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Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We pray that this letter finds all of the readers of *The Heritage Journal* in the warm blessings and grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who “redeemed us from the curse of the law...that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith “ (Gal. 3:13-14).

A new year brings new opportunities. *The Heritage Journal* is moving forward into exciting times! With powerful new publishing software and a fresh redesign, we are very pleased to release this new edition to you.

The focus of this issue of *The Heritage Journal*, in keeping with our trek through the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, is the decrees of God. In this issue, we will explore the nature of God’s sovereignty as it relates to the gospel and to apologetics. Also included is our standard selections from older writers in the “Ancient Paths” and “Catechism Corner” sections.

Noteworthy in this issue is a stirring contribution concerning abortion from Mr. Ben Stahl, a ruling elder at Redeemer Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, GA, who preaches regularly on the streets in front of abortion mills. We also are pleased to publish an award-winning essay on singleness from Mr. Ben Mordecai, a member of Heritage Presbyterian Church in Royston, GA.

May this publication be a blessing to you.

Warmly,

Taylor Sexton

Co-editor, The Heritage Journal

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Ancient Paths

“Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).



“Ancient Paths” stands at the beginning of every issue of *The Heritage Journal*. It contains an excerpt from an old writer that either has been notably impactful for the editors or is relevant to the theme of that particular journal issue.

If we are sinners, it is evident that the practically essential thing in religious experience is to appreciate truly our guilt, unworthiness, and helplessness before God, and God's free grace toward us to its full extent. If God is infinitely gracious and just, if at measureless expense he redeemed us at the cost of the pain, shame, and death of his Son, it follows that any failure in our appreciation of our own unworthiness and helplessness, or of God's gracious activity in our salvation, would be absolutely insufferable. To claim more for ourselves or to ascribe less to God than the facts of the case justify would be the greatest of all sins, and would be the very thing to make salvation impossible. The sense of our own guilt, pollution, and impotence, and of the absolute unconditioned freeness of the grace which saves us, is involved in every case of genuine religious experience.

The expiatory work of Christ which is sufficient for, adapted to, and freely offered to all men, being presupposed, the question of questions is, How—by what agencies and on what conditions—is it effectually applied to any individual? The Scriptures make it plain that the condition of its effectual application is an act of faith, involving real spiritual repentance and the turning from sin and the acceptance and self-appropriation of Christ and of his redemption as the only remedy. But

what will prompt a sinner in love with his sin, spiritually blind and callous, thus to repent and accept Christ as the cure of the sin he loves? The first movement cannot begin with man. The sinner of himself cannot really desire deliverance from sin; of himself he cannot appreciate the attractive beauty, loveliness, or saving power of Christ. The dead man cannot spontaneously originate his own quickening, nor the creature his own creating, nor the infant his own begetting. Whatever man may do after regeneration, the first quickening of the dead must originate in the first instance with God. All Christians feel this as the most intimate conviction of their souls. Yet it involves necessarily this very doctrine of eternal predestination or election. If God begins the work, if our believing follows his quickening, then it is God, not man, who makes the difference between the quickened and the unquickened. If we believe, it is because we have been first quickened. If any man do not believe, it is because he is yet dead in his natural sin. God's eternal choice therefore cannot depend upon foreseen faith, but on the contrary, faith must depend upon God's eternal choice.

Archibald Alexander Hodge, *Evangelical Theology* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 120-21.



Articles

“Whatever things were written before were written for our learning” (Romans 15:4).



Calvinism is the Gospel

REV. MICHAEL MYERS

“Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:10).

The reader of Scripture will look in vain for any explanation of God’s beginning, for the eternal God has none. The skeptic may object, “Who gave Him the right to create?” The answer is no one, for “God is in heaven, He does whatever He pleases” (Psa. 115:3). The Triune God made this world for His glory and will remake it for the same purpose, all without consulting the creature. As such, He may do what He wills, with whom He wills, for whatever reason He determines is good.

It is precisely at this point that fallen man, in native hatred for God and His rule, begins to clench a rebellious fist. Thankfully the Lord of Hosts does not derive His power “from the consent of the governed.” The Bible asks those who take exception to the incontestable sovereignty of God, “But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why have you made me like this?’ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?” (Rom. 9:20-21).

The renowned Charles Spurgeon once said, “There is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.” He proceeded to explain the grand themes of God’s sovereign grace, eternal love, glorious redemption in Jesus Christ, and everlasting assurance for the people of God.¹ One may read this

and think, “That sounds like biblical Christianity!” Indeed it is.

“Calvinism is the gospel” is a bold statement. This does not mean one must be a Calvinist to believe the Gospel. Praise God that sinners are not saved by their orthodoxy, but rather by the One who is Truth incarnate (John 1:14). Calvinism rightly understood exalts God’s glory and grace in the gospel. The following will explain and (one hopes) encourage the reader’s soul with the refreshing streams of divine grace.

What is the Gospel?

No question is more important! Simply stated, Jesus Christ is the gospel. Consider first His person and work. The blessed name Jesus means He shall save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). The title Christ demonstrates that He is the elect and anointed One (Isa. 42:1), approved by God and set apart by the Spirit for the work of redemption (Matt. 3:16-17). This simple outline expands further.

Concerning His person, Jesus was and is simultaneously God (Rom. 9:5) and man (John 19:5), the incarnate Word (John 1:14), God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). He is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). Concerning His work, Jesus Christ is the final Prophet (Heb. 1:2), the Great High Priest (Heb. 8:1-2), and the reigning King (Rev. 1:5). Most precious is the title Savior, for He came to save even the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).

What is the Gospel? Jesus Christ, the divine incarnate Son, who lived, suffered, died, was buried, rose again, and is now proclaimed in all the world. Whoever believes in Him will not perish but has eternal life (John 3:16).

God's grace stands alongside a sober reality. Why did the eternal God freely go to such great lengths to secure an eternal redemption for His elect? Did He make man in need of redemption? Far from it. "Truly, this only I have found: that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes" (Eccl. 7:29). Everything God made was good, but that good creation became spoiled, sullied, and subject to futility, decay, and death. This was the effect of Adam's sin. His fall plunged humanity and creation into the darkness of alienation and sorrow (Gen. 3:8-24; cf. Rom. 8:20-22). Everything was affected, mankind in particular (Eph. 2:1-3). Yet, dear reader, this did not take God by surprise. He had a plan, the origin of which flows from eternity (Eph. 1:10).

Whence the Gospel?

Every sinner with a sense of Jesus' glory and the heart's depravity must ask, "How, Lord? Whence this gospel?" Whence is a good word, meaning "from what place or source?" The Apostle John hints at the answer, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1). That love comes from another world.

The Origin of the Gospel: The Bible teaches that God's saving work arose from Himself. Throughout the Gospels Jesus referred to work the Father gave Him to accomplish. His divine assignment was as ancient as the glory He eternally possessed with the Father (John 17:4-5; cf. 4:34). From eternity, the Triune God decreed the plan, parts, and persons of salvation. Paul makes this explicit, writing that God "has saved us...according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began" (2 Tim. 1:9). Why would God do this for creatures who initiated a war against Him? Paul exalts in the threefold answer throughout Ephesians 1: "to the praise of His glorious grace"! Grace is both the source and the grand mystery of the gospel, as Philip Doddridge wrote, "Grace first contrived a way / to save rebellious man / and all the steps that grace display / which drew the wondrous plan."

The Initiative of the Redemption: Throughout the story of redemption, the initiative of grace moves in one direction. On that black day when Adam sinned, he did not cry out for mercy. He and Eve covered their shame by the works of their hands, hiding from their all-knowing Creator (Gen. 3:8-10). Just moments after falling they already displayed that tragic state of depravity: "There is none who seeks after God" (Rom. 3:11). At every turn God—not man—takes the initiative of grace. God sought Adam in his fig leaves, Noah in his dark generation (Gen. 6:8), Abram in Ur (Neh. 9:7), Moses in the desert (Ex. 3:2), David in the sheepfold (2 Sam. 7:8). Christ Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). The witness of gospel preaching continues the great task of divine initiative. Through His pleading ambassadors, God calls sinful man to be reconciled with Him (2 Cor. 5:20).

The Accomplishment of Redemption: God alone is mighty to save (Isa. 63:1). The divine Son of God set His face like a flint, endured the cross, despised the shame, secured an eternal redemption, and sat down at the right hand of God (Isa. 50:7; Heb. 9:12, 12:1-2). The words that gave Abraham comfort many years ago find their great fulfillment in the One who hung on Calvary's cross, "God will provide for Himself the lamb" (Gen. 22:8). Jesus the Lamb of God did not exaggerate when He cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Hallelujah, "His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory" (Psa. 98:1).

What does any of this have to do with Calvinism? That question needs to be turned on its head. Calvinism has everything to do with the glories described above. B.B. Warfield once wrote, "What lies at the heart of [Calvin's] soteriology is the absolute exclusion of the creaturely element in the initiation of the saving process, that so the pure grace of God may be magnified." Later he wrote,

He who knows that it is God who has chosen him and not he who has chosen God, and that he owes his entire salvation in all its processes and in every one of its stages to this choice of God, would be an ingrate indeed if he gave not the glory of his salvation solely to the inexplicable elective love of God.²

Calvinism, and thus the gospel, understands that at the heart of true biblical religion is the doctrine of pure and sovereign grace. It is not first what man must do, but rather what God has done in Jesus Christ. Salvation in all its parts is only and entirely of the Lord. This is Calvinism.

Notes

1. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Spurgeon's Sermons (Vol. XX)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1892), 88-89.

2. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, *Calvin and Calvinism*, vol. 5, 10 vols., *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1932), 359-60.

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The Decrees of God as an Apologetic Tool

TAYLOR SEXTON

“The decrees of God are, his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.” So says the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Question 7) on the subject of God’s decrees. Many would see this doctrine primarily as one of the dividing lines between so-called “Calvinists” and “Arminians.” A dividing line it certainly is. That God “foreordains whatsoever comes to pass” is an essential truth not only for the very being of God (for what God is not in absolute control over His creation?) but for the gospel itself. If salvation is truly a free gift, given irrespective of man’s “willing” or “running” (Rom. 9:16), then God of necessity must have an eternal, immutable, and absolutely efficacious decree. Otherwise, he is truly sovereign over nothing, and all his plans could be thwarted (in contrast, see Dan. 4:35).

The biblical doctrine of God’s decree is crucial not only for gospel purity; it is also of great use in apologetics. Apologetics is “the vindication of the Christian philosophy of life against the various forms of the non-Christian philosophy of life.”¹ It is not merely showing Christianity to be reasonable. Rather, it is the endeavoring to demonstrate that the biblical, Christian worldview is the only viable worldview upon which human life can be lived.

God’s decree, as defined above, being an essential aspect of the Christian worldview, is of use in defending the Christian faith. The aim of this essay is to demonstrate a few ways the Christian can utilize the doctrine of God’s decree in defending the Christian faith against detractors.

First, *the doctrine of God’s decree is of use in establishing the reliability of human knowledge.* As modern society moves further and further away from the biblical worldview, and thus further away from an understanding of God’s sovereignty over the world, it is understandable why it has also become increasingly adamant about the impossibility of human knowledge. Today, we cannot know anything! We cannot really know whether boys are boys and girls are girls, or what is right and what is wrong. Who can really know?

Yet no one really lives like this is true. Try to steal from someone who is agnostic about right and wrong, and they will surely object. Ask someone whether the statement, “There is no absolute truth,” is absolutely true, and the dilemma is manifested in full force. Everyone believes knowledge is possible. The real issue is that most people hate the truth. And the most human way to deal with inconvenient truth is to pretend it cannot be known—in other words, to suppress it (Rom. 1:18).

Knowledge requires a metaphysical foundation. In other words, every bit of knowledge a man possesses must be built upon some other piece of knowledge or standard that is more certain. At the very bottom of this “pyramid of knowledge,” something must lie at the base, grounding and

stabilizing everything above it. For example, when I woke up tomorrow morning, went into the bathroom, retrieved my toothbrush and toothpaste out of the drawer, and proceeded to squeeze the tube of toothpaste, I knew that toothpaste will in fact come out. I know this because I did it yesterday morning, and it worked. At the base of this belief is the more certain belief that the universe behaves consistently throughout time. If the toothpaste came out yesterday morning, I can reasonably expect it to do the same tomorrow morning.

This is not enough for true knowledge, however. Upon what basis do I believe that the universe behaves consistently throughout time? This is not a hypothesis that can be tested, as I have only thirty years of experience to go on. I cannot go back to 1970 to see if the toothpaste came out for my then teenage father. At the base of my knowledge, then, must be something that metaphysically *accounts* for such a belief—in other words, a *presupposition*.

The only viable presupposition for such a belief, I assert, is the doctrine of God's decree. If God were not God, or did not exist, I could have no reasonable expectation that when I wake up tomorrow morning the universe will behave then like it does today. Yet, on the biblical worldview, I can have such an expectation, because God has decreed it: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). I can truly know nothing apart from God's decree. The Christian should be aware of this and be ready to point it out.

Secondly, and closely related to the first, *the doctrine of God's decree is of use in establishing the possibility of human science*. Science (properly so-called) is a gift from the Lord. In fact, science (again, properly so-called)² would not have been possible apart from the Christian worldview. The scientific method, which has brought such great technological and medical advancements to the modern world, relies upon the belief that the experiments scientists conduct today, when repeated and tested, will produce the same results, because the universe behaves uniformly from day to day.

Again, this is all impossible without a metaphysical basis. In the unbelieving worldview, there is no reason to believe that tomorrow will be like today, or that yesterday was like today is. Without this certainty, science is impossible, not to mention history. However, if there is a God who orders the universe in such a predictable and reliable way—so that the sun rises and sets in an orderly fashion, the law of gravity remains precise and consistent, and the speed of light holds constant—then science is possible. The unbeliever, try as he might, cannot account for science. To do so, he must borrow from the Christian worldview. Christians should be aware of this and point it out.

But thirdly, and most precious, *the doctrine of God's decree is of use in establishing the blessing of human comfort*. Knowledge and science, although immensely important, are one thing; comfort is another. A man may have all the knowledge and understanding in the world, yet if his life is full of dread and terror, he considers it not worth living. At the same time, even though a man be of little knowledge and shallow understanding, if his life is one of contentment, hope, and true happiness, he considers it a blessing above all others.

How does God's decree bring comfort? It consists in this: that God is good. To explain, if God is good, yet is unable effectually to cause his good purpose to stand, and to accomplish all that he pleases (Isa. 46:10), his goodness means nothing. However, if God is good, and is able by his omnipotent power, through his irresistible and unthwartable decree, to make his most glorious purposes maintain, then his goodness means everything.

Christian, you have something to offer the unbeliever. The fact is, the unbeliever—who has knowledge and enjoys the advancements of science—lives in absolute defiance of their own worldview, which can provide no such luxuries. In their sad, naturalistic state, they believe that all that exists is merely matter in motion. For the unbeliever, whether they recognize it or not, their life is, in the words of Shakespeare, "but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more: it is a tale /

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.”

Worst of all, the unbeliever has no hope. To them, all is chance. Things may turn out okay for them; they may not. Even if they do, what does it matter? They cannot possibly know. But you, Christian, do know, because you know the Lord, who sovereignly executes his decree, and will accomplish all his good pleasure. And he *has* accomplished it in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christian, take comfort in this: that the Lord, who is faithful, is fulfilling his good purpose in you, and He “will do it” (1 Thess. 5:24). Now, go forth, wielding this good news, and bring the gospel to the lost who so desperately need it.

Notes

1. Cornelius Van Til, *Apologetics*, Logos Edition. (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1976), 1.
2. I emphasize this because what is today called “science” is often not science, but implicit faith in “experts.” True science seeks to discern the fabric of God’s world, thinking God’s thoughts after him.
3. From *Hamlet*, Act 5, Scene 5.

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400 to 1

Are You Willing to Contend?

MICHAEL MYERS

Christians everywhere hold Athanasius the Great in high esteem. *Athanasius contra mundum* (“Athanasius against the world”) evokes thoughts of championing the cause of orthodoxy against the tides of heresy. I thank God for Athanasius. As one who stood for the cause of biblical, Trinitarian theology, his task was unique and essential. His contending for the faith did not immediately earn a position of popularity, however. On the contrary, the blustering winds of power and culture blew fiercely in his face, even leading to multiple exiles. If you are a Christian, you can thank God that Athanasius was no weathervane who turned with the gusts of opposition, but was instead full of love to the Lord, deeply rooted in the truth, and willing to stand firm in the evil day, even and especially when he stood alone.

People love unanimity because they look to one another for validation. So when everyone in the room is clamoring for the next progressive topic, enthusiastically striving to catch the next cultural wave to propel them into acceptance (and

a little notoriety doesn’t hurt, right?), few want to chime in and record their negative vote. The fact is, it is hard to be the odd man out, apparently the only one in the room saying ‘no.’ This, dear friends, is nothing new.

Rewind about 3,000 years to 1 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 18. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, had begun well, building upon the advances of his father Asa and walking in the ways of his predecessor David. Nevertheless, in an astonishing lapse of judgment, he decided to ally himself with the wicked king Ahab to go fight against Syria. Despite the folly of his commitment, Jehoshaphat had some residual good sense to request that the monarchs inquire of the Lord to see if this was a war worth waging. More than happy to oblige, Ahab sent the word and called a conference of prophets: “Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred men, and said to them, ‘Shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?’ So they said, ‘Go up, for God will deliver it into the king’s hand’” (2 Chr. 18:5).

The prophetically sanctioned answer was overwhelming. What more could Jehoshaphat desire? Absolute unanimity, thriving nationalism, unwavering confidence—it was all there for the taking, 400 times over. But Jehoshaphat had that nagging feeling that something was off. What caused Jeho-

shaphat to think twice? Did he notice the way the fabulous 400 were dressed? Did they have golden calf pendants hanging around their necks? The text does not say, but the king of Judah realized that there was not a single prophet of the Lord around, so he had to ask just one more question: “Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?” (2 Chr. 18:6).

Ahab’s answer revealed his true colors: “There is still one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he never prophesies good concerning me, but always evil” (2 Chr. 18:7). Ahab was happy with the easy and prevailing “yes,” but he also hated the hard “no.” His concern terminated “not upon what was true or false but upon what was supportive or non-supportive.”¹ As a man ahead of his times, in very 2022 fashion, he decided that the best method of maintaining unity was to block (de-platform?) that one detractor from having a say. He wanted a safe-space of positivity despite the sham uniformity. This should have been the cue for Jehoshaphat to head for the door, but instead he responded by weakly chiding his cohort, “Let not the king say such things!” (18:7).

Enter Micaiah, a legendary prophet of whom few legends have been told. Ahab’s messenger was kind enough to brief Micaiah on the situation. “Listen, Micaiah, do not come in here and ruin the mood. Everyone is in agreement, and you should be too. You aren’t the only prophet you know, and we all just want to love God and love people” (amplified paraphrase; see 1 Kgs. 22:13). What’s a prophet to do? Micaiah faced two mutually exclusive options: 1) go with the flow while surrendering his conscience and spine or 2) speak forth the Word of the Lord and suffer for it. Like every faithful prophet and servant of the Lord, this man opted for the latter. He did so not because he raised a moistened finger and found the cultural winds favorable, but rather because he “was no sycophant longing for royal favor, no cooperative evangelical begging his colleagues in ministry to confer respectability upon him.”²

With fiery eyes and a faithful heart, Micaiah walked into the presence of the kings and the False

400. His sarcastic introduction drew out Ahab’s hypocritical ire (1 Kgs. 22:15-16). The prophet’s clear and resolute proclamation of the truth and condemnation of error led to his injury, imprisonment, and impoverishment, not to mention his continued and manifest unpopularity (vv. 17-28). Yet the Lord’s word held true and Micaiah has received at least part of his prophet’s reward (Matt. 10:41, though still awaiting the resurrection).

Our churches desperately need pastors, elders, and congregants like this. Dale Ralph Davis in his masterful commentary on 1 Kings wrote:

One sometimes wonders if the church is drifting back to an Ahab mind-set, or, if not hostile toward the candor of the word at least embarrassed by it. I have received church advertisements in my mail. A new church is forming in our area. It is going to feature, among other attractions, a ‘non-judgmental atmosphere’ to attract me. I know, I mustn’t over interpret. But what does that mean? Likely that the church means to eschew negativity, refrain from making folks ‘feel guilty’, or—the ultimate contemporary sin—feel bad about themselves. What will the ministry of the word be like in such a church? Will it ever press home the word of God in its searing honesty? Or must that be sacrificed lest it destroy the non-judgmental ambiance. Ahab would love such a place.³

Would you love such a place? Far too many throughout church history have opted for Micaiah’s first option, that is, surrendering both conscience and spine to placate the pressures of culture. These things must not be so. Though Jude admitted that he would have preferred to write about the joys of salvation, he found it more necessary to exhort his people to contend earnestly for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Our age of relativism requires us firmly to adhere and faithfully to defend the truths of the Word of God. Our age of humanism necessitates the Church to fight tenaciously for a biblical anthropology and soteriology. Our age of low-churchism compels us to be faithful in maintaining the truths of the gospel and the purity, peace, and unity of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise on that account. Our age of

spiraling gender confusion and sexual rebellion obligates the Church to hold fast to biblical manhood and womanhood, not recover from it. Our age of statism challenges the Church boldly to profess the singular glory of Jesus Christ the King and our allegiance to Him.

The difficulty with contending is that it tends to be contentious. Of course, our speech needs to be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that we may know how to answer each person (Col. 4:6). Nevertheless, salt stings sometimes, especially when contacting the wounds of error. Today, defending and preserving the truth is far less appealing than meddling with it. Far too frequently, calling out error and speaking the inconvenient truth will earn labels of arrogant, mean, or narrow-

minded. It happened to Micaiah. It happened to Athanasius. It happened to the Lord Jesus. That is good company, however, and an honorable calling. Remember that until the Day of Glory the Church will be “by schisms rent asunder and heresies distressed.” May the Lord raise up saints who keep watch, contend earnestly for the faith, and hold fast to the truth, even if the odds are 400 to 1.

Notes

1. Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2013), 314-15.
2. *Ibid.*, 314.
3. *Ibid.*, 315-316.

Abortion: Roots, Causes, and Defeat

BEN STAHL

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days”
(Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

The *American Thinker* recently posted an article republished on many Christian websites titled “What Hath Roe Wrought?” The author notes reasons abortion clinics are closing and Americans are turning against abortion. The reasons include studies documenting harm to many women from abortion; too many abortions driven by designer baby goals; and the profit generated through abortion. Recently, at an Atlanta abortion clinic as a pregnant woman entered for an abortion, a woman standing against abortion called out, “You are a great mom! This procedure will hurt you because many woman regret their abortion.” Many today

are rightfully hoping and praying for abortion to end, but the way it is being opposed is with the wisdom of this world rather than wisdom from the Lord.

The Lord does not call abortion one of the seven things He hates because of the documented harm to the mothers who murder their own children. The Lord hates abortion because it is an abomination to Him (Prov. 6:16-17). Christians oppose abortion because we are in a spiritual warfare against sin, and abortion is sin. What follows seeks to frame abortion in its true context, that is the Biblical context, so that the people of God might be thoroughly equipped in their prayer lives and evangelism to those on the road to death. In this manner, the Word of God will go out faithfully, and men and women will be saved, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”

Abortion: Its Roots

“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”
(James 1:15 KJV).

These words of the Lord written by James trace the origins of all sin. Sin is conceived by lust. Therefore, the root of abortion is lust (1 John 2:15-17).

Lust of the Flesh: Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines "bloodlust" as the "desire for bloodshed." The Cambridge Dictionary defines it as "enjoyment of being violent or watching other people be violent." At some risk of lowering the level of scholarship, perhaps the Urban Dictionary defines the term most accurately in our context: "an uncontrollable desire to kill people." The bloodlust of abortion is the insatiable appetite for the shedding of innocent blood. We often see this bloodlust in politicians and abortion promoters who speak so cruelly of children being killed. Rather than crying out, "Enough, enough," they cry out, "More, more!"

The recent U. S. House bill H.R. 3755 (dubbed by some the "Unrestricted Warfare on Children Act") includes this line: "Access to equitable reproductive health care, including abortion services, has always been deficient in the United States for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) and their families."

In Atlanta, New York, Philadelphia, and many other cities, more African American children are murdered by abortion than are born alive. A large portion of politicians believe murdering half of all Black babies is not enough, it is deficient! "There are three things that are never satisfied, four never say, 'Enough!' The grave, the barren womb, the earth that is not satisfied with water—and the fire never says, 'Enough!'" (Prov. 30:15-16). A devouring fire is never satisfied. Burning half the fuel is not enough—it wants more! A fire seeks to burn all and only goes out by reason of loss of fuel. So are those who hate innocent life. One half of minority children being slaughtered is "deficient." When will it be enough? There is only one way—when all are consumed and there are no more to murder.

Lust of the Eyes: The concept of devouring fire and abortion is not a new idea. In ancient Canaan, there was a horrific idol named Molech. God warned His people Israel against engaging in the barbaric idolatry of Molech in several places including Leviticus 18:21 and 20:3-5. And yet, the people quickly fell into the sin of worshipping Molech along with the Baals, Chemosh, and Asheroths who seem to have utilized overlapping practices of requiring blood at the hands of their

worshippers (see 1 Kgs. 18:25-29 and 2 Kgs. 2:26-27).

In 1 Kings 11:7, Solomon in his multiplication of wives built a high place for Molech outside Jerusalem. In 2 Kings 21:6, King Manasseh of Judah offered his son through fire as a sacrifice to false gods. Molech required the shedding of the innocent blood of children at the hands of their parents. The blood was shed by burning the child alive in the devouring fire of the idol.

A twelfth century rabbi named Schlomo Yitzchak wrote a commentary on Topheth (Molech) mentioned in Jeremiah 7:31 and gave this description of the practice:

Topheth is Moloch, which was made of brass; and they heated him from his lower parts; and his hands being stretched out, and made hot, they put the child between his hands, and it was burnt; when it vehemently cried out; but the priests beat a drum, that the father might not hear the voice of his son, and his heart might not be moved.

This horrific practice, of which the Lord says, "I commanded not...neither came it into my mind" (Jer. 19:5 kjv), was one of the primary reasons that Judah was destroyed by Babylon. The lust of the eyes towards the idols of the world and their worship always comes with the shedding of innocent blood, one of the seven things the Lord hates (Prov. 6:16-17). Similar practices are recorded throughout history in places such as Carthage and portions of the Roman empire.

Today, as children are sacrificed to the gods of this world, their parents turn up loud music in their cars or on their headphones to drown out the words of God presented by Christians on the street warning them of the cries of their little ones that call to their parents and their Creator for help and protection! So it was many years ago as the babies screamed in the flaming arms of the idol Molech that the priests beat the drums and blew the trumpets drowning out the cries of agony.

Pride of Life: "Reproductive justice!" "Bodily autonomy!" "International human rights!" "Women's health!" Such are the rallying cries of the wicked as they lead their followers to murder their own

flesh and blood. Like the “Answer to the Jewish Question” of Hitler’s Nazi Germany, so the euphemisms of our day are the death sentences of millions of innocents. Why? The wicked in his pride persecutes the poor (Psa. 10:2).

Psalm 10 teaches that the wicked in their pride think God doesn’t know, see, or care what they do, and through vain words they carry out atrocities on the innocent. This foolish pride is a root of the sin of abortion.

Abortion: Its Cause

When lust conceives it brings forth sin. When sin is finished it brings death. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life have conceived together to bring forth sin in the form of abortion. Their fruit has largely been born through deceit.

In my experience at several Atlanta abortion mills, few if any parents en route to murder their children have ever thought about shedding innocent blood. They have never thought about minority abortions as a percentage of the minority population. They may have never heard of “bodily autonomy,” and in the many conversations with folks, I have never heard that term used in their own defense. What they have said are things like this:

- If the life in the womb seems to be an inconvenience, then the right thing to do is to abort.
- There is no moral issue with abortion as the baby is not “viable.”
- The mom’s choice to abort is a valid choice.
- God understands their difficult decision and will accept or at least forgive them if it is wrong.
- It is better to end the baby’s life than to lose friendships over pregnancy.
- It is better to abort the child than to raise the child without a father.
- No one can judge their decision, as God says, “Judge not lest ye be judged.”

What these ideas have in common is that each is false. Those who believe these things and practice their belief have been deceived by the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

When the lusts of the world are conceived, they deceive many to carry out sin. Sin when it brings forth fruit leads to death. Millions upon millions of children have died and are still dying because parents and abortion providers have been deceived by lies of the wicked one and are acting out those lies in the murder and killing of their own and others’ children.

This is what the devil subtly came to do: steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). Those that participate in such murder are demonstrating two things: 1) they are children of their father the devil, and 2) they do not have eternal life abiding in them, for murderers “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21).

Abortion: Its Defeat

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”
(1 Corinthians 6:11).

There are many individuals and groups today that call themselves “pro-life.” Some mean by this that they are for laws that limit and restrict abortion. Others mean that they want mothers to know that they have other options besides abortion. Still others consider mothers to be victims of abortion and want to help rescue them. None of these ideas will hinder the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life. They will not defeat Satan, his deceit, and his deceived children from bearing forth the fruit of their sin, which is death. There is only one way that sin is defeated, and it is not found in politicians, laws, or slogans. Sin is defeated by a person whose name is Jesus Christ.

To those who are living in sin and murder, deceiving and being deceived, the Lord calls out from Heaven:

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. "Come now, and let us reason together," says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword"; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isa. 1:16-20).

The defeat of abortion and all sin comes from the one who bore my sin on the cross and shed His blood for me, even Jesus Christ. God has made "Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ Jesus came to save the murderer. The one who was a captive to Satan and sin Christ came to set free.

Christ did not sugarcoat sin or tell people their sin was okay, as so many are apt to do today, but He came telling them it was evil, of their father the devil, and He could set them free. How can sinners, murderers, evil men and women be set free? By repenting of their sins and believing in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. For this reason Jesus came into the world, to set the prisoner free!

The faithful proclamation of the full counsel of God and of His holiness, righteousness, perfection, glory, sacrifice, redemption, and salvation—in other words, the gospel of Jesus Christ—will defeat abortion. As the gospel goes out, lost souls are saved. As lost souls are saved, the day of the Lord is hastened. As lost souls are saved, they and their children live. As children live, the abortion doctors have no more work to carry out. Sin is defeated by Christ and His glorious gospel.

Go Ye Therefore!

Many people view the proclamation of Christ and His Word to the lost and dying at abortion

mills as folly. Just before Christmas I was surrounded by a group from another religion who told me, "God's Word that you're reading cuts people to their hearts. We don't want to do that. We want to show them love." A group then exceeding thirty people stood on the sidewalk and sang "Jingle Bells" and "The Twelve Days of Christmas" as mothers carried their children into the modern day temple of Molech to pour out their blood as a sacrifice to their own idols and lusts.

Let us not be deceived, the world and its religions—and sadly, even many in various pro-life movements—are no friends of the Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are no friends of preaching when it is preaching of the cross. They consider it foolish and powerless. Instead, they desire men's wisdom. Fifty years of men's wisdom later, abortion is alive and well. It is high time for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be preached and to give no quarter to those who would seek to stop it.

Christ sent us into the world not with wisdom of words but to preach the gospel!

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Cor. 1:18-25).

The Kingdom of Heaven has come, Satan is bound, Christ is ruling, all power in Heaven and on earth has been given unto Him, He is destroying sin and setting free those who are slaves to sin, and He is doing it by the proclamation of His Word and by His Holy Spirit. Here is how abortion is

defeated—by Jesus Christ the Lord and giver of life. Go out to the fortresses of Satan and proclaim freedom to the prisoners through that everlasting Word that cuts to the heart of men for their salvation. Christ is for you in this! Who can be against you? Make Christ known, call all to repentance and faith, and Christ will be glorified, wickedness will subside, souls will be saved, and children on the path to death will live.

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Bleating Hearts

"My sheep hear My voice" (John 10:27).



The "Bleating Hearts" section is for contributions from members of the congregation at Heritage Presbyterian Church in Royston, GA.

How Should We Understand Modern Christian Singleness?

BEN MORDECAI

Have you ever faced the introvert's dilemma? The introvert's dilemma is when you do not actually want to go to a party, but you want to have been invited. The modern single is faced with a similar dilemma: on the one hand, they are told to celebrate how free they are, bombarded with messages from magazines and Instagram about how great it is to not be tied down so they can seek the things that would give their lives meaning. On the other hand, they are reminded by countless songs and movies about how finding the love of their life is the key to happiness, or how hopeless life is after losing out on that special person.

Outside of the messages from popular culture, singleness is also treated as a benchmark for how big of a loser you are. If you are single, that must mean that you are unwanted, unloved, and unvalued. Even the word "virgin" has come to mean "loser." This is probably why young couples are known for over-the-top infatuation when they do pair up. They feel like being wanted and chosen by another serves as a validation that they are not weird. In other words, it satisfies their ego.

In the church, the situation is perhaps barely better. Christian singles are still facing the same issues as the broader culture except, perhaps, feeling pressure to forego extramarital sex. Even the Christian singles with a robust worldview and a strong, guiding faith still find that many sermons,

lessons, and church activities carry the expectation that people of a certain age will automatically be married. This leads many to feel overlooked or, worse, like they have a substandard calling as a Christian.

"Why hasn't God given me a spouse?" some ask. The answers usually given are intended to be encouraging but rarely land that way, and they usually amount to some variation of the claim that singleness is a gift.

They are told how free they are to serve in ministry, and sometimes that is true, but often the types of service they already do would be unhindered or even enhanced by being married. They are told God is teaching them patience, but they feel like they have been patient for a while. They do not want to contradict their pastor but they are left unsatisfied with the answers they are getting. Eventually, they wonder, "Is singleness really a gift?"

A wise pastor once told me that when someone asks you a theological question, you should pry in and find the personal reasons beneath it. When I consider whether singleness is a gift, I do want to answer the question, but I also want to address the real reason it was asked. They are rarely truly asking, "Is singleness a gift?" as much as they are asking, "Why hasn't God given me a husband when I want a family so badly?" Let's start with the basic question of whether singleness is a gift.

Technically, everything in the Christian life is a gift since God works together all things for the

good of those who love Him and are called according to his purposes (Rom. 8:28). While this is a profound truth and blessing, under this definition you could call getting a flat tire or getting fired from your job a gift. When Paul describes the spiritual gifts, he highlights the importance of desiring the higher gifts (1 Cor. 12:31).

Though we may have good things to say about singleness, we would not exhort Christians to seek to cultivate singleness because it is a gift. It would be more accurate to call singleness a providence that affords benefits and drawbacks depending on the situation. Most Christians have heard many lessons on the benefits, but little about the drawbacks, which weigh on them heavier.

Marriage is normative. Before sin even existed, it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). When sin was introduced it only added strain to the relationship. It did not eliminate God's original purpose. He still intends to fill the earth and subdue it (Gen. 9:1).¹ Before God created the world, He was planning a second wedding, the marriage of Christ to the Church (Eph. 5:32), which is the ultimate meaning of marriage. Practically speaking, most people want families, have sexual desire, want companionship, and would benefit from having the help or provision that a spouse could provide. Even spiritually speaking, a good spouse will encourage, lead, submit, instruct, learn from, support, pray for, meditate with, and enjoy their partner in the various ways that husbands and wives are called to do so. When compared to a good marriage, it seems deluded to think that singleness is preferable.

The single Christian has grounds for hope in their singleness. We are not Mormons who wrap up salvation with marriage.² The Christian single possesses all of the ordinary promises that Christ offers in the gospel: justification, adoption, and sanctification, "assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end."³ They also have promises that God can cause the "barren" to bear fruit (Isa. 54), to restore lost years that have seemed wasted (Joel 2:25), and that nothing sacri-

ficed for the kingdom will go unrewarded (Mark 10:29-30).⁴

Nevertheless, just as Paul encourages a Christian slave with the assurance that slavery does not hinder his Christian calling, he recognizes the value of seeking freedom when given the opportunity. In the same way, the single person has the same assurance but benefits from seeking the opportunity to marry (1 Cor. 7:21).⁵

How then should Christians seek to marry? They should ask, seek, and knock (Matt. 7:7). That is, they should become increasingly persistent in prayer, intensifying the request as time passes.

The Christian must seek to confirm or cultivate their own maturity. This requires humility and willingness to consider and act upon wise advice. For men, maturity involves demonstrating strength, workmanship, and wisdom, along with other godly virtues.⁶ For women, it involves cultivating feminine beauty, gentleness, nurturing attitudes and skills, and general pleasantness. This maturity takes work, whether it is in the gym, the office, the workshop, the kitchen, or the living room. To put it bluntly, most men are looking for a beautiful and gentle woman who can cook, and most women are looking for a strong man with good chances of career success who is kind to them. If Christians are to count others more significant than themselves (Php. 2:3), they ought to consider what kind of man or woman the person they would want to marry would want to marry.

They ought to look for opportunities to meet the kind of person they would want to marry. This involves practical activities like going to events, joining groups, and polishing their social media. They should also deliberately tell their friends, family, and church that they are interested in getting set up and they should practice making casual small talk and learning to be friendly with strangers. This is a learning process. Finding and forming healthy relationships takes time and attention. This improves with experience.

In this short essay, we explored the confused state of modern relationships: celebrating independence, fear of being alone, and the ego validation of

finding a partner. We saw that most of these problems affect the church and are met with unsatisfying answers. We asked whether singleness was a gift but decided it should instead be called a providence. We saw some benefits of singleness and put them into their proper context, but recognized that most of the blessings of singleness are general Christian blessings that apply to all. We saw that that marriage is normative and we discussed practical approaches to finding a husband or a wife by focusing on prayer, maturity, and the golden rule.

At its heart, the introvert's dilemma is self-sabotage. People who decline invitations generally stop getting them. Those who accept the invitations even when they are not excited usually realize that the real party was far better than the one they imagined. In their hearts, Christian singles know that they want marriage and that singleness is not especially a gift for them. By doing some work and enduring some discomfort, they may just enjoy it nonetheless.



Notes

1. The same mandate given to Adam before sin was given to Noah after.
2. https://www.fairlatterdaysaints.org/answers/Mormon_ordinances/Marriage/Is_it_essential
3. *Westminster Shorter Catechism* 36
4. Jesus specifically includes temporal rewards, perhaps because he is considering these blessings in light of those gained in union with the Church.
5. There is also 1 Cor. 7:32-35, which seems to put preference on singleness for the sake of undivided devotion, but the context suggests that this recommendation was influenced by the circumstances of the day (v. 26) and not necessarily for ordinary situations. Paul also celebrated his own singleness because of the liberty it gave him for his missionary journeys and since his calling more than the other apostles involved suffering.
6. <https://itsgoodtobeaman.com/about/>

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Catechism Corner

“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13).



The “Catechism Corner” is a small section containing a short commentary on a portion of the Westminster Standards.

J. G. Vos on God’s Decrees

J. G. Vos, son of the great Geerhardus Vos, here comments on Westminster Larger Catechism question twelve.

- 1. What great truth is set forth in the answer to question 12?** The truth that God has an inclusive and exact plan for the universe which he has created.
- 2. According to the Bible, when was God’s plan made?** In eternity, or before the creation of the world.
- 3. What three adjectives are used to describe the character of God’s decrees?** Wise, free, and holy.
- 4. What is meant by affirming that God’s decrees are “wise”?** This means that God’s decrees are in perfect harmony with his own perfect wisdom, which directs the use of the right means to attain right ends.
- 5. What is meant by affirming that God’s decrees are “free”?** This means that God’s decrees are not constrained or influenced by anything outside of God’s own nature.
- 6. What is meant by affirming that God’s decrees are “holy”?** This means that God’s decrees are in perfect harmony with his own perfect holiness, and therefore are utterly free from sin.
- 7. Should we regard God’s decrees as arbitrary decisions, like the heathen ideas of “fate” and “luck?”** No. God’s decrees are not “arbitrary,” for they were framed according to the counsel of his will. Back of God’s decrees is the mind and heart of the infinite, personal God; therefore they are totally unlike “fate” or “luck.”
- 8. What is the aim or purpose of God’s decrees?** The aim or purpose of God’s decrees is the manifestation of his own glory.
- 9. Is it selfish or wrong for God to seek his own glory above all else?** No, for God is the Author of all things, and all things exist for his glory. It would be selfish and sinful for human beings to seek their own glory above all else; but since God is the highest being, and there is no being higher than God, it is proper that God should seek his own glory.
- 10. What is the nature of God’s decrees?** God’s decrees are unchangeable; they cannot be changed; therefore they are certain to be fulfilled (Ps. 33:11).
- 11. What do God’s decrees include?** God’s decrees are all-inclusive; they include everything that ever happens.
- 12. Prove from the Bible that God’s decrees include what are commonly called accidental or “chance” happenings.** Proverbs 16:33; Jonah 1:7; Acts 1:24, 26; 1 Kings 22:28, 34; Mark 14:30.
- 13. Prove from the Bible that God’s decrees include even the sinful acts of men.** Genesis 45:5, 8; 50:20; 1 Samuel 2:25; Acts 2:23. In affirming, as

the Bible plainly teaches, that God's decrees include even the sinful acts of men, we must carefully guard against two errors: (a) God's decree does not make God the author of sin nor render him responsible for sin; (b) the fact of God's foreordination does not cancel man's responsibility for his own sins. The Bible teaches both God's foreordination and man's responsibility. Therefore we should believe and affirm both although we frankly recognize that we cannot fully harmonize the two. If we give up belief in either God's foreordination or man's responsibility, we immediately become involved in gross errors which contradict the Bible's teaching at many points. It is better and wiser to accept what the Bible teaches in simple faith and confess "a holy ignorance" concerning secret mysteries which have not been revealed, such as the solution of the problem of divine foreordination and human responsibility.

14. What is the difference between foreordination and predestination? Foreordination is a term for all God's decrees concerning anything whate-

ver that comes to pass in the created universe; predestination concerns God's decrees regarding the eternal destiny of angels and men.

15. Why do many people object to the doctrine of God's decrees? Most objections to this doctrine are based not on Scripture, but on human reasoning or philosophy. It is common for those who oppose the doctrine to set up an absurd caricature of it and then demolish it with a great show of indignation. In dealing with a question of this kind no argument that does not take up, thoroughly and in detail, the various Scripture passages on which the doctrine is based can be of any weight against the doctrine of God's decrees. Human opinions, reasonings, and philosophy are of no weight whatever against the statements of God's Word.

Johannes G. Vos, *The Westminster Larger Catechism: A Commentary*, ed. G. I. Williamson (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 2002), 29-31.



Book Reviews

“Of making many books there is no end” (*Ecclesiastes 12:12*).



Various. *The Pastor: His Call, Character, and Work*. Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2020.

The Lord Jesus Christ once said, “Every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old” (Matt. 13:52). The treasures from “the friends of Old Princeton” contained in this short collection of lectures display afresh the timeless truths related to—and desperately needed in—the Christian ministry. While the biographical sketches at the conclusion of the book are worth the purchase price alone, there is great usefulness in the entire volume.

For a man wrestling with a call to ministry, the opening address from William Plumer serves as an exceedingly helpful catalog of considerations. In this writer’s mind, J. W. Alexander’s profound, eleven-part explication of the excellencies of Christ’s character stands above all the entries. Having read that chapter, one will learn more experientially why the hearts of the saints on the road to Emmaus burned so hotly (Luke 24:32).

Archibald Alexander and Charles Hodge both outline the various and necessary virtues of ministers. These chapters will prove refreshing, convicting, or both, either for the young minister or for one well advanced in years and experience. In our age of doctrinal decline and compromise, both Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller speak with prophetic relevance in their stirring calls to fidelity to the Holy Scriptures and sound doctrine.

Ashbel Green reminds the reader that the Lord of grace still uses the foolish message of the cross to save the lost and edify the saints. With great eloquence, he explains that to preach Christ crucified is not to restrict proclamation to a naked

or narrow fact of history, but rather to announce the whole counsel of God as it relates to and terminates upon the person and work of Jesus. Green said, “The doctrine of Christ crucified, was the *sun* of the apostle’s theological system, which imparted lustre to every other truth” (187). The final address by Nicholas Murray is a rousing and needful call to piety among those given the privilege of serving as ministers in Christ’s church.

The Pastor is not merely “a word spoken in due season” (Prov. 15:23), but a compendium of words that honor the King and Head of the church and call His ministers to steadfastness and holiness in their eternally significant work. One final note: while especially poignant for pastors, this volume will be of great help to all Christians. It is highly recommended.

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McGraw, Ryan M. *Knowing the Trinity: Practical Thoughts for Daily Life*. Lancaster, PA: The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, 2017.

Knowing the Trinity is a thought-provoking book that will transform how you think of many of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. It looks methodically at the work of each individual Person of the Trinity, and teaches the reader that at the foundation of Christianity lies in the doctrine of the Trinity.

In *Knowing the Trinity*, Dr. McGraw’s aim was to “furnish the reader with the tools needed to build a Trinitarian faith, to cultivate a Trinitarian piety, and to live a godly life in fellowship with the

Triune God” (22). He began by giving a definition of Trinitarian piety, outlining the centrality of the Trinity in our relationship to God and man. He then showed how the New Testament is painted upon the canvas of the Trinity and how it proves the doctrine of the Trinity. In chapter three, Dr. McGraw broadly outlined the Father’s plan of salvation, the Spirit’s application of salvation, and the Son’s purchase of salvation. At that juncture the book started a section on knowing the Father, wherein Dr. McGraw expounds on how the Father saved us by blessing us with Christ, electing and adopting us in Christ, all to the praise of His glorious Grace. After his brief section on the Father, McGraw begins on a more lengthy section about knowing the Son. The Son saves people from their sins to the uttermost, by His blood, for His Father’s glory, and therefore Jesus must be preeminent in our affections, and we must seek to cultivate communion with Him. *Knowing the Trinity* then went on to look at Jesus’ incarnation, His life and ministry, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension. In each of these chapters, the Triune work of God in these landmark occasions in Jesus’ life was highlighted. Dr. McGraw subsequently explains how the Spirit saves us by demonstrating that the Spirit enables us to receive Christ, the Spirit seals our redemption in Christ, and that the Spirit is the guarantee of our heavenly inheritance. He then speaks of adoption, corporate prayer, the church, Spiritual gifts, worship, the ministry, and the sacraments. Dr. McGraw aptly explains how the Trinity is at the heart of each of these topics. The book concludes with looking at the benediction in 2 Corinthians 13:13-14. All three persons of the Godhead bless us, for “Christ is the door through which God enters into fellowship with us,” “The Father blesses us in that “He represents the love of the entire Godhead” and “The Spirit is the bond of fellowship between God and our souls” (112-113).

In *Knowing the Trinity*, Dr. McGraw gives the reader an invaluable new lens with which to read Scripture and which magnifies the work of the Trinity. He brings the doctrine of the Trinity to life in the mind of the reader by practically applying it to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith.

While some may consider the doctrine of the Trinity stuffy, they will not have the same frame of mind after reading this practical treatise on the Trinity. The section on “Knowing the Son” was particularly enlightening when Dr. McGraw demonstrated that the work of Son on earth was in fact accompanied by the work of the Father and of the Spirit. In a skillfully simple but profound way, Dr. McGraw shows believers “how to love the Triune God better by bringing the Trinitarian background of Scripture to the foreground” (13). I would certainly commend this book to any believer interested in knowing more of this essential truth of Christianity that is at the heart of doctrine, church, and the Christian life.

Dr. McGraw stated in his preface that when teaching the things in this book, “most people had never seen the Trinity behind so many teachings in the Bible. Once they do, they testify that the Gospel comes to life in ways that they never could have imagined” (13). In light of the knowledge of the enlivened Christianity, we must turn now to building a Trinitarian faith, cultivating a Trinitarian piety, and living a life in communion with the Triune God.

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**Dabney, Robert Lewis. *Sacred Rhetoric*.
Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee
of Publication, 1870.**

Many a book has been written about preaching. Few are exhaustive. Even fewer are masterful. In Robert Lewis Dabney’s *Sacred Rhetoric* (in later editions called *Evangelical Eloquence*), we have practically an exhaustive manual for Christian preaching written by a master.

Dabney was the premier Southern Presbyterian theologian. It was once said in a review of W. G. T. Shedd’s *Reformed Dogmatics*, that the three greatest minds America every produced were Jonathan Edwards, W. G. T. Shedd, and Robert Lewis

Dabney. In everything he wrote, his brilliance shines brightly. Such is the case with this work.

Dabney begins by discussing what it is a preacher is supposed to be about, which is based upon who he is supposed to be. Namely, “the preacher is a herald; his work is heralding the King’s message” (36). He does this through *eloquence*: “the emission of the soul’s energy through speech” (32). This is not just any speech; it is speech meant to move God’s people to think God’s thoughts, do God’s will, and believe God’s gospel.

Dabney speaks of virtually every conceivable aspect of sermonizing and preaching. He speaks of the various parts of a sermon, which are “Textual Fidelity, Unity, Instructiveness, Evangelical Tone, Movement, Point and Order” (105). He talks about what makes a good argument in a sermon. He discusses the art of persuasion, the preacher’s character, style, movement, action, and even ends with very helpful remarks about public prayer. (Anyone who has read Samuel Miller’s *Thoughts on Public Prayer* will appreciate Dabney’s summarizing bullet points.)

The most impressive thing about this work is the fact that Dabney exhibits with great skill the very qualities he is endeavoring to teach. In a word, the book itself is *eloquent*. This is what shows Dabney to be a true master of his art.

Anyone wishing to improve their preaching, or even their public speaking skills, is highly encouraged to read this book (along with all of Dabney’s works!). It comes in a nice edition from The Banner of Truth Trust, but can also be found online for free, being in the public domain.

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Veith, Jr., Gene Edward. *Post-Christian: A Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020.

Gene Edward Veith wrote *Post-Christian* as a sequel to his 1994 work *Postmodern Times*. The

book contains his reflection and analysis of philosophical, anthropological, social, and religious developments over the three intervening decades. Before briefly discussing the content matter of this book, I offer this general description. Carl Trueman’s recent tome, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*, identifies many of the philosophical underpinnings responsible for driving our society to its present condition. *Post-Christian* takes many of those abstract concepts that Trueman helpfully identified and shows how they are coming into expression in our day. Although Veith does not appear to depend upon Trueman’s work specifically, these two volumes complement one another well. In fact, if the reader is daunted by the density of philosophy from Trueman, Veith’s book will explain what the results look like without extensive examination of how those results came to be. Regarding the title, Veith does not argue that Christianity has come to an end. Rather, he endeavors to discuss “what we are left with when we try to abandon the Christian worldview” (18).

Post-Christian will prove helpful to many Christians. Veith matter-of-factly introduces his readers to an array of categories and concepts about which there is much naïvety and/or ignorance in the church. For instance, he discusses the subject of transhumanism in chapter six. This concept refers to melding humans with machines and technology in an attempt to transcend the natural limitations of humanity. He also addresses the increasing prevalence and moral problems with things like sperm donation (150), pornography, sex robots (111-112), genetic engineering (116-124), and even artificial wombs (124). These words and concepts may shock and even offend readers. However, this world in which we live resembles the degeneracy of Sodom more and more. Christians—and especially elders within the church—must at the very least be aware of these issues. While we pray and work for reformation of the church and the good of the places in which we live (Jer. 29:7), we also need to know that these movements and developments will pose serious questions and even threats to biblical Christianity. God’s people must seek to be as wise as serpents in the midst of wolves (Matt. 10:16).

Veith also offers insightful criticisms of feminism and the sexual revolution. He rightly connects feminism to the homosexual and transsexual movements. Regarding transgenderism, he explains how it actually destroys what many have claimed the goals of feminism are: “But once males and females are fully interchangeable, feminism too ceases to exist” (147). Another strength of Veith’s work is how he applies the Word of God to these various challenges of our day. In his discussion about artificial intelligence and singularity (256-266), Veith exposes the movement to be nothing other than technologically advanced idolatry. Citing from Isaiah 44:14-22, he clearly demonstrates how it will ultimately come to nothing.

Some of the observations Veith makes in *Post-Christian* sound frightening and dystopian. Many of the facts and statistics he presents are quite disheartening. However, he encourages Christian readers that they have no reason for despair. The bleakness of the “post-Christian world” stands in sharp contrast to the glory of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. The book ends on this very theme, “The succession of ages and movements are all in his hands—premodern, modern, postmodern, post-Christian, post-secular, and whatever will come next” (307). As with everything, read with discernment, but I definitely recommend this work.

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