

# (Biographies) J. Gresham Machen

by John Piper

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*John Piper's sermon on J. Gresham Machen highlights his unwavering commitment to Reformed theology and his significant contributions in the face of modernism.*

**Duration:** 1:35:14

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Acts 1:8

**Topics:** "Sovereignty Of God", "Modernism And Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of presenting the sovereignty of God as a powerful and life-changing message. He shares that he preached about the sovereignty of God from the scriptures, not from the teachings of Calvin. The speaker also discusses the dangers of rejecting objective truth and the impact of modernity and modernism on society. He concludes by offering some applications and encourages honest and straightforward communication in Christianity.

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## Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at [www.DesiringGod.org](http://www.DesiringGod.org) On New Year's Eve of 1936, in a Roman Catholic hospital in Bismarck, North Dakota, one day away from his death, J. Gresham Machen lay with pneumonia at the age of 55. It was Christmas break at Westminster Seminary, where he was teaching New Testament at the time, and his colleagues said that he looked deadly tired.

But instead of resting, as his colleagues said he should have, he accepted a speaking engagement in North Dakota, and he took a train from the mild temperatures of Philadelphia to the 20 below zero winds of Bismarck, and he spoke with Pastor Samuel Allen in several Presbyterian churches there. Ned Stonehouse, who wrote his biography, said, there was no one sufficient in influence to constrain him to curtail his program to any significant degree. His isolation really was remarkable in those last hours of his life.

He was the leader of the conservative movement in the Presbyterian church in America, no one doubted that, and so he had no one above him to watch over him, to hold him accountable for his schedule. His heroes and mentors, Warfield and Patton, were dead. He never married, so he had no wife to connect him with reality.

His mother and father, his mother had given him remarkable counsel over the years. They were both dead. His two brothers were 1,500 miles to the east.

He had, according to George Marsden, a personality that only his good friends found appealing, and so he was incredibly isolated. For a man of international stature, he had pneumonia, he could scarcely breathe. Pastor Allen visited him on that last day of 1936 to pray with him, and he told Pastor Allen of a vision that he had of being in heaven, and said, Sam, it was glorious, it was glorious.

And then a little later he said, Sam, isn't the Reformed faith grand? And on New Year's Day 1937, he mustered just enough strength to send one telegram to John Murray back at Westminster, and his last recorded words in the telegram were, I am so thankful for the active obedience of Christ. No hope without it. And he died at 7.30 that night.

That's a picture of J. Gresham Machen. His death scene is a picture. So much of the man's life is there.

The stubbornness of going his own way when friends urged him not to do this extra preaching, the isolation far away from the centers of church life, his suffering for what he believed in with all his might, his utter allegiance to the Reformed faith of the Westminster Confession, his getting comfort not just from general truths that Christ loved him and gave him, but from a specific doctrinal truth about the active obedience of Christ that he knew was his obedience, and therefore fit him to be accepted into eternal life for Christ's sake. All of that was Machen, and he was cut off in the midst of a great work at the age of 55. The great work at that moment was the founding of Westminster Seminary and the founding of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

He had not set out to found anything. He prided himself, and Princeton prided themselves, that not anything new had come out of Princeton for a hundred years. It was the glory of Princeton Seminary to have stood with Hodge, Hodge, and Warfield for a hundred years.

He had no intention of founding a seminary or a church. He had taught at Princeton for 23 years and was at the thick of everything in the ecclesiastical life of the PCUSA in those days. But who he was and what he stood for made it almost inevitable in view of where that church and that seminary was going.

Westminster, at that moment when he died, was seven years old. The Presbyterian Church in America, which was forced legally within its first months to change its name to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, was six months old. He had been elected its first moderator June 11, 1936.

The occasion for starting that new Presbyterian Church was that on March 29, 1935, Machen was found guilty of insubordination and failure to obey his ordination vows and was stripped of his ministerial standing by the New Brunswick Presbytery. The appeal was made to the General Assembly and at the Syracuse Assembly in 1936 it failed and he was out of the ministry by vote of the entire denomination. The reason for the insubordination that led to the censure and the indictment and the conviction and the ouster was that in June of 1933 he had formed an independent Board of Foreign Missions to protest the fact that the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions had endorsed a book called Rethinking Missions, written by Lehman, which Machen said, quote, from beginning to end is an attack upon the historic Christian faith.

And because he said that they were supporting missionaries of the likes of Pearl Buck. Pearl Buck said that if someone existed who could create a person like Christ or portray for us a Christ like the Gospels, then Christ lived and lives, whether he once had a body and a soul or whether he is just the essence of

men's highest dreams. And when Machen read that kind of latitudinarianism or indifferentism, as he would call it, he said, I can't give my money to support a Pearl Buck.

And therefore, the seriousness of that decision flowing from the General Assembly in 1934 read like this, quote, a church member that will not give to promote the officially authorized missionary program of the Presbyterian Church is in exactly the same position with reference to the constitution of the church as a member that would refuse to partake of the celebration of the Lord's Supper or any other prescribed ordinance of the denomination. In other words, it was elevated his decision not to support the board to found a new independent board, was elevated to the level of refusing to come to the table of the Lord. And that was the ground of his dismissal.

A few years earlier, 1929, he had left Princeton Seminary, not under the same conditions. He voluntarily left Princeton because of the reorganization of the governance structure. There was in Princeton for 100 years a board of directors who embodied the conservative confessional commitments of the school.

And as the President Stevenson and other groups became more broad in their sympathies with the modern way of thinking, they wanted to get the control of the seminary out of that group and therefore proposed the combining of the trustees and the directors, the trustees having on them the more broadly minded people. And that was voted on and passed. Machen said, if the proposed dissolution of the present board of directors is finally carried out and the control of the seminary passes into entirely different hands, then Princeton Theological Seminary, as it has been so long and so honorably known, will be dead.

And we shall have at Princeton a new institution of radically different type. And in his judgment, the seminary died in 1929. And by the fall of 29, a new seminary existed with Machen and others as the faculty.

And he said at the inaugural address, September 25, 1929, to the class of 50 students, No, my friends, though Princeton Seminary is dead, the noble tradition of Princeton Seminary is alive. Westminster Seminary will endeavor by God's grace to continue that tradition unimpaired. Now, the title of this message today is Jay Gresham Machen's response to modernism.

And my first answer to the question of how he responded is that his most enduring response were to institutions. It was not his intention. That wasn't the way he was responding for 20 years.

But the most enduring response has been Westminster Seminary, which today I believe is a remarkably influential institution in evangelicalism and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, which after 56 years has 188 churches and only 19000 members, but may in fact have a wider influence than the numbers would signify, though probably they are a part of what I said this morning was the reform tradition's failure to reform. Where did this warrior come from? Who was this man who came on the scene in the PCUSA and left their seminary and were kicked out of their denomination and formed Westminster in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church? What shaped him? What was his engagement with modernism over the 20 years while he taught, 23 years at Princeton? And what is this thing called modernism that he so energetically opposed? And can we learn anything from him today? John Gresham Machen was born in 1881, 16 years after the end of the Civil War. His mother was from Macon, Georgia, and was educated, cultured.

She wrote a book called *The Bible in Browning*, and his father was a very well-to-do lawyer in Baltimore. That's where he grew up. He was, in a word, a well-to-do southern aristocrat.

He made at least six journeys to Europe in those days when there were no planes flying, sailing. The family had a retreat house in Seal Harbor. He went to university school for boys, studied Latin from the time he was 11.

They belonged to the southern aristocratic Presbyterian Church, Franklin Street. His ways of thinking about black people were southern. Quote, the servants are the real old-fashioned, kind-hearted southern darkies in the house.

He was a man gripped by the southern culture in which he grew up. And when he was 21 years old, he inherited \$50,000 from his maternal grandfather. To put that in perspective, his first annual salary at Princeton was \$2,000, so he inherited 25 times an annual salary when he was 21 and a similar amount when he was 35 from his father when he died.

He was a millionaire in our terms. And that explains how you could read in his biography over and over again that he funded the magazine. He funded the 250,000 books that were mailed out to the PCUSA and so on.

When he died, his estate was \$250,000 in those days' dollars. That carries with it tremendous limitations, and it defines in large measure the level at which he engaged his culture and the level at which he engaged the PCUSA. When he finished high school, he went to Johns Hopkins, studied classics, and then, kicking and screaming almost, he went to Princeton Seminary for three years, not at all intending to go into the ministry, didn't know whether he would or not, took a year in Germany to study New Testament, and there he met modernism as he came to understand it for the first time in vital, compelling, winsome form in the person of Wilhelm Hermann at Marburg.

It was an almost compelling, overwhelming encounter. This is important because what Machen was doing for the next 23 years when he opposed modernism was not throwing rocks over a wall that he'd never glimpsed over. He had been over the wall, into the camp, and almost was lost there to the cause.

I'm going to read an extended series of quotes from the letters home just to show you how close we came as evangelicals to losing him and what an impact this man, Hermann, had on him and what it should teach us about the way we present our theology. Princeton almost lost him because of the way they presented their theology. Here's the quotes.

The first time I heard Hermann may almost be described as an epoch in my life. Such an overpowering personality I think I almost never before encountered, overpowering in the sincerity of religious devotion. My chief feeling with reference to him is already one of deepest reverence.

I have been thrown... Now this is a man who does not believe in the resurrection, doesn't believe in the infallibility of the scriptures, doesn't believe in the virgin birth. This is a modernist. 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 during the past few years, the Princeton years. Hermann affirms very little of which I have been accustomed to regard as essential to Christianity. Yet there is no doubt in my mind that he is a Christian, and a Christian of a peculiarly earnest type.

He is a Christian not because he follows Christ as a moral teacher, but because of his trust in Christ. Practically, if anything more truly than theoretically, his trust is unbounded. Hermann represents the

dominant Rischlian school.

Hermann has shown me something of the religious power which lies back of this great movement which is now making a fight even for the control of the Northern Presbyterian Church in America. In New England, those who do not believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus are generally speaking religiously dead. In Germany, Hermann has taught me this is by no means the case.

He believes that Jesus is the one thing in all the world that inspires absolute confidence and absolute joyful subjection. And that through Jesus we come into communion with the living God and are made free from the world. It is the faith that is a real experience, a real revelation of God that saves, not the faith that consists in accepting as true a lot of dogmas on the basis of merely what others have said.

Das Verkehr des Christen mit Gott is one of the greatest religious books I have ever read. Perhaps Hermann does not give the whole truth. I certainly hope he does not.

But that little phrase is so hope-giving as you read the history of this man. I certainly hope. I think underlying, this is a token of the way God works, I believe, as young men experience doubts.

Underlying these intellectual doubts that he was being plummeted into, there was what Jonathan Edwards would probably call an affection, a nose. It didn't operate here mainly, a nose and an affection for the truth. So that periodically, as he's expressing his fascination with these new ideas, he keeps inserting, I hope it's not true.

I hope it isn't true. Because there was this gut level, I have loved what Warfield taught. I think.

I certainly hope he does not. But at any rate, he has gotten hold of something that has been sadly neglected in the church and in the Orthodox theology. Perhaps he is something like the devout mystics of the Middle Ages.

They were one-sided enough, but they raised a mighty protest against the coldness and deadness of the church and were forerunners of the Reformation. Now what Machen found in Hermann, I think, was something that he had apparently not found at Princeton. Nor in his home church, Franklin Street.

Nor in his mother, whom he loved dearly and counted as a saint. Namely, passion, joy, exuberant trust. At Princeton, there was solid learning.

There was civil, formal, careful, aristocratic presentations of fairly cool, thorough, reformed theology. He eventually came to see that that theology was an infinitely better foundation for joy than what Hermann had. But in comparison to Hermann's spirit, the spirit of what he had experienced in the Reformed community, almost lost him.

It came within a hair of losing him. And the lesson that I just throw out to the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and to this group, because those of you who are attracted to hear Oz Guinness and to this topic are probably the kind of people who are toward the Warfieldian ilk of human being, which is a peculiar sort of person that isn't like Hermann. And you need to be aware that you can lose precious young people by not, as Edwards would say, having affections that correspond to the glory of your affirmations.

There must be a correlation or something's not going to click in young people's lives. The experience in Germany made a lasting impact on him and on the way he carried the mercy the rest of his life. He said

again and again that he respected and he sympathized with modernists who could honestly not believe in a bodily resurrection from the dead, nor that the Bible was inerrant, nor that Jesus was born of a virgin, provided they said it and didn't stay in churches where it wasn't believed.

That's what made him angry. Quote, there is my real quarrel with them, referring to some of the faculty at Union in New York. There's my real quarrel with them.

As for their difficulties with the Christian faith, I have profound sympathy for them, but not with their contemptuous treatment of the conscientious men who believe that a creed solemnly subscribed to is more than a scrap of paper. He wanted to deal with people straight up, argument for argument, honestly. His struggle with people who were struggling was very empathetic.

Twenty years after his German experience, he wrote, some of us have been through such struggle ourselves. Some of us have known the blankness of doubt, the deadly discouragement, the perplexity of indecision, the vacillation between faith diversified by doubt and doubt diversified by faith. Now, Machen came through without losing his evangelical faith, and he was called to Princeton to teach New Testament, which he did from 1906 until he left in 1929.

And incidentally, in regard to this morning's comment, he never got any advanced degree beyond Princeton. Neither did, by the way, F.F. Bruce beyond his masters and numerous others. There is no necessary correlation between insight and degrees.

Most of the worst teachers in the world have PhDs. There is no correlation between pedagogical ability and advanced training. They are in two totally separate worlds.

And the same is true with passion. The same is true with orthodoxy. The only thing a PhD does is certify you in the guild.

That's all it guarantees. And that isn't much. He came to embrace conservative reformed orthodoxy, a strong apologist now for biblical Christianity and an internationally acclaimed New Testament scholar with his book *The Origin of Paul's Religion*.

It was still a textbook at Fuller in 1968 when I studied it with R.K. Harrison. *The Virgin Birth of Christ*, still in print and used today. Now, two decades he was at Princeton teaching.

And those two decades, 1906 to 1929, were the decades that we all know about as the controversy between fundamentalism and modernism. That's when it was raging to the fullest. And he made a very distinctive contribution to that debate.

And what I want to do is, I think, get at him by contrasting his engagement of modernism with fundamentalism. Because you can't understand him if you only see him as one species of what's known as fundamentalism. At least, I don't think that can be done.

He was seen as an ally, and he was an ally to fundamentalism. He was blasted as guilty by association by those who were the enemies of fundamentalism. He never would accept the term himself.

Here's Stonehouse's definition of fundamentalists. People who, quote, Now, there's a lot more to it than that, and Machen didn't like it. Here's what he said.

Fundamentalists, I most certainly do regret it. But in the presence of a great common foe, I have little time to be attacking my brethren who stand with me in the defense of the word of God. So there you hear the balance of yes and no to fundamentalism.

Here's what he did not like about it. These were his characteristics. One, the absence of a historical perspective.

Two, the lack of appreciation for scholarship. Three, the substitution of brief skeletal creeds for historic confessions. Four, the lack of concern for precise formulation of Christian doctrine.

Five, pietistic, perfectionistic tendencies. Let me just insert, just to give you a glimpse here, for somebody like me that grew up in a home that I would call fundamentalist and love it, prize it, cherish it, wouldn't choose any other home to grow up in, never have joined the people at Fuller where I was, kicking against that prick and using nasty language and talking like an adolescent until you're 40 years old about how bad everything was in fundamentalism. I have no patience with that kind of debunking at all.

But it took a while for me to get adjusted that there could be Christians who smoke. Listen to this quote. 1905.

He's just finishing up at Princeton. The fellows are in my room now on the last Sunday night, smoking the cigars and eating the oranges, which has been the greatest delight I have ever had to provide whenever possible. My idea of delight is a Princeton room full of fellows smoking.

When I think what a wonderful aid tobacco is to friendship and Christian patience, I have sometimes regretted that I never began to smoke. I mean, I think I can read that now. It takes my breath away, my fundamentalist breath away, literally.

And it's killing about 40,000 people a year who don't smoke but go to work with those who do. Well, enough of that. I still believe in all those things.

Six, one-sided otherworldliness. Seven, a penchant for futuristicism, premillennialism. He didn't like it.

He was an amillennialist. So those were the things that set him off from from fundamentalism. He was on one side and they were on the other.

But when it came to the modernists, they were like two peas in a pod as far as he was concerned. Now, there's a deeper issue for why he did not align himself with the fundamentalists. And this is important because this gets to the root of how he tackled modernism in his day.

And I hope the definition of modernism will come out in in a few minutes more clearly, perhaps, than it has been so far. He went deeper than the fundamentalists and he went broader than the fundamentalists. And he owed his ability to do that to Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield.

February 16, 1921, halfway through his time at Princeton, Machen, I mean, Warfield died. Machen wrote home to his mother, with all his glaring faults, he was the greatest man I ever knew. 1909, on the 400th anniversary of John Calvin's birth, Warfield gave a great address to the faculty and others gathered to celebrate that event on Calvinism.

And it struck to the very depths of Machen's mind and heart what Warfield said on that day. What he said, in essence, was that Calvinism is not a species of Christian theism alongside others. It is Christianity come

to full flower.

Quote, Calvinism is not a specific variety of theistic thought or religious experience or evangelical faith, but just the perfect manifestation of these things. The difference between it and other forms of theism, religion, evangelicalism is the difference, not of kind, but of degree. It does not take its position then beside other types of things.

It takes its place over all else and claims to be these things as embodying what they claim to be. Now, this is a weighty, weighty distinction. Alongside of, as a species, alongside, or the full-blown flower of what other things are trying to become.

Now, Machen believed this. And this governed the way Machen thought about Christianity and how it interacted with everything else out there. Lutheranism is its sister type of Protestantism.

Arminianism is its rebellious daughter. Calvinism's grasp of the supremacy of God in all of life enabled Machen to see that other forms of evangelicalism were all stages of grasping God, which were yet in process of coming to the full and pure appreciation of the total God-centeredness of Calvinism. Now, what that meant for Machen was that his mission over against modernism was not to defend a species called fundamentalism, but to defend Christianity.

When he defended the Calvinistic supernaturalism of his day, he did not see himself as in any corner of Christianity. It was Christianity. That was what drove him.

So his main problem with the term fundamentalist was this, quote, it seems to suggest that we are adherents of some strange new sect, whereas in point of fact, we are conscious simply of maintaining the historic Christian faith and of moving in the great central current of Christian life. That's what set him off most deeply from fundamentalism. He was invited to be the president of Bryan Memorial University, which now I think is just Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee.

And he wrote to turn it down. Now, that move from Princeton to Bryan would have been to a presidency. It no doubt would have been a different school than it is now had he done that.

But it would have taken him out of the PCUSA. It would have put him in a more ecumenical interdenominational premillennial atmosphere. And he couldn't do it.

And here's why he wrote the letter of refusal like this. Thoroughly consistent Christianity, to my mind, is found only in the reformed or Calvinist faith. And consistent Christianity, I think, is the Christianity easiest to defend.

Hence, I never call myself a fundamentalist. What I prefer to call myself is not a fundamentalist, but a Calvinist. That is, an adherent of the reformed faith.

As such, I regard myself as standing in the great central current of the church's life, the current that flows down from the word of God through Augustine and Calvin, and which has found noteworthy expression in America in the great tradition represented by Charles Hodge and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield and the other representatives of the Princeton school. So Machen moved in a different conceptual world than most fundamentalists did of his day. When he took on modernism, he took it on as a challenge to reformed Christianity.

And so his most important book, which has just come back into print and gone out of print from Eerdmans. This is what you should all have in your library. This is relevant today as it was 70 years ago in 1923 when it was written.

The title *Liberalism and Christianity* says almost all the story because he was not titling the book liberalism and fundamentalism. The challenge of liberalism was not a challenge to fundamentalism. It was a challenge to Christianity.

It was a big, all encompassing challenge. And so he he wrote the blurb for the book like this. Liberalism on the one hand and the religion of of the historic church on the other are not two varieties of the same religion, but two distinct religions proceeding from altogether separate roots.

He had one regret, and that is that he had not titled the book *Christianity and modernism* because he came to feel that in calling it liberalism, he gave it too much credit because the word liberalism has a noble history. And what's unique about modernism is that it is modern, which is no compliment nor indictment in itself. What was it? What was liberalism slash modernism? The words are used interchangeably in Machen.

I'll use them interchangeably here. Here again, he moved not nearly so quickly as the fundamentalist into showing specific fundamental doctrines that modernists were moving away from. He didn't do it that way.

He didn't jump quickly on the virgin birth and say, this is what we must talk about or the resurrection or the infallibility of Scripture. His approach was far deeper and far broader as he engaged modernism in his day. What he did was engage in first a thorough analysis of the modern culture and the spirit of the age.

And he tries to think through the relationship between modernism and what has been calling modernity. Modern culture is his word for it. They're not the same.

Modernism is the theological construct and atmosphere theologically that is growing out of modernity. And Machen's first efforts are to get at what this thing is and then deal with it on its own terms. Let me read a quote about modern culture.

He says, modern culture is a tremendous force. Modern inventions and the industrialism that has been built upon them have given us in many respects a new world to live in. He's writing 1920.

Twenty three and these material conditions have been produced by mighty changes in the human mind. The industrial world of today has been produced not by blind forces of nature, but by conscious activity of the human spirit. It has been produced by the achievements of science.

Many observes the problem for the church is that modernity has on the one hand bred forces that are inimical and hostile to Christian faith and created a world that the church loves to embrace and does embrace and must embrace. Quote, this is a skewering quote. This could be written yesterday if you just replaced railroad, telegraph and printing press with computers, jets and fax machines.

We cannot, without inconsistency, employ the printing press, the railroad, the telegraph, computers, jets, fax machines. We cannot employ them in the propagation of our gospel and at the same time denounce as evil those activities of the human mind that produced these things. That that is the fundamental problem that I think Oz has been wrestling with, the problem of modernity.

Now, what he says is that this calls for a critical assessment of modernity or contemporary culture. The negative impulses that are hostile to Christianity, he said, were three. One, suspicion of the past.

And that's natural. If you look around your life and you can remember the time when there were no cars, no refrigeration, no electric light, no telegraph, you can remember those days you lived. Why, you would soon become pretty persuaded that the past doesn't have very much to offer.

I mean, everything is in the future. It is a totally new world. It had been the same for six thousand years.

And in the last 50, it's a new world. So who needs the past? I mean, they rode chariots for six thousand years. Now we've got cars.

There's nothing it has to offer so that you can feel some of the force of that thinking. Secondly, skepticism about truth and the replacement of the category of true with useful. And you can feel some of that when you do your experiments in order to find out how to make light, how to make refrigeration, how to make words go over wires.

Who gives a hoot about truth if it works? I mean, if you can fax, if you can work computers, I mean, does it work? And so you can feel some of the force. Why true that category just kind of goes down and useful and efficient comes up. And the third is the denial of the supernatural.

Is there any such thing? It hasn't been obvious in any of our recent discoveries. And we are we are we are fixing the diseases. No need prayer anymore.

You just, as Dr. Fuller says, you get the rats out of the manholes, poison the rats, find new chemical that'll kill the rats. And that'll take care of your black play. Machen credits modernism.

Now, that's the theological response to modernity. Machen credits modernism with really trying to come to terms with these challenges. Quote, What is the relationship between Christianity and modern culture? May Christianity be maintained in a scientific age? It is this problem which modern liberalism, modernism attempts to solve.

And in trying to solve it, liberalism or modernism has joined modernity in one, minimizing the significance of the past. And two, accepting the utilitarian view of truth. And three, surrendering supernaturalism.

And all three compromises with the spirit of modernity together produce the modernist spirit in religion. It is a spirit. It's not a set of doctrines per se or a set of denials.

This is why Machen, this is so important. It's important today. This is why Machen never tired not only of criticizing the doctrinal views of people in the PCUSA, but what he called indifferentism or latitudinarianism.

The President Stevenson, who was the president of Princeton in those days, did not want, he affirmed, he said, the whole Westminster Confession. But he did not want to push the liberals out. Machen never tired of saying that there's a spirit here of modernism that creates an atmosphere in which shifts away from orthodoxy happen.

And it's the spirit that minimizes truth as true and elevates truth as useful. Let me just quote from one of the modernists of that day, John McCallum, about what he understood modernism to be. Just to show you that from the inside out, we're moving in the right direction with the definition.

The liberals have accepted the enlarged view of the universe which has been established by modern astronomy, geology and biology. Instead of blindly denying scientific facts, as obscurantists have always done, they have adjusted themselves to them and in so doing have increased their faith and urbanity and consequently extended their influence, particularly with the educated classes. Liberalism is an atmosphere rather than a series of formulas, end quote.

So when the preference for the new and the naturalistic bias and the skepticism about finding what is true, when those all come together, what you have in the seminary, in the church, is an extraordinary opportunity for the abuse of religious language and the manipulation of historic confessions. In essence, modernists don't throw out Christianity. They reinterpret the creeds of Christianity and give old words new meanings.

And that's the way they stay. And Machen could see that. And that's what he kept criticizing with this doctrinal indifferentism, that President Stevenson wouldn't recognize what was happening.

People could still be using the words of the confession and put a totally different meaning. So the virgin birth was one theory of the incarnation and the bodily resurrection was a theory of the resurrection. And so the old facts don't correspond anymore with permanent facts.

They symbolize the virgin birth is a symbol and the bodily resurrection is a symbol of a general religious principle. And those symbols are sometimes useful. And when they're useful in a generation that can handle the term virgin birth, you use them.

And if they cease to be useful in a generation that can't, they are expendable. And the general religious truth remains, and that's defined in various ways. But it's that principle of utilitarianism in the view of truth that he saw and was so distressed about in the Presbyterian church of his day.

Hundreds, hundreds of clergy in his day would not deny the confession of faith of the Westminster Confession. But by virtue of a modernist spirit had come to give it up, even though they signed it. Now, one of the most jolting sentences in all the reading I've done was the next one that I want to read to you.

Here's the quote. It makes very little difference how much or how little of the creeds of the church the modernist preacher affirms. Or how much or how little of the biblical teaching from which the creeds have been derived he affirms.

He might affirm every jot and tittle of the Westminster Confession, for example, and yet be separated by a great gulf from the reformed faith. All is denied because all is affirmed, not as true, but as useful. There's a whole philosophy of language that has been built up to justify that kind of staying within denominations.

It makes it so hard to deal with colleges, seminaries, denominations. There's this gut sense when you're around certain people. They don't believe this.

There's nothing. There's nothing happening here. The language, some of it is there, but you can't.

It's like mercury. You put your finger on it. It'll zip, zip, just all over the place.

The utilitarian view of history and language leads to evasive, vague language that enables the modernist to mislead people into thinking that they are still orthodox. Listen to this. This is another incredibly contemporary and relevant sentence from his book, *What Is Faith?*, which is out there, by the way.

I recommend it. For the introduction alone, *What Is Faith?* is worth the price of the book. This temper of mind is hostile to precise definitions.

Indeed, nothing makes a man more unpopular in the controversies of the present day than an insistence upon definition of terms. Men discourse very eloquently today upon subjects as God, religion, Christianity, atonement, redemption, faith, but are greatly incensed when they are asked to tell in simple language what they mean by these terms. Now, Machen's critique of this analysis of modernism, his critique of it, flows from two directions.

One is a critique from inside the culture, analyzing it and its goodness or not, its benefit, its truth, and the other is from inside the text of the New Testament. So let me take those one at a time. Machen asks modern man, are we better off with modernity? And he grants, we're better off with material things, but are we better off in the realm of the spirit? Here's a quote.

The improvement appears in the physical conditions of life, but in the spiritual realm, there is a corresponding loss. The loss is clearest, perhaps, in the realm of art. Despite the mighty revolution which has been produced in the external condition of life, the railroad, the telegraph, fax machine, computer, and so on.

I lost my place. Despite the mighty revolution which has been produced in the external condition of life, no great poet is now living to celebrate the change. Humanity has suddenly become dumb.

Gone, too, are the great painters, the great musicians, the great sculptors. The art that still subsists is largely imitative, and where it is not, it is usually bizarre. He argues that drab utilitarianism, that's his phrase, drab utilitarianism, destroys the higher aspirations of the soul.

And results in unparalleled impoverishment in human life. So you can see what he's doing. He's working from the inside of contemporary culture to show on its own terms it's bankrupt.

This is his first strategy. When you take away objective norm and truth, you take away the only means of measuring improvement or progress. You can talk till you're blue in the face about progress.

But ultimately, if there's no absolute, no norm, no objective truth, you have lost anything to move from toward. And all that's left, he says, is the changes of a meaningless kaleidoscope. So in view of those things and other observations and effects of modernity and modernism, he asks the modern man, is your rejection of the past and is your rejection of the category of truth and is your abandonment of supernaturalism as cheap and expendable as you think they are? Quote, in view of the lamentable defects of modern life, a type of religion certainly should not be commended simply because it is modern or condemned simply because it is old.

On the contrary, the condition of mankind is such that one may well ask what it is that made the men of the past generation so great and the men of the present generation so small. And that's the way Machen seeks to understand and critique modernity and modernism from the inside. Questions like that, unfolding its own hollowness.

And that set him apart from the fundamentalists. They didn't do it that way. They didn't go that deep.

They weren't that broad. Now, his other strategy was biblical. From outside of modernism, he took their claim to be biblical.

They never abandoned that claim. That's what was so maddening to him. He took that claim to be biblical and he went back to Paul and Jesus and he noted some very simple things.

He noted Acts 1.8. He said the church from the beginning has a charter to be witnesses. He said witnesses implies events beheld and experienced. And the charter and meaning of Christianity is faithfulness to true events through true witness.

And then he said, not only have there been events, but they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, which was the interpretation of those events. And then he went to Paul's letters and he pointed out some very interesting things. He said Paul took truth and doctrine and specificity seriously.

For example, he contrasted Philippians and Galatians. And in Philippians, he noted that Paul in prison was incredibly tolerant towards the people who wanted to make his imprisonment miserable by preaching the gospel when he couldn't. And he said, I'm glad it's preached.

And in Galatians, when they wanted to preach, he cursed them with an anathema and said that if he or an angel from heaven said what they say, let them be damned. You say, well, is that the Paul of Philippians? I mean, what happened to this tolerance? And Machen points out that the difference is a sentence. They got the gospel right, rotten attitudes, rotten attitudes, and they got it right.

Evidently, the Judaizers in Galatia got one sentence wrong. You can be completed by the works of the flesh. That's all.

And he listed off the things they probably agreed on. The Trinity probably agreed on the scriptures. They probably agreed on the atonement.

They probably agreed on one sentence wrong, and they are anathema. Now, that does not mean every sentence wrong makes a person anathema. In fact, in the chapter on doctrine in Christianity and liberalism, he lists off all the things he won't fight about.

It's an incredible list. He is fighting anti-supernaturalistic modernism that goes right to the core of what it is. And all he's doing then is trying to show them, look, you can't be so indifferentist and latitudinarian about doctrine and still call yourself Pauline.

And then he spends time on Jesus doing the same thing. Now, they may not have bought it, but in my judgment, and for many, it was a successful thing. And Walter Lippmann, who reviewed from the outside that book, said the modernists, he wrote this about ten years later, the modernists have never answered Christianity and liberalism.

What he meant by that was not that they are wrong about denying the resurrection, but that they're wrong about calling themselves Christian. That, Machen settled to his satisfaction, that you cannot call yourself a biblical Christian and still deny the importance of doctrine or the fundamentals. Here's another quote.

As over against the pragmatist attitude, we believers, Machen said, in historic Christianity, maintain the objectivity of truth. Theology, we hold, is not an attempt to express in merely symbolic terms an inner experience, which must be expressed in different terms in subsequent generations. But it is a setting forth of facts upon which experience is based.

And so his response to modernism, I think, stands. It is not a kind of Christianity. It is the chief, quote, the chief modern rival of Christianity and in direct opposition.

The foundational truths are surrendered. And worse, the concept of truth is surrendered to pragmatism so that even our affirmations are denials because they are affirmed as useful rather than true. I don't think the modernism of Machen's day is significantly different in spirit than the post modernisms or liberalism theologically of our own day.

It is still a menace in most churches and schools and agencies. I think one of the greatest protections against it is to know the stories like Machen's, what enemy he faced, what battle he fought, the weapons he used and failed to use. The losses he sustained, the price he paid, the triumph he wrought.

If we know our history, we will be better equipped. Let me just close this part with a with a quote about hope. What was his hope? That church is still alive.

An unbroken spiritual descent connects us with those whom Jesus commissioned. Times have changed in many respects. New problems must be faced and new difficulties overcome.

But the same message must still be proclaimed to a lost world. Today we have need of all our faith. Unbelief and error have perplexed us sore.

Strife and hatred have set the world aflame. There is only one hope, but that hope is sure. God has never deserted his church.

His promise never fails. Now, I'm looking at the clock here and noticing that my hour is up. And I have a list of 12 applications that I was just going to wonder whether I had time for any of them.

And I knew I wouldn't have time for all of them. But maybe since we have just a little leeway on the other side and I won't be offended if anybody walks out, I'll give you a few of these applications today and then leave time for questions. So I hope that's okay.

I'm taking prerogative to go longer than my hour here. We need to bring this into today a little more than I already have. So let me try.

Number one. These are called, on my paper here, hints at lessons we might learn from Machen. Number one is a call for honest, open, clear, straightforward, guileless use of language.

Very few things anger me more than Christian slipperiness. I hate it. I really hate it.

And I think God hates it. And I think Paul wrote against it when he said, We speak before God with guileless, open speech in 2 Corinthians. We don't peddle the word of God.

We don't flatter with our tongue. Paul hated duplicity. I think even more than he hated false doctrine.

It alerts us to the fact that it exists. Now, this may be taking Coles to Newcastle to say this to you. I don't know.

But I try to say it a lot to my church to alert them to the way moral language is prostituted today for special interest groups. Here's an example. This is a quote from Christianity Today, quoting Gregory King, who is the spokesman for the Human Rights Campaign Fund, the largest homosexual advocacy group, quote, I

personally think that most lesbian and gay Americans support traditional family American values, which he then defined as tolerance, concern, support, and a sense of community.

Now, here's a man on behalf of the homosexual community taking the phrase traditional family values and saying, Yes, of course, this is a classic illustration of what is being done with language. What was done by the modernists in Machen's day, what is done with the word infallible in many of our schools today. You take traditional family values and you say, we believe that.

And then you find four words that the choice of words is incredibly astute. Tolerance. If you disagree with that, you're intolerant.

Concern. If you disagree with that, you're callous. Support.

If you disagree with that, you are oppressive. Community. If you disagree with that, you are a hate monger.

But definitions? Tolerance of what? All things? The standards? People like me? Probably not. Concern. Concern for what? Expressed in what way? Support.

Support for what? Behavior that is destructive to personhood? What do you mean? Oh, you don't do definitions today. We don't do definitions. That's not what language is for.

Language is useful. This is politically useful to talk this way. Community.

By what standards? Under what unification? Oh, we don't talk like that. It's useful. We're getting our agenda across.

We're winning. If we can use language to win, we don't need definitions. Now, you must be aware of that today.

You must alert your people. This preaches, brothers. This preaches.

Boy, when I talk on these things, political correctness, it is dead silent in this room. They love to hear this thing analyzed. They hear it every day.

They read it in the newspapers. They like it when somebody can say, oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

I see. The oh, yeah thing on Sunday morning is one of your best powers. Suspense in preaching is one of the most useful tools to hold up a problem.

Everybody feels the problem. To hold them for 20 minutes and solve it. That's what people are longing for.

When you talk about preaching doctrine. This is another point down here somewhere. When you talk about preaching doctrine, oh, dead, boring.

Dorothy Sayers must have been off the wall then. The dogma is the drama. People want doctrine.

They want things explained. But they don't want it like this and preachy tones and no passion and no zeal and no illustrations and no thoughtfulness and no order and no clear language. They've had enough of that stuff, but they want you to solve their problems, their intellectual problems and how the Bible fits with the world.

And what is what is the active obedience of Jesus? And what is the sovereignty of God? And is the atonement limited? And that is not boring. It is not boring. You make it boring if it's boring.

God is the most exciting reality in the universe. We are not always excited. That's our problem, not God's problem.

He is infinitely exciting, infinitely glorious, infinitely. He never bores anybody. If people are bored, they are blind.

And we are. You just must link in to this glorious sovereign God. If you want to hold your people, how did I get on that with language? Number two was to alert people to the utter doctrinelessness of our day and the utilitarian way of thinking is with us, with a vengeance.

Third, here's an interesting one. The importance of founding and maintaining institutions. He did two.

The Princeton theology was carried by three institutions. Princeton Seminary, Princeton Theological Review and Charles Hodges Systematic Theology. Now, I'm a charismatic at heart.

I'm even a theological charismatic. I believe in life. I believe in all the spiritual gifts.

I believe institutionalism kills. But I am thinking these days where I would be without the institution of Bill and Ruth Piper, my parents, the institution of Wheaton College, the institution of Fuller Seminary, and the institution of the writings of C.S. Lewis. Who would John Piper be? It is inconceivable to me.

This church is an institution. The danger of institutions is that they hold you in from going to the neighborhoods and become ends in themselves. But if you could try to imagine life without institutions and say the preservation of all that's precious will go from person to person, hands raised and heartfelt, it ain't going to happen.

It just ain't going to happen. Precious things are preserved over decades and centuries in large measure by books, charters, coalitions, churches, universities, denominations committed around shared values. Now, I don't know what that says to you, where you are.

To me, it caused me to create a conference. Here's a conference. It's six years old.

It's becoming an institution. Different people come each year, but I have a vision. I have a vision of God.

I have a vision of church life and worship and the centrality of God over all things. And I said, look, if people will come when I send out an invitation and get speaker like us to come, I'll pour some work into it. And this embodies something.

You men will be influenced a little bit. Even if you don't like it, you'll be influenced a little bit. And so you in your where you are, you can create little institutions, little institutions like the family, which is most important.

And there are big institutions like the American government and others. So institutions are really, really crucial. The next one is the danger of indifferentism.

I think I've said enough about that. Probably. I probably hit hard enough the value of a God centered vision of all reality.

When he when Warfield got a hold of Machen and enabled him to see that once you see that God is supreme overall, that Calvinism is the most full expression of that total supremacy over all things. What that does in my life is enable me to say something significant about everything. That's not presumptuous.

Almost doesn't. You could you could say we could just take an hour right now and you could stand up and say anything you wanted. Just pick anything.

Open the dictionary flop and pick out a word and tell me. Talk about it. I could talk about it.

I mean, even if I didn't know what it meant, I could talk about it. Because I could talk about my ignorance. I could talk about the word and maybe some maybe it reminds me of another word.

When God relates to everything. And you bring everything in relationship to God, everything relates to everything. And that's the glory of the sovereignty of God.

You know, when people think about Calvinism, they think, hmm, five points and number five is a real problem. When I when I think about Calvinism, I think mainly about the supremacy of God to God. And then the supremacy of God in the world and the supremacy of God in the church and in the soul and in eternity.

And that's the dominant thing in your life. Everything relates to everything. And then you preach.

Interesting. I mean, you don't you open a text. Oh, what can I say about that? I mean, when I look at a text, my big problem every Saturday is what not to say.

What should I leave out this Sunday? I mean, the connections in the Bible of every verse to every verse, every verse to my wife and my children in this church and the poor and homosexuality and divorce. Everything relates to everything. And people love it.

People want coherence. People love to see things brought together because that's the way it is. That's reality.

You're putting people in touch with reality. Number eight or whatever it is here is is the pain of criticism. He was bitterly criticized.

By his own colleagues, names were used of Machen and you. My denomination, Betts General Conference, is a noncombative, ironic denomination to a fault, I believe. Although I chose it largely for that reason.

I don't want to be a pugilist. You know, but I don't want to put such a premium on being ironic that you become an indifferent test. That's the danger.

But I lost my train of thought here. Oh, that kind of person doesn't like to be criticized. And therefore, they don't like to say anything that's going to ruffle feathers.

And because that hurts, it hurts to be criticized. One criticism at that door after I preach will not compensate for 10 compliments. That said that backwards in compliments won't compensate for one criticism.

My emotional makeup. Boom, I'm on the floor. Criticism takes 20, 30, 40 compliments to get me off the floor again.

That's the way we're structured. Therefore, people won't do it. They think that they can become so kind, so loving, so meek, so soft spoken, so we us that they won't get criticized.

You know, it won't work. I read in first things Jermaine Greer called Mother Teresa a religious imperialist. At my covenant school, convent school, she said the pious nuns who always spoke softly and inclined their heads with small patient smiles were ones to fear.

They became the mother superiors. Mother Teresa is not content with running a convent. She runs an order of Mother Teresa clones which operates worldwide in anyone less holy.

This would be seen as an obscene ego trip. Mother Teresa epitomizes for me the blinkered charitableness upon which we pride ourselves. And for which we expect reward in this world, in the next, there's very little on earth that I hate more than that.

Well, I mean, if Mother Teresa is going to get it, forget it, guys, just you just forget it. You're going to get it. And therefore, we just have to go ahead and say it like it is.

I have one more, but it's too long. So I'm going to I'm going to stop. I think if you want to ask a question about it, you can.

I'll tell you what it is, namely preparing pre evangelism, preparing culture to receive the gospel. But it's it's my cutting edge. I don't know if I agree with it, but I'm going to stop here and let you ask questions.

And you can ask about anything under the sun for the next 15 or 20 minutes. They with the extent in PCUSA, I don't think the BGC is in anywhere near the trouble they were at that time. The vote last summer out in Colorado Springs on the resolution concerning ministering to homosexuals was to me a great signal of faithfulness.

For those of you who don't know, there's about nine hundred people there. And and a motion was brought to the floor to, I think, express a compassionate and yet full of conviction statement about homosexuality and passed with two dissenting votes out of nine hundred people. That's unheard of, I think, today.

So I feel encouraged at the grassroots. That's who they're I have less encouragement about about the college, although I believe it's in the hands of very strong and committed evangelical non indifferent tests. And I just think we need to be prayerful and supportive.

We had a Bethel Sunday last Sunday and I held up programs. I called the people to support and pray and had a Bethel prof preach. And I, I don't want to be quick to jump ship on an institution.

That's the biggest struggle I have. Did Machen jump ship at the right time with Princeton? Did you do right? Voss didn't go, you know, Armstrong didn't go. And and others stayed.

I don't know what to say about the wider. We got PCUSA people here and they are far better equipped to say I think that church has lost cause as far as I can tell. But but that's a that's a philosophy of separatism that is very unrepresentative of a lot of evangelicals.

I mean, I have precious friends who believe they're going to stay there. They're going to fight from the inside. Obviously, where Ben is, I presume, and and others.

But when I mean, they had they had the General Assembly here in the Twin Cities a couple of years ago. And it's really hard. I mean, we have become so callous to the to the wild eyed things that mainline Protestants say today that I don't even know if we could judge the way Machen would judge about the time of leaving.

John, that definition, because we have it. We have a gay church, Church of the Lakes, who would agree with your definition of evangelicalism. The definition we are people who define ourselves by the gospel of Jesus Christ is inadequate.

To make any distinctions today in view of the abuse of language, I think. I mean, those those words gospel of Jesus Christ are words that virtually every professing Christian of every liberal and modernist stripe would agree with. So I don't think Oz meant I don't think he meant that that would be the sentence in the covenant.

You're going to have to respond to this tonight. But if Oz meant that we can gather an evangelical rallying point with that sentence, I need more help to agree with that, because I don't know of of any liberals and and modernists and people who have forsaken the lifestyle of the Bible who would not agree with that. The Westminster Confession of Faith, that that's too that's too simple in in this book to put my hands right on it.

He he just he here it is. He won't argue over people who disagree with him on the timing of the Lord's return. He doesn't want to fight over the mode and efficacy of the sacraments.

He does not want to fight over the nature of the Christian ministry. Congregationalism versus Episcopalianism versus Presbyterianism. He does not want to fight Arminianism mainly.

That's number four. And he does not want to fight Rome. Mainly, he said, the gulf is indeed profound between us and Rome, but profound as it is, it seems almost trifling.

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. So his breadth was very broad in whom he was willing to call brother.

But he would he would he would use words like defective or perverted. See, my guess is half of you are. I don't know what.

How many in here are. Would you be honest? Do not. I mean, endorse pedo baptism.

Raise your hand. There's a lot of you. Come on.

Raise your hand. Endorse your presbytery. Do endorse.

How many of you believe in practicing infant baptism? Raise your hand. OK, so 40 or 50. You know, I would call that view not unchristian.

But defective. It's a defective. It's it's it's one of those little it's one of those little sprouts under the big tree of of baptistic reform.

I think one of the biggest challenges we have is to decide what issues we're going to rally. We're going to make issues of coming together and not coming. And and then it's so complex because when you say coming together, what do you mean coming together for what? I pray with the weirdest people in this city.

I pray with almost anybody. But whenever a group gets together to plan a prayer event, I'm the one who pulls out the Lausanne Covenant and says, you know, I think we need some doctrinal agreement. Here's a good one.

And now I say, oh, fine. That's that's good. It's called indifferentism.

But at least I feel like I've got to put the word on the table because I don't I don't think it's going to work in the long run to try to pull people together on the basis of prayer or other experiences. I think whoever you just quoted there would probably also add, wouldn't he? And as long as I'm not kicked out, I'll stay as long as it is officially orthodox and they don't kick me out. Now, OK, they kick Mason out.

I wish I knew what would have happened. They didn't kick him out of Princeton. That was a different kind of decision.

He he left Princeton seven years before he left the PCUSA and he was kicked out of the PCA and he fought with all his might to stay in the PCUSA. Now, whether he would have stayed long term, I don't know. But he argued his case vehemently that he was not in disagreement with the Constitution or the confession.

And he was defeated. In fact, they wouldn't let him make his whole case. They wanted him out so so bad.

So I would say the trajectory of Machen's career denominationally was that he was he was going to fight this thing in the denomination as long as he could. I don't know how long that would have lasted. I sure respect that view, that if there is official denominational affirmation of biblical faith, that one can have integrity in staying.

Unless staying communicates endorsement and support through maybe too many unofficial ways that would compromise the testimony. And I suppose the many that you couldn't say for sure when that happens, but I can imagine for him it was I will not give money to support Pearl Buck and others. And they said, that's like not coming to the Lord's table and kicked him out.

Now, they might not have said that. And so I think in many denominations, it's possible not to to contribute to the denomination. I don't know if that's true, but that would be one compromise.

I suppose that you would might want to avoid it. May it be that if you're in the community where that church is known for what it stands for and what you are communicating to your whole community is the endorsement of rejection of biblical truth. Practically, then you might say this is too destructive to the witness of the church.

There's another fellowship that would be more more consistent. I've never been in that situation, and so I haven't had to face it. I had two very precious friends, Tom Provence, on the one hand, and Larry Allen on the other, who made two very different decisions.

Tom stayed, died of cancer a couple of years ago, and Larry went out into the PCA. And so I just have had a lot of respect for people who have gone both directions. But I guess my own my own sympathies lie with

those who are drawing the line closer to the truth.

You see, when when you have a document in front of you, like the Westminster Confession, you know, 95 percent of which I love, maybe 98. When you have that in front of you. And you say this is who we are and you know, they're lying through the teeth.

Go ahead. Most people live most people in the grassroots. What he just pointed out was he grew up in a church in the Presbyterian Church with a pastor who believed the words, the meaning, the reality of the event, and didn't even know there was such a problem as modernism until he got to seminary.

And that's that's where most people live in most denominations, is that what you are immediately week in and week out connected with is what matters most to you. And to and the question was, then do you throw over that tradition and say that didn't count or I don't want to preserve that? Maybe that's what you're asking. And I am not going to.

Yeah. You know, in the Southern Baptist Church, there's this little group of reform pastors that get together each year. I think I forget what it's called, but a couple hundred or three hundred.

And that sort of thing happens in denominations that are, if they're not liberal, are either, you know, just doctrinally noncommittal. I mean, it's happened in our little fellowship because people aren't trumpeting great truth. When the Baptist General Conference gets together, the note that is struck is not a doctrinal commitment that is glorious and that holds together.

The note that is struck is church growth and large. We're planning 52 churches and that's great. But if some of us in the conference say, well, I'm really glad we're planning churches and that's better than some denominations who aren't.

But that's not what sustains me and makes my fire bright. I don't have to find a little group of guys or a big group and say, let's get together and talk about God. And you you form a little group and I'm sure there are groups like that probably in the PCUSA.

I don't know what they're called, but I'm sure there are. And so that's one way of sustaining the faithfulness of the witness within a denomination. I know in the Methodist Church, there are renewal movements like that where you get together and hundreds of pastors say, here's who we really are.

And we exist as a kind of counter testimony to the powers that be out there without leaving the church. Maybe one more. Well, I wish I knew.

I wish he'd lived another 20 years. Wow. What a loss.

But what comes to my mind is he chose to fight the battle against anti-supernatural liberalism, not against the varieties of evangelicalism. That was his choice. It set him off somewhat from the fundamentalists.

When the OP was founded. Now, my history is not as good as some of yours here. But within a year, it split again because Carl McIntyre and Oliver Buswell and I forget who the others were.

They wanted the new Presbyterian Church to have a totalistic statement and they wanted it to have a premillennial sense to it, I think, and a few other things. And Machen dug in his heels and said, we will be defined as broad, reformed faith. So he saw the battle so significantly in terms of those outside and inside that he seemed to reduce.

Now, my sense today, maybe I'm too much in the grip of a domino theory. But I asked what Clark Pinnock, who I think has gone off the deep end so far, I don't know what to call him anymore. But he asked the question one time at Bethel Seminary.

Where do liberals come from? And he said, they come from you. They don't grow on trees. They come from evangelicals.

They grow out of evangelicals. And so I've ever since, you know, 15 years ago when I heard that, I've just thought, how does that happen? How is it that Jerry Shepherd, Assemblies of God, with whom I went to seminary and was one of my closest friends, teaches up in Toronto now in Old Testament, endorses things, I mean, that he would have considered utterly unthinkable 20 years ago at Fuller. How did that happen? Should I blame it on Yale and Union where he went? Was it a family situation? His marriage broke down? Is that part of it? So I care about that question, which means I look around the feminist issue, the homosexual issue, Arminian issues.

And I ask, are there any roots here of liberals in the making of the real sort? And so when I when I edited this book on feminism, evangelical feminism, wrote the last chapter on the way forward. Are we together? And tried to write a really hopeful chapter there. Brothers, sisters are not, you know, I'm not looking at at the evangelical feminists, say us and them in terms of Christianity or even evangelicalism.

But I see the hermeneutical seeds of the rejection of the Bible. I see continuity between that issue and the homosexual issue and then the rejection of the authority of the scripture entirely. I see people who say, if the Bible says I have to be that way, I'm not going to be that way.

I'll reject the Bible before I'll not be a feminist or before I'll not be endorsing homosexuality. So my my response is that even though Machen might have drawn his lines there and only written and spoken concerning what's happening among the anti-supernaturalistic thoroughgoing liberals. For myself, I wonder if we might not serve the church and save rescue people by finding out where is that? What are the origins of that? In what kind of home do they grow up? What did parents do right for Machen and do wrong for Jerry? Or was it the parents? Was it Christian school? Should I found a Christian school at this church? Because the I watch my son, Benjamin, at the public school.

There's no way I can combat the utter disrespectfulness that is bred into young people at Roosevelt High School. So I'm asking questions on the inside as well as the as well as the outside. So that's just some of what comes to my mind.

Dean told me we have till three thirty, according to the schedule. And so I what I find is that if you present the sovereignty of God as the most glorious, life sustaining, tragedy, enduring, soul saving evangelism, producing prayer, empowering message, people like it. They like it.

They don't know that it carries five points with it. But once they begin, I mean, just the history of this church. I mean, I've been here twelve and a half years now and I came to mention the word Calvinism for six years, five years.

But I preach the sovereignty of God from the very outset, from the scriptures, not from Calvin. I've never read the institutes from Romans and Galatians and Isaiah. And they liked it.

It gives hope to people when they're dying, when their kids are leaving and when motorboats run over their legs. It gives hope to people. And then when you explain joyfully there's a connection between whether

Christ really saved sinners or only made them savable.

They like that, too, because you've you've prepared them with the glory of the sovereignty of God. So I think all hangs on whether you believe it's joyful. The reason so many little reformed churches don't grow and don't attract is because it doesn't look joyful.

It looks like a club. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Feel free to make copies of this message to give to others.

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Desiring God exists to help you make God your treasure because God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/15/SID15068.mp3>

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