indeed of enormous benefit to the race. But it is of benefit only if it is kept healthy at every moment by the absolutely free possibility of the competition of private schools. A public school system, if it means the providing of free education for those who desire it, is a noteworthy and beneficent achievement of modern times; but when once it becomes monopolistic it is the most perfect instrument of tyranny which has yet been devised.

### **Machen's crisis of faith**

While studying in Germany, Machen encountered Wilhem herrmann. Hermann is not that well known but two of his students are: Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. Of Herrmann, Mschen wrote to his father, "I can't criticize him I have been thrown all into confusion by what he says--so much deeper is his devotion to Christ than anything I have known in myself these past few years."

### **World War 1**

Machen was too old to enlist so he served in the YMCA. Machen served faithfully, for most of the time, in the "ArmyZone," surrounded by bombs, the never ending exchange of gunfire and the din of airplanes overhead." <sup>33</sup>

### **Tidbit**

In 1922 his salary increased from \$2888.88 to \$3004.62. A teahcer in New Jersey would have received \$1676. Average income in New Jersey was \$3419. <sup>34</sup>

### **Regarding *Christianity and Liberalism***

"Machen emerges as the singular spokesperson for the rigorous defense of orthodox Christianity in response to the challenge of liberalism." <sup>35</sup>

### **The necessity for the doctrine of sin**

"Modern liberalism has lost all sense of the gulf that separates the creature from the Creator; its doctrine of man follows naturally from its doctrine of God. But it is not only the creature limitations of mankind which are denied. Even more important is another difference. According to the Bible, man is a sinner under the just condemnation of God; according to modern liberalism, there is really no such thing as sin. At the very root of the modern liberal movement is the loss of the consciousness of sin"

"The fundamental fault of the modern Church is that she is busily engaged in an absolutely impossible task--she is busily engaged in calling the righteous to repentance. Modern preachers are trying to bring men into the Church without requiring them to relinquish their pride; they are trying to help men avoid the conviction of sin. The preacher gets up into the pulpit, opens the

Bible, and addresses the congregation somewhat as follows: "You people are very good," he says; "you respond to every appeal that looks toward the welfare of the community. Now we have in the Bible--especially in the life of Jesus--something so good that we believe it is good enough even for you good people." Such is modern preaching. It is heard every Sunday in thousands of pulpits. But it is entirely futile. Even our Lord did not call the righteous to repentance, and probably we shall be no more successful than He."

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/phall/13.%20Edwards.pdf>, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> [http://etcweb.princeton.edu/CampusWWW/Companion/founding\\_princeton.html](http://etcweb.princeton.edu/CampusWWW/Companion/founding_princeton.html)

<sup>3</sup> Machen thoroughly enjoyed his days as a Princeton student.

"My idea of delight is a Princeton room full of fellows smoking." (p. 36) "The football at Princeton is a continual delight to me." (Stephen J. Nichols, J. Gresham Machen: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thoughts, P&R Publishing: Phillipsburg, © 2004, p. 36.)

At Princeton Seminary he was widely regarded as the best of the "stunters." "Stunting" was the boisterous retelling of humorous stories.

(<http://www.thirdmill.org/files/english/html/ch/CH.h.Oliver.Machen.1.html>)

<sup>4</sup> Anyone know what happened on October 24 in 1929? The stock market crashed and initiated the Great Depression. Not the best time to start a seminary.

<sup>5</sup> The final straw came in 1928. Princeton was governed by a board of Directors who were mostly conservative and a board of Trustees, who dealt with finances, who were mostly liberal. In 1928, the University merged the two boards which effectively gave the liberals the edge.

<sup>6</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, Introduction

<sup>7</sup> His family's wealth enabled him to travel and take up a lifelong, passionate hobby of mountain climbing. He even wrote about his hobby in an article that first appeared in *Christianity Today*.

"One thing is clear—if you are to learn to love the mountains you must go up them by your own power. There is more thrill in the smallest hill in Fairmount Park if you walk up it than there is in the grandest mountain on earth if you go up it in an automobile. There is one curious thing about means of locomotion—the slower and simpler and the closer to nature they are, the more real thrill they give. I have got far more enjoyment out of my two feet than I did out of my bicycle; and I got more enjoyment out of my bicycle than I ever have got out of my motor car; and as for airplanes—well, all I can say is that I wouldn't lower myself by going up in one of the stupid, noisy things! The only way to have the slightest inkling of what a mountain is to walk or climb up it." (Mountains and Why We Love Them--Christianity Today, August 1934.)

<sup>8</sup> Given the fact that they were married in 1873 (John was born in 1881), a mere eight years after the Emancipation Proclamation which outlawed slavery, it is almost certain that his mother Minnie's family became wealthy off the backs of slaves. It was not her fault, but it is noteworthy.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen J. Nichols, J. Gresham Machen: A Guided Tour of His Life and Thoughts, P&R Publishing: Phillipsburg, © 2004, p. 28

<sup>10</sup> Nichols, p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> Fosdick was clearly caricaturing the doctrine of inerrancy here by claiming we adhere to the "dictation theory" of inspiration. One of the most complete and succinct Biblical passages describing inerrancy is 2

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Peter 1. **16** "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. **17** For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," **18** we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. **19** And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, **20** knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. **21** For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." For further reading on the Doctrine of inerrancy, see the [Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy](#).

<sup>12</sup> <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5070/>, (June 10, 1922)

<sup>13</sup> Here's another similar quote: The many varieties of modern liberal religion are rooted in naturalism—that is, in the denial of any entrance of the creative power of God (as distinguished from the ordinary course of nature) in connection with the origin of Christianity.

<sup>14</sup> And one more concerning Jesus message and work: Certainly we shall remain forever in the gloom if we attend merely to the character of Jesus and neglect the thing that He has done, if we try to attend to the Person and neglect the message. We may have joy for sadness and power for weakness; but not by easy half-way measures, not by avoidance of controversy, not by trying to hold on to Jesus and yet reject the gospel. What was it that within a few days transformed a band of mourners into the spiritual conquerors of the world? It was not the memory of Jesus' life; it was not the inspiration which came from past contact with Him. But it was the message, "He is risen." That message alone gave to the disciples a living Savior and it alone can give to us a living Savior today. We shall never have vital contact with Jesus if we attend to His person and neglect the message; for it is the message which makes Him ours.

<sup>15</sup> <http://legalinsurrection.com/2014/10/houston-mayor-annise-parker-backtracks-on-controversial-subpoenas-to-pastors/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5070/>, (June 10, 1922)

<sup>17</sup> I highly recommend D.A. Carson's book, [The Intolerance of Tolerance](#).

<sup>18</sup> September 25, 1929 he launched Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

"No my friends, though Princeton Seminary is dead, the noble tradition of Princeton Seminary is alive." (inaugural address). Four Princeton professors followed him to Westminster.

<sup>19</sup> [https://archive.org/stream/rethinkingmissio011901mbp/rethinkingmissio011901mbp\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/rethinkingmissio011901mbp/rethinkingmissio011901mbp_djvu.txt)

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.pcachistory.org/HCLibrary/capo/premise/97/dec/p04.html>

<sup>21</sup> Nichols, p. 72.

<sup>22</sup> Nichols, p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Rian, E. H. (1940). *The Presbyterian Conflict*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, p. 215.

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.opc.org/books/fighting/pt1.html>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/desiring-god-for-god>

<sup>26</sup> Machen, *The Christian View of Man*, © 1937.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.apologeticspress.org/apcontent.aspx?category=6&article=274>

<sup>28</sup> [http://www.the-highway.com/atone2\\_Machen.html](http://www.the-highway.com/atone2_Machen.html)

<sup>29</sup> <http://jgmachen.org/2011/06/06/machen-and-creation-in-six-days/>

<sup>30</sup> Cited in *The Presbyterian Controversy: Fundamentalists, Modernists, and Moderates* By Bradley J. Longfield, p. 69.

<sup>31</sup> *Evangelical Convictions: A Theological Exposition of the Statement of Faith of the EFCA*, January 1, 2011 by EFCA Spiritual Heritage Committee.

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<sup>32</sup>[http://www.reformed.org/webfiles/antithesis/index.html?mainframe=/webfiles/antithesis/v2n1/ant\\_v2n1\\_curr1.html](http://www.reformed.org/webfiles/antithesis/index.html?mainframe=/webfiles/antithesis/v2n1/ant_v2n1_curr1.html)

<sup>33</sup> Nichols, p. 39

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-soi/22soirepar.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Nichols, p. 49.