

Caleb Collins

SESSION 1 | Where Do We Stand? The Life and Teaching of J. Gresham Machen

1. Introduction to the Class and Session

i. **Shared Experience.**

ii. **An Important Observation.**

1. Speaking of theological liberalism and modernism

a. **Liberalism:** Freeing the church from “tradition”

i. **Tradition** is the living faith of the dead

ii. **Traditionalism** is the dead faith of the living

b. **Modernism:** the Church accommodating to the modern world

b. **Courageous Convictions.**

c. Machen’s similarity to Luther (Nichols, p.14-15)

i. Unwanted by the churches they were ordained in, loved and lived for

- ii. Both were unwanted for questioning theological drift and departure from biblical foundations
 - iii. They both faced heresy trials
 - iv. Left behind a legacy of theological scholarship
 - v. Both examples of courage and defending the faith
- d. “Love him or hate him, he had a gift possessed by too few theologians: plain speaking combined with straightforward comprehensibility, and that of a kind which, with its passion, forces the reader, even the hostile reader, to reflect upon his or her own convictions.” - Carl Trueman, Foreword of C&L

2. Who is Machen?

- a. Early Life
- b. College
- c. Princeton
- d. Stepping into the Presbyterian Controversy

i. Christianity and Liberalism

- 1. Harry Emerson Fosdick’s sermon: “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?”

- a. “We must be able to think our modern life clear through in Christian terms, and to do that we must be able to think our Christian faith clear though modern terms.” Fosdick quoted by Nichols 84-5

2. The Five Points of Deliverance, aka “the Five Fundamentals,”
 - a. Scripture’s Inspiration and Inerrancy

 - b. Christ’s Virgin Birth

 - c. Christ’s Substitutionary Atonement

 - d. Christ’s Bodily Resurrection (as a Historical Event)

 - e. Christ’s Performance of Miracles during His Earthly Ministry

3. “a God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.” - Richard Niebuhr

4. “it is the Bible and the cross of Christ that define Christianity.” - Nichols,p.201

5. “As Machen has argued, Christianity is one thing, liberalism another. And the church can ill afford not to see the difference.” Nichols, p.95

ii. **Missions Controversy**

iii. **Westminster (Sept 1929) and OPC (June 1936)**

1. Westminster, Machen wrote “will be hardly attended by those who seek the plaudits of the world or the plaudits of a worldly church.” Nichols p.17
2. “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.” Machen’s most enduring response to modernism was the founding of these two institutions: Westminster Seminary (which today is a major influence in American evangelicalism) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (which now, over six decades later, bears a witness disproportionate to its small size.” Piper, p. 454

e. *The events of his death*

3. The Controversy in a Word: Authority

- a. “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.” Machen, C&L p.4

4. The Problem in a Paragraph

- a. The American Stage
 - i. After Industrial Revolution
 - ii. After the Civil War
 - iii. The rise of Darwinism
 - iv. During WWI
 - v. The Roaring 20's/The Great Depression
- b. Liberalism Attempting to Save the Church
 - i. The Distinctions of this rescue
 - 1. Deifying History
 - 2. Focusing on Morality
 - 3. The Centrality of Religious Feeling
 - ii. JI Packer's Definition of Liberalism
 - 1. A purpose of adapting the faith

2. A skeptical view of historic Christian supernaturalism
3. A view of the Bible as fallible human record of religious thought and experience
4. Low view of God of working chiefly in cultural developments, philosophical, sociological, moral and aesthetic means.

5. Machen and Today

- a. The Scepter of God's Rule is His Word
- b. Utility vs. Purity
- c. Be Courageous
 - i. Short Definition: *Christian courage is confident obedience to the Lord in the face of fearsome circumstances*
 - ii. Long Definition: *Christian courage is the virtue of confident obedience to the Lord, with conviction and discernment, in the face of adversity, risk, or sacrifice required by fearsome circumstances.*

6. Conclusion

- a. *J. Gresham Machen*, Stephen Nichols

April 25, 2021

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b. *21 Servants of Sovereign Joy*, John Piper

c. *Christianity and Liberalism*, J. Gresham Machen