



The **Authority**
of **Scripture**

A Place for Truth

Jeffrey Stivason, editor



ALLIANCE OF CONFESSING EVANGELICALS

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INTERVIEW¹

Jonathan Master:² Our guest today is one of the scheduled speakers at this year's Blue Ridge Bible Conference: husband of Catriona Trueman, pastor of Cornerstone Presbyterian Church, author of many books, and co-host of *Mortification of Spin*. He also holds the Paul Wooley Chair of Church History at Westminster Theological Seminary.* Carl Trueman, thank you for joining us today.

Carl Trueman:³ It's great to be here, Jonathan.

JM: You're delivering an address at this upcoming conference titled "J. Gresham Machen and the Authority of Scripture." First, who was Machen?

CT: J. Gresham Machen was the founding father of WTS (where I work) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (where I serve as a local pastor). He was a confessional Presbyterian, intimately involved in the early 20th century conflict between Fundamentalists and Modernists, Confessionalists and broad Evangelicals, and different factions within Princeton Theological Seminary and the Presbyterian Church. He ultimately led a separation from the Northern Presbyterian Church in 1936 to form the OPC.

JM: So why are the events of Machen's life and his writings still relevant today?

CT: They are still relevant because Machen focused on the basic essentials of the Christian faith, making a fundamental distinction between Christianity and Modernism. Machen saw Christianity as a fundamentally supernatural religion; if your Christianity has no place for the supernatural (e.g. the incarnation, the resurrection), then it is not really Christianity. That is a question which Christians

* Dr. Trueman has since taken a position as professor of humanities at Grove City College.

face in all times and all places. It is a basic dividing line: "do you believe that Christ rose from the dead supernaturally?"

JM: In the evangelical church today, those who would identify themselves as evangelicals would answer that question, "Yes, we're supernaturalists." To what extent then are some of Machen's writings relevant even to battles within the evangelical church?

CT: That's a good question, and we could answer in a number of ways. First, Machen was acutely aware that Christianity, at the level of the Church's testimony, requires a certain irrevocable complexity—that "mere Christianity" as the testimony of a church or any individual Christian simply cannot sustain itself as orthodox over the long term. The doctrines all depend on one another; downplay or remove one—say, mess up your doctrine of the Trinity—and sooner or later everything else is going to collapse.

Secondly, Machen's emphasis on the inspiration of Scripture was very important. In his view, Scripture is not merely a document that witnesses to divine revelation; rather, Scripture is itself a species of divine revelation. It is the revelation of God, and it exists in this form because that is what God wished to reveal of Himself to us.

Thirdly, Machen does not simply ask whether Christianity is supernatural; he also asks "what difference does it make?" One could, for example, think of certain high-profile prosperity preachers today. If you ask them "Did Jesus rise from the dead on the third day?" they will probably answer, "Yes, I believe that!" But what's the personal significance of that? What does that mean? Why does it make a difference if He didn't rise from the dead on the third day? I think this gets down into Machen's key point: doctrine is not just true, but also has profound, existential significance for Christians.

JM: It sounded like, in the first thing you mentioned, that Machen is arguing for a thick, doctrinally-rich expression of the faith in the local church. In the third thing you mentioned, he is trying to make clear what all the implications for these core truths are.

CT: I think that is a fair way of putting it. Luther made a similar

distinction: it is one thing to believe that Jesus rose from the dead—it's another thing to believe that He rose from the dead for my sins. That's the kind of thing that I think Machen is pressing home. On one side, he hits the liberals who deny the supernatural. On the other side, he offers a rebuke to fuzzy-minded evangelicals who think they can reduce the faith to a half-dozen basic doctrines, or who do not think through the implications of their doctrines for themselves and for the Church.

JM: It seems like you think Machen is worth reading today for pastors, elders, even lay people within the Church, precisely because he makes these distinctions so clear and draws out their implications. So, if I want to read Machen, where should I start?

CT: Well, I think the basic place to start is a little book called *Christianity and Liberalism*. It is a sharply-written book that makes that fundamental distinction I mentioned, between supernatural Christianity and everything else pretending to be Christianity. In that book, Machen deals with the Bible, the Church, the doctrine of Jesus Christ... its a massively insightful piece of clear, concise writing that lays out for the reader just what is at stake. I would also recommend Darryl Hart's book, *Defending the Faith*, which is an intellectual biography of Machen. Hart does a great job of setting Machen in his historical and ecclesiastical context, which allows you to read something like *Christianity and Liberalism* in a more historically-informed way.

JM: Last question, Carl: I'm wondering about these implications that you have referred to on several occasions. "Machen does a good job of drawing out the implications of the bodily resurrection of Christ, the implications of our supernaturalism, the implications of the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Can you explain a couple of those implications? What kinds of things are we talking about here?"

CT: For example, if you believe that the Bible is a divinely-inspired document, then your approach to the Bible is going to be fundamentally different than to any other book on the face of the earth. That Book is going to have authority as the speech of God, authority in a way that no other book ever could. You are not going

to simply allow it to stand in a relative position to other pieces of ancient near-eastern/classical literature.

The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, what does that mean for us? Well, it shows us in no uncertain terms the depth of our own sin, the depth of the human problem; that *we are sinners*, and that we are going to die because of our sin and the face judgment. Christ's death and resurrection reveals the awesome and terrifying nature of sin and death to us. But it also points us to the fact that God is overwhelmingly gracious. Here is a God who acted on our behalf and in our place, to bring us back into communion with Him. When I read about the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, it's not the same to me as reading about the death of Napoleon.

Napoleon's death is a historical fact, but it has no significance in indicating to me who I am before God; the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ does.

SHEPHERDING THE FLOCK

Jeffrey Stivason⁴

Some words are hard to like, and for a number of reasons. You might dislike a word because it is tricky to spell, like “handkerchief” (thank you, autocorrect!). Maybe you are embarrassed by a word because you cannot remember what it means (how about “inchoate?”). Some might avoid a word because it lies far outside their normal vocabulary, while others avoid a word because it has been snatched by an opposing ideological group (I’m looking at you, “meditation”).

I think that the word “authority” fits this hard-to-like category, though not because it is difficult to spell or to remember; rather because our culture has taught us that “authority” is a bad word. For example, a shoe commercial can cajole us to challenge authority by being different. And why not? Authority can be angry, restrictive, even unjust (we are told). It is no wonder our culture has trouble with the word. The problem is that the Church’s view of authority is not much better. For some Christians, authority resides in the opinion of a single hierarchical figure. For others, a “me and my Bible” attitude reigns. And between those two poles we find a host of other unhelpful views.

So, what should authority in the Church to look like?

First, authority ought to arise from an authoritative source. There is a logical fallacy called the argument from authority (*argumentum ad verecundiam*). A debater may employ this fallacy to call foul on an opponent who appeals to an authority who has no expertise in the field under discussion. Therefore, on the basis of Christ’s infallible authority we believe the Bible to be God’s infallible authority for the Church. The Church must begin where the author of the Church begins. For the Church to start anywhere else would be foolhardy.

Second, the visible exercise of Biblical authority has been committed to elders in Christ's absence. Clearly, this is the reason for Paul's encouragement to appoint elders who have been raised up by the Spirit in every church. Furthermore, the author of Hebrews says of these elders, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account" (Hebrews 13:17a). In other words, the elders' exercise of authority must be accord with Biblical authority.

Third, the character of Biblical authority is best described as *ministerial* rather than *magisterial*. The elder in Christ's Church is not a judge in a court of law. Yes, there are similarities between an elder and a judge. Both derive their authority from another source; neither the judge nor the elder is the author of the law. However, there is an important difference. The judge uses force, whereas the elder uses persuasion to bring about good or godly behavior. The elder does not rule as the gentiles; has no power to lock a person in the pen. This raises yet another difference: Biblical authority must train the elder so that others can see its effect on him. An elder unaffected by Biblical authority is not going to be very persuasive!

Brothers and sisters, this sort of godly authority is something we should embrace. We need this type of authority, because of our sinful tendency to be self-centered. Sin's power has been broken in us, but sin's presence remains. We almost invariably believe that we know best. We think that the elders don't understand, and therefore cannot give us good counsel. Sin clouds the eyes and leads us to think that *we* are the authority. So, the next time that you are tempted to challenge godly elders who are exercising Biblical authority, remember to "let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Hebrews 13:17b).

AUTHORITY AND TRADITION

Michael Matossian⁵

In the protestant family of churches, the phrase “church tradition” raises a red flag and is almost immediately rejected as an assault on the Bible’s authority. After all, *Sola Scriptura* is a key protestant rallying cry. At the same time, our churches have a plethora of their own traditions—practices and beliefs we embrace without much thought. For example, many churches celebrate the Lord’s Supper monthly as opposed to weekly. Someone in those churches at some point gave the question thought, came to a conclusion, and the church adopted it. But, most of us simply accept the monthly celebration as a given and go with it without a clear understanding—I’ve certainly been guilty of that myself! If we simply “go with it,” haven’t we adopted tradition in some form? That being the case, rather than rejecting all tradition, the question is whether there is legitimate tradition that upholds biblical authority.

During the 16th century, partly in response to the growing protestant movement, the Roman Catholic Church initiated the Council of Trent that met, off and on, from 1545 to 1563. In 1546, Trent issued a decree concerning the canon of Scripture that officially and formally recognized the authoritative place of unwritten traditions which were believed to be dictated by Christ or the Spirit. These unwritten traditions were handed down by Christ and the Apostles “and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession.” Although the Council debated whether revelation was contained partly in Scripture and partly in tradition, the decision made adopted a broader, more ambiguous statement that the truths and rules from God “are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions.” Whether one takes the view that all revelation is found partly in Scripture and partly in tradition or fully in both, tradition is

considered as authoritative a source of God's revelation as Scripture. At the same time, the Council of Trent reaffirmed the Catholic commitment that no individual may interpret Scripture contrary to the "Holy Mother Church." What this means is, even though tradition is given a place on par with Scripture, the real authority rests with the magisterium—the Church's teaching and doctrinal authority of the ordained hierarchy.

Protestants reject the existence of revelation in a standalone oral tradition. For example, the Westminster Confession of Faith declares, "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men" (WCF 1.6). The entirety of what is needed for belief and behavior is clearly and sufficiently delivered by God in Scripture. If that's the case, can there be, in any sense, legitimate church tradition? I'd like to suggest two ways there can with one critical proviso: neither of the two is inspired revelation from God. Both may carry authority in the church, but neither can claim inspiration, inerrancy, or direct divine communication.

First, confessional statements are legitimate church tradition. Confessional statements include creeds, catechisms, confessions of faith, and other officially recognized church documents that express and clarify the beliefs of a church. When each expression of a faith or duty commitment is shown either explicitly or "by good and necessary consequence" to come from Scripture, that statement is a legitimately authoritative tradition. Confessional statements codify key biblical truths to make them quickly and easily accessible and so function as a rule or standard of faith. Even though they express biblical truths and principles, not being Scripture themselves, we call them tradition.

Second, church practices derived directly from Scripture or from principles of Scripture are legitimate tradition. Here I'm thinking of the "regulative principle of worship"—we ought worship God

only in ways He commands. This is a protective principle meant to keep illegitimate, conscience-binding tradition from being foisted on anyone. Those who codified the regulative principle in the Westminster Confession also insisted that gathered worship must include reading and preaching of God's word, singing, prayer, etc. Reading Scripture, preaching, singing, and praying are all practices I call tradition. These are legitimate traditions because they come from God's word. But, to engage in them and employ them in our worship doesn't require we prove repeatedly that they are called for by Scripture. Rather, they are settled issues—a form of tradition.

Whether settled practices or confessional statements, legitimate church tradition is a tool to uphold biblical authority, not replace it.

AUTHORITY AND CHURCH POLITY

Martin Blocki⁶

I am a Presbyterian minister. Having served in the courts of the church now for 14 years, I have come to the uncomfortable conclusion that Proverbs 29:25 speaks to every presbyter:

The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe (Proverbs 29:25).

Presbyteries in my denomination have the following charge given to them by our constitution:

"It is the duty of the presbytery to maintain a faithful supervision over all the congregations within its bounds and to provide for presbyterial visitation, to guard against any teaching contrary to sound doctrine and any corruption of the worship of God, and to institute presbyterial discipline when necessary."⁷

The need to "guard against any teaching contrary to sound doctrine and any corruption of the worship of God" is the regular business of Presbytery each time it meets to conduct business. Presbytery:

1. *examines* students under care related to their soundness in the faith and their ability to articulate it.
2. *debates* papers proposing changes to doctrine and practice.
3. *adjudicates* discipline cases, sometimes involving the holding, or promulgation, of positions contrary to the adopted doctrines of the church.

To borrowing a phrase taken out of context: *Who is sufficient for these things?* (2 Corinthians 2:16).

The question needs to be asked by every Presbyter: What happens when the courts of the church function well? Although a much larger list could be developed, consider four things:

1. The truth of the Gospel is preserved. Thus:
 - Unbelievers come to faith (Romans 10:17), the kingdom of God is built (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:12).
 - The people of God are set free. (John 8:32)
 - God's people glorify Him as His law is written on their hearts and minds. (Jeremiah 31:33)
2. The people of God are preserved from the damage incurred by the applications of false teaching (Titus 1:11, Acts 20:29). They will "no longer be children, tossed to and from by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes" (Ephesians 4:14).
3. The people of God are equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17, Ephesians 4:12). Thus, God receives the praise due His name (1 Peter 2:12, 2 Corinthians 9:13).
4. Unity is achieved and enjoyed (Ephesians 4:13).

The work of Presbytery is essential work to the work of Gospel faithfulness!

The importance of the work of the presbytery cannot be overstated. As individual presbyters, men must solemnly commit to personal submission to the authority of the Scriptures. Personal friendships, potential ecclesiastical advantages, a desire to be seen as "reasonable" or "loving & encouraging to students under care", all must be subordinated to a commitment to serve the King of the Church, the LORD Jesus Christ, and by doing this presbyters imitate the great shepherd, who laid down His life for the church. The church is the precious bride of Christ. Personal ambition, comfort, or pride have no place in the thinking of the Presbyter. Rather, a desire to ensure the good of the people of God entrusted by the great Shepherd to our care must rule our thinking and actions. This desire will come only as Presbyters are individually submitted to the authority of the Scripture. In turn, the authority of the Scriptures will rule

collectively as presbyters meet together in constituted court.

Recognizing that the fear of man is a snare and that this snare will harm the people of God (in the context of presbytery decisions), I have determined to endeavor to speak and vote my conscience without consideration of what my fellow Presbyters think of me. Do I do this perfectly? Regrettably, I do not. So, with Paul, I repent and then forgetting about what lies behind, I press on to the goal (Philippians 3:12, 14). My prayer is the my fellow presbyters in all Presbyterian denominations will do the same.

AUTHORITY AND PREACHING

*Tim Bertolet**

"The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God." This line from the Second Helvetic Confession summarizes how we should think of the biblical authority exercised in the pulpit. We see this concept reflected in Scripture, when someone preaches they are bringing the Word of God with authority.

Consider that Scripture itself is breathed out by God. It is God's own words:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16)

Because of what the Bible is, Paul can give the solemn charge to Timothy, and by extension, it is applied to all who bear the office of elder in the life of the church:

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. (2 Timothy 4:1-2)

This is no small charge. Paul charges Timothy under God and Jesus Christ to whom the pastor is ultimately accountable. The preacher is to bring the Word of God. In proclaiming this Word, the preacher has the authority to reprove, rebuke, and exhort. This is to be carried out with patience, not to beat up the sheep. It is an act of teaching and instructing.

The reason the preacher can reprove, rebuke, and exhort is because

the Word of God is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness. The Word of God does the work. The Word of God bears the authority for what the preacher says. At the same time, the minister in the pulpit has the responsibility to use the Word of God in every way that God has intended for His Word.

This leads to several implications:

First, the preacher must stay close to the text of Scripture. One cannot just step into the pulpit, say what he wishes, and claim 'thus saith the Lord.' Perhaps one reason we have lost the vision for biblical authority in the pulpit is because so many pastors today give mere talks that have little if any actual connection to the Bible. If you are not explaining what the text says and means, no amount of citing Bible verses will make your message preaching. There is no Word of God proclaimed when the Bible is not read and expounded.

Second, the preacher only has the authority to bind the conscience where Scripture binds the conscience. Not only must the preacher stick to the Word of God, he cannot go beyond what is written when he corrects, reprovcs, and rebukes. The preacher must draw conclusions that are both good and necessary. For example, he can say with biblical authority that it is sin to look at Internet pornography even when there is no concept of the Internet in Scripture. However, he cannot say with biblical authority that one should never go to movies even if some movies are questionable or sinful. The authority from the pulpit must be tied to the Scriptures.

Third, the pastor is preaching the Word but not bringing a new word. Many pastors take notes or manuscripts into the pulpit. As a pastor, my notes are not new Scriptures nor is my manuscript authoritative. We must listen as faithful "Bereans" (Acts 17:11). We are to hear the Word of God and receive it with joy, but we also open our Bibles and follow along with the passage being preached and expounded. As the pastor explains the Word of God, we are not to hold ourselves in authority over the Word (or the pastor) but sit under the proclamation of the Bible. The preacher is not inerrant; no man is perfect. At the same time, to hear the faithful exposition of Scripture is to hear God's Word proclaimed. The distinction must be stressed

in our culture: listening to biblical preaching is not listening to a message about God's Word, it is hearing God's Word with all His authority being brought to bear on the listener.

Fourth, the Word is to be proclaimed and heard. Paul says "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). There is something unique that goes on in the preaching of the Word of God in the church by men duly ordained as elders. God has established his church. God has established the offices in the church. And God has established preaching as the means of nourishing the church. There is an authority that comes in preaching. With God's authority the preacher is announcing and telling God's Word, calling people in the Gospel to repent, and exhorting them through the Holy Spirit to obey God. Biblical counseling, small group Bible studies, and personal or family devotions are all good things but none of them bear the same weight and authority of biblical preaching. In a truly constituted church, there can be no substitute for the authority of Bible proclaimed from the pulpit.

THE SWEETNESS OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

David Garner⁹

The first Psalm sets the stage for the entire Psalter. Its attention on the covenant God and covenant blessing and cursing, as well as its preoccupation with God's Word as the source for our understanding, focus the entire Psalter. In fact, as scholars like O. Palmer Robertson have contended, Psalms 1 and 2 serve as the "pillar or gates" to the whole edifice of the Psalter.¹⁰ They are the great building blocks that support the whole.

The Psalms, as Luther contended, do even more. He loved the Psalms, and in his study of them, found in them a snapshot of the whole of the first testament of divine revelation. He understood the book of Psalms to summarize the entire Old Testament.

If the Psalms express the treasures of the entire canon of God's first words to His people, and Psalms 1 and 2 support the weight of the entire Psalter, these opening words deserve particular attention. On its own, Psalm 1 calls us compellingly to soak our hearts in God's Word. Understood as the architectural footer for the entire book of Psalms, the Psalm's call to meditate on the Word of God "day and night" (v. 3) delivers even greater urgency. And as the Psalmist will have us know, neither biblical meditation nor biblical satisfaction is optional!

Let's get more specific here. Why must we attend to this Word? Why must we "delight in the law of the Lord" (v. 3)? The answer is built right into this description itself. We must relish it, precisely because of what it is. While the Psalm offers words of ultimate benefit from immersion in Scripture (vv. 3–6), the ultimate reason for our holy absorption in God's instruction is because it is the Lord's. Because

God is God, we must meditate on this personal Word, relish in it, listen to it, and walk by it.

My life consists of a great deal of travel. Those who don't travel often believe travel is glamorous. Those who do travel regularly know it is not. But for me there is at least one very big plus, a travel perk towering above any other. This benefit comes from no airline mileage account, no hotel point program, no car rental agency trying to persuade me that I am a five-star customer, and certainly no airport restaurant offering me a sorry excuse for a meal that is triple a reasonable price.

The benefit is far more personal than any capitalist enterprise could offer. Sometimes I find it in my suitcase. Sometimes it appears in my Yahoo inbox. Wherever it appears, it brings contentment, joy, and even palpable strength for the journey. My wife often takes time to write me notes—some long, some short. All of them are worthy of close attention and often multiple re-readings. Why do they compel me so much? Because of their author. These words deliver sustenance and encouragement, because the one whom I love and who loves me has written them. My love has taken time to speak, and I cannot wait to listen.

The parallel here is not without note. God has spoken. All Scripture is breathed out by God (2 Timothy 3:16). The Psalms, from the outset, indicate that God has spoken. But more than that, Scripture clearly affirms that God has spoken to us. Using the covenant name of God, the first Psalm tells us that the Word we have comes from our Lord—the covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. Think of it. Our God, the One who is in the heavens and does as He pleases (Psalm 115:3), has written us. His words lovingly address us, and it has pleased him to write.

While life travels often take us places we would rather not go, and while the aspirations the world offers show themselves shallow and dissatisfying, we as God's people enjoy the words of our God and Father; He has spoken to us. Such a fact ought to spark joy, thanksgiving, and delight to walk in His wise ways. His words bring sustenance and encouragement.

Remember, rejecting the popular laws of unbelief (v. 1) does not come to us as blunt moral warnings from a cosmic-killjoy. These warnings come to us from the God of heaven, who judges all the earth yet loves His people, and shows Himself to be the God of redeeming grace and glory. How do we know? Because He has spoken. It is written—to us.

So what then? Walking in the counsel of wicked, standing in the way of sinners or sitting in the seat of scoffers offer no ultimate appeal to us. Our loving God and Father has called us to walk in His counsel, to stand in His righteous ways, and to plant our souls in the verdant sanctuary of His holy Word.

Note well. Scripture then does not come to us as some abstract philosophical or moral system. It is not a how-to handbook. It is not a code of conduct or a guide for happiness and prosperity. It is not a tool to meet our selfish desires, the end of which will cast us in judgment before the Almighty. Rather, God's Word is His speech to His people, whom He calls to hear His ways—ways which radically differ from our own ways, and thoughts that do not blossom by themselves in our self-centered souls (Isaiah 55).

Now don't misunderstand. Scripture does present an explanation of the way things are (divinely-given philosophy). It does present moral demands (divinely-given law). It does render specific guidance for our conduct and offer promises for our happiness (divine practicality). But in all these aspects of its message, it does so by defining the meaning of all things—including our happiness and holiness, and calling us to trust in the God who is Creator and Redeemer.

Biblical truth comes to us by the God who is both Righteous Judge and Merciful Father. God's Word comes to us by His covenant grace. Its ultimate blessing delivers what is promised because its Author is the all-powerful Blessor of His people. And since the authoritative word comes from the God of boundless mercy, kindness, and goodness, from the God who works all things for good to those who love Him, from the sovereign King of all creation and the God of redeeming grace, even the slightest resistance is the ultimate act of foolishness.

The facts of our lives then present a desperate quandary. We must be honest. We have resisted. We are foolish. We are guilty of violating the Law of God, and delighting in our own law, meditating in the alluring instruction of the world. We have rebelled and we do rebel. We have walked in the counsel of the wicked. We have stood stubbornly in the path of sinners. We have tuned our hearts to the scoffers and planted our roots in derision of the Almighty.

Yet speaking directly into those damning realities of our hearts and lives, God's Word meets us with the gracious, covenant Lord. He promised to redeem us, and has delivered on His promise. Our foolishness and rebellion are met by the fully satisfying life, death, and resurrection of the One Blessed Man, who without fail, delighted in the Law of His Father, and meditated on His Law day and night.

This Beloved Son is the singularly blessed Man who stood before the Father and was found righteous. It is this holy and vindicated Son who lives ever to intercede for us (Heb. 7:25) and who is our perpetual Advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1). It is because of this promised and perfect Son (Gal. 4:4) that we ultimately prosper "like a tree planted by streams of water" (v. 3). In and through Him, we are counted among those who stand tall in the judgment. The King and Son sits at the Father's right hand, and in His all-pleasing sacrifice and advocacy, we find refuge (Psalm 2:12).

And so now, as sons loved in the Royal Son of God, our hearts are graciously attuned to His will. How then could we possibly despise the Word of God? How could we possibly recoil under the authority of divine revelation? How could we possibly assert our own way, our own rights, and our own authority? To do so defies who we are as beloved in the Beloved.

The authority of our God's Word is no burden (1 John 5:2–4)! His Word renders life-giving freedom to the sons of God (Gal. 5:1). God's Word is sweetness to the tongue (Psalm 19:10). Like honey storms the palate with its surge of satisfaction, God's Word floods the soul of the hearer with what could only be called "sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:10). A heart bowed before this Word and its Lord will enjoy the sweet promises

of prosperity (v. 3) and eschatological vindication (vv. 5–6). Our God has spoken to us.

Take then and eat.

NOTES

1. The original interview may be found online at PlaceforTruth.org/blog/j-gresham-machen-and-biblical-authority-podcast.

2. Jonathan Master (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is professor of theology and dean of the School of Divinity at Cairn University. He is also director of Cairn's Center for University Studies. Dr. Master serves as the Alliance's editorial director, as well as co-host of the Theology on the Go podcast.

3. Carl Trueman is chief spinner at Mortification of Spin, professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, visiting fellow at Princeton University, and pastor at Corner Stone Presbyterian Church (Ambler, PA). As of Fall 2018, he will take a position at Grove City College as a professor in their Department of Biblical and Religious Studies.

4. Jeffrey Stivason (Ph.D., Westminster Theological Seminary) is the pastor of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church in Gibsonia, PA, and editor at Place for Truth. He has been serving the Lord as a minister of the Gospel since 1995 and has planted two churches during that time.

5. Michael Matossian was ordained to gospel ministry in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in 1998. He has served since 2009 as senior pastor at Emmanuel OPC in Wilmington, Delaware. He holds a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology from Marquette University. He and his wife, Judy, and their son, Matthew, are all natives of southern California.

6. Martin Blocki has served since 2003 as the associate pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North Hills in Pittsburgh, PA, since 2002. He is a counselor at the Biblical Counseling Institute

in Pittsburgh. Rev. Blocki graduated from Indiana University, Bloomington (B.M.E), Arizona State University (M.M.), and the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary (M.Div.). Martin and his wife, Kathy, have two sons, one daughter, and two grand children.

7. *The Constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America*, Directory for Church Government, Chapter 6, Paragraph 10.

8. Tim Bertolet is a graduate of Lancaster Bible College and Westminster Theological Seminary. He is an ordained pastor in the Bible Fellowship Church, currently serving as Interim Pastor of Faith Bible Fellowship Church in York, Pa. He is a husband and father of four daughters.

9. David B. Garner (PhD, Westminster Theological Seminary) is vice president of advancement and associate professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. He formerly served as pastor of teaching at Proclamation Presbyterian Church (Bryn Mawr, PA), as well as a missionary in Europe and Central and Southeast Asia. From 2003-2007, he served as Director for TE3 (Theological Education for Eastern Europe), a regional theological training ministry based in Sofia, Bulgaria.

10. O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub.Co., 2015), 201.

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