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THE Bull Pen REVIEW



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Preface: What is the Bull Pen Review?



THROUGHOUT HISTORY, WHENEVER reformation has seized the Church, the first mark has usually been a revival of Word-centered worship. The driving element of this has historically been *expository preaching*.

This reformation of preaching has consistently been followed and bolstered by efforts of writing and publication, for the education and edification of the people of God. The audience and circulation runs a wide breadth. Charles Spurgeon published *The Sword and the Trowel*, which focused on engaging pastors and church leaders. More recently, John Piper during his time at Bethlehem Baptist Church would send out a weekly newsletter titled “The Bethlehem Star,” written strictly for his own congregation. Pastors like John Newton were known for a robust ministry of personal correspondence via letters.

And of course, writing for the local church is at the very foundation of our faith: The New Testament is an arrangement of twenty-seven *written* documents, *most* of them letters to specific local churches, all aimed at instruction and edification and equipment of the saints.

Our aim is similar for the Bull Pen Review. We long to strengthen, edify, educate, and inform the congregation God has graciously entrusted to us through the ministry of not only proclamation, but the pen. We aim to continue in this tradition, and enrich the love of Bull Street Baptist Church for Christ Jesus through this bi-monthly periodical.

A word about the layout.

Culture: At BSBC, we have six distinctive cultures which the elders hope to see our church treasure and continue to grow in. These articles will explore different topics and answer different questions to help our church grow in these “cultures.”

Historical Retrieval: To study history is to practice humility. Whether it’s events, theological developments, or historical figures, we are part of a great tradition, and we want to appreciate the house on which we are building.

Theology: The church thrives on a diet of healthy doctrine. Every sermon has to weigh the balance between that doctrine and its application. These articles are a way for us to help the church continue growing in a more systematic understanding of God, his Word, and his world.

Book Review: Of the writing of many books there is no end—how much more so when it comes to reading them! (Also, another reason why we’re writing *articles*, and not full books!) Some books are worth reading; some are not. We hope in these reviews to commend some good resources to you, and suggest how to read others with a careful and critical eye.

Thought for Food: More of a devotional thought, based usually on a single passage or pair of Scripture, written for your reflection and spiritual benefit.

Vice, Virtue, Verse: A brief definition and description of a vice and a complement virtue, along with a “fighter verse” you can memorize to grow in this area. If you don’t have a plan for memorizing scripture, start here!

Ask a Pastor: Do you have a question you’d like answered by all of the pastors, or by one in particular, which might be helpful for the rest of the congregation to hear? Send Pastor Andrew an email with the topic line “Ask a Pastor.” We will answer no matter what—but perhaps you’ll spark a conversation that could benefit others as well!

CULTURE: FAMILY MINISTRY

Stay-at-home Moms, Stay-at-work Dads?

Andrew Ballard

ONE QUESTION THRILLS kindergartners, paralyzes college freshmen, and may send the early retiree into a midlife crisis: *What do you want to be when you grow up?*

Conversations like these are fundamentally about *vocation*: We like to know what people *do* or *might* do in the future. When we ask, “What do you want to be?” if a youngster responds, “I want to be kind,” or “loving,” or “godly,” or “mature,” we smile and clarify, “No, I mean what sort of *job* would you like to have?” We’re scanning for their sense of calling, mining for promise, aspirations, and potential.

Though well-intentioned, these conversations often over-emphasize employment, which might display a disordered view of *vocation*. The kinds of questions we ask, and the types of answers we expect, train our children how to think about, frame, and prioritize their life decisions. We need to get *vocation* right and put it in its proper place.

Marriage Declines, and Kids Follow

Consider our cultural moment. Men and women are marrying later, and *less*. Fertility follows suit.¹ The flightpath parents chart for their kids often goes like this:

Graduate high school at eighteen, college at twenty-two, and then pursue a career. Once your career is established (in five or six years),

then it might be time to start *thinking* about getting married. But take your time getting to know your potential spouse; a two-to-three year on-ramp from dating to engagement, and then a two-to-three year engagement before marriage, is reasonable. Also, you’ll want to *enjoy* your marriage, so don’t add any kids for the first few years. And don’t have more than three, unless you’re planning to be a doctor.

This general vision has been generally disastrous. Generations are missing milestones. The birth rate plummets. Aspiring mothers have the most to lose, due to their more limited window of fertility.²

Recalibrating the Ideal

Could part of the problem be that we are *training* our kids to think about their future in terms of *career* rather than in terms of *vocation*? Figure out the career first, and fit the family in after. We neuter our parenting, offering the same vision to girls as to boys. Even for self-avowed complementarians, we are often too squeamish and embarrassed to present any vision of *eudaimonia* (the good life) that differentiates between the sexes. So, we cut against the grain of creation and train our kids to pursue a gender-neutral, career-centric ideal. And we are surprised our sons hesitate to approach the altar. We wonder why our daughters don’t hurry up with the grandbabies already.

1 In 1970, 67% of Americans ages 25 to 49 were living with their spouse and one or more children younger than 18. Over the past five decades, that share has dropped to 37% (according to data from 2023). See also John Schweiker Shelton, “Don’t Wait to Have Kids: If You’re Married, You’re Ready to Start Having Children—and Waiting Is Risky,” *WORLD Opinions*, 8 April 2025.

2 According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, “A woman’s peak reproductive years are between the late teens and late 20s. By age 30, fertility (the ability to get pregnant) starts to decline. This decline happens faster once you reach your mid-30s. By 45, fertility has declined so much that getting pregnant naturally is unlikely.”

We clip the wings, and watch for flight. We stomp on toes, and demand a dance. We castrate our framing of the future, and still expect the geldings to be fruitful.

What if a six-year-old girl announced, “When I grow up, I want to be a wife and mother. That’s what I want to be more than anything.” What if she said that when she was sixteen? A college senior? What if a college grad’s five-year plan was “to have better care of the home, and a better instruction of my children in the Lord”? Odds are many of us would mildly suggest a “backup plan,” one that looks strangely similar to the career path of a young man called to be the breadwinner.

My point is not that “homemaker” is a valid career choice. My point is that “homemaker” is not a career choice at all, but a vocation—a providential calling from the Lord, which is the default plan we should propose to every daughter. Just as “head of a household” is the default aspiration we should urge for every boy.

But this is hard, because we have a biblically disordered doctrine of vocation. No wonder many women are reluctant to steward a home. No wonder many men are passive once inside. When we embrace a robustly biblical understanding of family and work, we won’t find “stay-at-home moms” or “stay-at-work dads,” as if their employment (or lack thereof) encompassed the sum of their vocation. Rather, we’ll have heads and helpers who fulfill their particular responsibilities in every sphere in service of their household—and we’ll have a culture where young people dream of pursuing the same. In other words, a proper understanding of vocation for both men *and* women will see, plan, prepare for, and pursue careers in *service* of the family.

In pursuit of a more biblical understanding, then, let’s turn to 1 Corinthians 7 for illumination.

A Biblical View of *Vocation*

“Vocation” comes from the Latin verb *voco* (and its noun form, *vocatio*), which in the Vulgate corresponds to the Greek *kaleō/klēsis*. In 1 Corinthians 7:20 the ESV reads, “Each one should remain in the *condition* in which he was *called*.” This could be appropriately translated “each should remain in the *calling* in which he was *called*.³”

Today, just as “What do you *do*?” usually means “What is your *job*?”, so too *vocation* is used synonymously with *employment*—it’s “what you get paid for.” But the biblical idea in 1 Corinthians 7 has a much broader meaning: It is “what you do *according to God’s providential assignment of responsibility*.”

This includes work paid and unpaid. Paul was *called* to be an *apostle* (1 Cor. 1:1). Christians are *called to mutual holiness* (1 Cor. 1:2) and to fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). Believers are *called to God*, even though they have many weaknesses (1 Cor. 1:26).⁴ *Calling* (vocation) has nothing to do with how one aspires or feels about the future; it has everything to do with being obedient and honoring God in the providential circumstances in which you find yourself. Hence, if we ask, “What is the biblical concept of *vocation*?” we would be well within the bounds to use the ESV heading from 1 Corinthians 7: “Live as you are called.” It is faithfulness to God *through* fulfillment of our responsibilities to others in the circumstances we are sovereignly assigned.

Calling is a prescription drawn from a description. Direction is derived from duty, and not the other way around. I *was* called to singleness, while I was single. And for twenty-three years, I happily honored God as a single man, fighting to be satisfied in Christ and to maximize the strengths of my life situation for the sake of his kingdom. Then I

3 *klēsis*, implied from 1 Cor. 7:20; *kaleō*.

4 Many thanks to Nathan Moore for his confirmation on the Latin and for his clarifying thoughts on “calling” in 1 Corinthians.

married my wife. From that point on, I was called to marriage.

“But Andrew, doesn’t this argument *undercut* your point, and suggest we shouldn’t change our circumstances, since that would be like trying to change our calling?”

No. Paul is not fatalistic. A little later, he tells the slave to honor God in his *vocation* of slavery, but to emancipate himself if possible. The application, then, is not “don’t change your circumstances,” but be faithful *in* your circumstances *while* you are in them.

So while we might read 1 Corinthians 7:27 and think Paul is against single people getting married, we have to contextualize that verse. Paul was concerned with “undivided attention to the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:35), against which, for some, marriage might be a hindrance. There were the realities of persecution and social instability (1 Cor. 7:26, 28). Paul was also battling the idea that either marriage or singleness necessarily brought one closer to God (1 Cor. 7:40). As for the broader context, fruitful marriages that yield godly offspring is God’s blueprint for humanity on earth (see Gen. 1:28; 9:1, 7; Mal. 2:14–15; cf. Heb. 13:4). Paul’s goal in 1 Corinthians 7 is single-minded devotion to God, and this must be balanced by the acknowledgement that “it is not good that man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18) and by the mandate to humanity to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28).

This is God’s good design; it is an “opt-out” feature rather than an “opt-in.”⁵ So the unmarried college student should be faithful in her *current* calling to singleness, *and* she would do well to prepare for a potential *future* calling to marriage, barring exceptions.

⁵ It is of course fine if someone does decide to opt out, if they are “made eunuchs” by birth (a biological effect of the Fall), by man (an effect of sin), or by themselves for the sake of the kingdom. But this is rarely the case.

Work From, and For, Home

Biblical precision on *vocation* complements clarity on *gender roles*. For example, the Proverbs 31 portrayal of a home-worker and child-raiser as the feminine ideal gives us a robust vision of *work-from-home* matriarchs, rather than *stay-at-home* moms.

The distinction may seem subtle, but it is important. “Stay-at-home” does nothing to posit the *actual occupation and labor* my wife is called to. The garden stays at home; our Mediterranean gecko stays at home; the water filter stays at home. My wife, however, is as productive as and more mobile than her desk-devoted husband. If anyone “stays” anywhere, it’s me, in my office, from 8:30am to 4:30pm. But when people see a woman clearly stepping into her God-given calling as a domestic manager, they will not pity her and look on her husband with scorn. Rather, “her works [will] praise her in the gates” (Prov. 31:31), she will be her husband’s crown (Prov. 12:4), and he will be known by a good reputation in the community (Prov. 31:23). I can personally testify to the truth of all these promises.

Conversely, we must encourage men to pursue a vocation *for the sake of* providing for a family. This means the purpose of your career is not to achieve accolades, make memories, express yourself, or feel like you are “making a difference.” The primary purpose of my paid work is to provide for my family, not to make me feel fulfilled or to secure free time for my leisurely hobbies. I have plenty of past times and interests. And until I am providing for my family in *every* way God has required, they are all dead to me.

Husbands and fathers, embrace your household as your most important vocation. No man can read the commands of Deuteronomy 6:4–8 and Ephesians 6:4 and conclude that his paid employment or hobbies is his highest calling. We don’t need “stay-at-work dads” any more than we want “stay-at-home moms.” Rather, if the helper’s calling is to work *from* home, then the head’s calling is to work *for* home.

Conclusion

I have asserted two theses in this article.

(1) God's good and default design is for men and women to get married and raise children together.

(2) The father's primary vocational aim is to protect and provide for his family, while the mother's is to manage the home and raise the children.

This perspective sees familial responsibility as the *main* vocation of *both* mother *and* father, because it is their providentially arranged calling from the Lord. Our conversations with our spouses, children, and neighbors should reflect this.

For the mother, the ideal is that homemaking and child-rearing is her primary career; no paid work is worth the sacrifice of doing these well.⁶ Wives and moms, strive to support your husband's work in his career *and* his vocation as a father. Fulfill your matriarchal calling: Make your home-working your craft, and seek to make progress in managing resources and raising children.

And for the father, his income-earning career is undertaken *in service* to his *primary* vocation: the patriarchal duty of leadership, provision, protection, and discipleship in the home. There is no place for passive men in God's households. So, husbands, strive to provide so your wife can fulfill her domestic responsibilities. Give her the tools, supplies, financial provision, and biblical clarity she needs to fulfill her vocation well.

Parents, prioritize preparing your child to be a godly spouse. Talk about jobs, college degrees,

careers, income, and financial goals *in relation* to their aspiration to provide for or manage a family. Encourage them to acquire skills, earn wages, and embark on career trajectories that will best serve the establishment of a godly household. In your child-rearing, give your children a compelling vision of pursuing the vocation of *husband* and *father* or *wife* and *mother*. Teach them that this is the core of their calling.

Young people, make plans and aspire to marry and to raise a family. This is more important than your career. Think about your pursuit of education and income *in proper relation* to the biblical vision for a family.

And don't be too put off when someone asks you what you want to be when you grow up. Some of us are still figuring that out ourselves.

⁶ As with all conversations about the family, there is always the exceptional case of the single parent. But the tragic challenges of an exception prove the rule, and not the other way around. We should have empathy for single moms who have to work full-time—and we should seek as the church or as the extended family to fulfill the needs that are left unmet by the absence of the biblical ideal.

HISTORICAL RETRIEVAL: COUNCIL OF NICAEA

1700 Years Later: The Council of Nicaea

Taylor Lazenby

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

And I believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

ARGUABLY THE MOST important event of the early church was the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Facing mounting opposition and unbiblical teaching concerning the person and work of Christ from the heretical group known as the Arians, Christian leaders convened a council to clarify biblical doctrine. It was at this council that a biblical foundation of orthodoxy was established concerning God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the church. These theological conclusions were then organized into the Nicene Creed, which the Christian church has confessed for more than 1700 years.

Doctrinal Distinctions

The first important observation about the Nicene Creed is that the writers believed in a Triune God. The first, second, and third stanzas describe the biblical reality that God is three-in-one: He is *one* God in *three* persons. Each of the persons are truly God, yet each is their own person.¹

The framers of the Nicene Creed also sought to systematically outline the role and work of each person of the Trinity. The Nicene Council declared that God the Father is maker of heaven and earth (see Gen. 1). In their view, God the Father actively created everything *ex nihilo*, from nothing. Thus, creation took place in time and in space. In other words, creation was a historical event as portrayed in the Bible and should be read as such. The Holy Spirit

¹ Note: Though each member of the Trinity is a distinct person, it is not proper to say that each person has their own will. The "will," as a technical term used by theologians, belongs to one's nature. Since God has one nature, God has one will, even though God is three persons.

is also described; but, for reasons that will be clear in a moment, he gets less attention. The longest section of the Nicene Creed concerns the person and work of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the time of the Council, Arianism had gained a stronghold in theological thought and practice. Arianism taught that the person of the Son of God was a being created by God the Father, and, therefore, was not deity. This teaching has at least three major implications for the person and work of God the Son.

First, since Arianism denies the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, this means that there was a time when the Son did not exist. If the Son is created, he is not God.

Second, Arianism destroys the Trinity and Trinitarian relations, ordering a false trinitarianism around a hierarchy where God the Father alone is fully God and the Son is a lesser and subservient creature.

Third, and most importantly, Arianism makes salvation impossible. The Scriptures are clear that only God can save, and that salvation requires a mediator who is both truly God and truly man. If Christ is not truly God, he cannot truly save.

Because of this major theological concern, it is no surprise that the most attention is given to the person and work of the Son. The writers state explicitly that the Son is begotten (not created) from eternity past (1 Jn. 5:18). He is *homoousios* (of the same substance) as the Father (Heb. 1:3). And he is the agent of creation and accomplisher of salvation (Jn. 1:1-16).

The Nicene Creed and You

Does something that happened 1700 years ago have any relevance to you today? Yes, it certainly does!

Our God is a sovereign God who is working across history to demonstrate his glory to the universe. He primarily does that now through the local church,

of which you are a part. As a member of Bull Street Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia in the year 2026, consider that the Nicene Creed is not a relic of a distant and irrelevant past. It is a rock-solid reminder that the faith we confess today is enduring and reliable. When we confess the doctrine of the Trinity and the full deity of Christ and his person and work, we stand in a long and unbroken line of believers stretching back to the earliest centuries of the church. The same Christ we worship on the Lord's Day every week in the 21st century was defended by Athanasius against the Arians, preached by Augustine to the churches of North Africa, articulated by the Reformers, and confessed by faithful churches across the world in every generation. Our faith is not novel. It is universal (catholic), shared by the one church of Jesus Christ throughout history.

The Nicene Creed also serves as a guardrail for our belief and practice today. In a nominally religious culture that often speaks vaguely about God and minimizes doctrine for the sake of unity, the Nicene Creed teaches us that true unity is grounded in truth as revealed in Scripture. If we do not worship the true God, if we worship him as something he is not, we do not truly worship him. The church is not free to redefine God according to sentiment, emotion, or experience. We worship the God who has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we submit our thinking to the testimony of Scripture as faithfully summarized by the church through the ages in the Nicene Creed.

THEOLOGY: INTRO TO THE 5 SOLAS

What are the 5 Solas of the Reformation?

Taylor Lazenby

AS A YOUNG boy, I grew up in a baptist church. One day after a Sunday worship service, I remember playing with my brother in a large tree on the front lawn of the church. We climbed while our parents talked with their church friends. Suddenly one of the largest limbs snapped. Fortunately for my brother and I, we were left unharmed. Unfortunately for the tree, it was left ugly. It was later discovered that the tree diseased—literally rotting from the inside. Shortly thereafter, the church had us say goodbye to our old friend.

That large tree did not become dangerous or unsightly because it lost a few leaves. It was not necessarily ruined because a main supporting limb was gone. It was compromised because it was diseased. That disease turned into a death sentence. The tree was no longer what it was meant to be. Trimming would not fix it. Decorating would not fix it. The problem was not cosmetic, it was structural. It needed to be uprooted.

Similarly, the church of the Middle Ages needed to be uprooted. Over the 1500 years since the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the institutional church had become infected with theological rot. In 1517, the Protestant Reformation began knocking on the Pope's door with Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*. At the same time, other Reformers (Zwingli, Luther, Melancthon, Bullinger, etc.) began lopping limbs in their own front yards, where the Lord had providentially placed them.

As the streams of reformation crossed and strengthened throughout the sixteenth century across the European continent, the five solas became the banner that united them all: *Sola Scriptura*,

Sola Gratia, Sola Fide, Solus Christus, and Soli Deo Gloria.

Sola Scriptura

Sola Scriptura asserts that Scripture alone is the final and sufficient authority for the church's faith and practice. This is the ground for all other *solas*. This was the formal cause of the Reformation because it addressed the question beneath every other question: *Who or what has ultimate authority over the church?* In the Catholic Church in the middle ages, authority had become functionally divided between Scripture, Church tradition, papal decrees, and ecclesiastical councils. Over time, Scripture was not denied, but it was displaced. It was treated as one authority among many rather than the authority that judges all others.

The Reformers did not argue that tradition was useless or that teachers and councils had no value. Rather, they insisted that all traditions, teachers, and councils must sit under the Word of God, not alongside it. Scripture alone is God-breathed and therefore uniquely authoritative. When the church elevates any other authority to the level of Scripture, theological rot inevitably sets in. The church no longer reforms itself according to God's Word, but reshapes God's Word according to itself.

Sola Gratia

Sola Gratia proclaims that salvation is wholly the work of God's grace. Grace is not divine assistance added to human effort. It is not God doing his part while we do ours. It is not God meeting sinners halfway. Grace is God's unmerited favor toward

sinners who are spiritually dead and can do nothing to save themselves.

In the medieval church, grace had been redefined. Rather than God's sovereign and saving initiative, grace became a "substance" dispensed primarily through the sacraments and secondarily through the priesthood. Because of this, salvation became a process in which grace and human effort worked together to produce justification.

The Reformers returned to the biblical teaching that salvation originates solely in the gracious will of God. From election (Eph. 1:1–10) to regeneration (John 3:1–14) to justification (Rom. 4 and 5) and glorification (Rom. 8:30), salvation is a gift from God. It is not earned, nor is God obligated to give it.

Sola Fide

Sola Fide teaches that sinners are justified by faith alone apart from works. Our faith is not the ground of our salvation; God's grace in Christ is. Faith, like grace, is a gift from God that allows the sinner to take hold of the promises of God.

A good illustration of *Sola Fide* is a straw in a cup of water. When I drink, the straw is the instrument by which the water is received. The straw itself does not satisfy thirst or sustain life, the water does. In the same way, faith is the conduit for the grace of God. Faith does not save because it has power in itself. Yet God has appointed faith as the means by which we receive his saving grace.

Solus Christus

Solus Christus declares that Jesus Christ alone is the mediator between God and man and the sole accomplisher of salvation. In the medieval system, Christ's work was functionally supplemented. The priesthood, the sacraments, the intercession of saints, and even Mary herself were (and still are) treated by the Roman Catholic Church as necessary mediators of grace.¹

¹ Though the RCC has recently made a statement that Mary is

The Reformers insisted that Christ is sufficient. His incarnation, obedient life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection fully accomplished redemption. Nothing can add to his atonement. Because of this, Christ does not merely make salvation available, he actually accomplished it.

Soli Deo Gloria

Soli Deo Gloria is the natural and logical conclusion of the other four solas. If Scripture alone is our highest authority, and salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, then all glory belongs to God alone.

The medieval church created a system of religion that caused glory to be shared between God and man. In the medieval church, Scripture was only one authority among many. Grace was not the sole source of salvation, but depended on human works. Faith was not the empty hand that received Christ, but a beginning point requiring obedience, penance, indulgences, and sacramental participation in order to secure final acceptance before God. Thus, Christ alone was no longer sufficient, and human merit was given a share in the glory owed to God alone.

Soli Deo Gloria means your salvation is not primarily about you, but about God's glory. God graciously gives salvation to display his glory to the ends of the earth. From the beginning of creation, to the redemption of sinners, to the consummation of all of history, it is all for God's glory alone.

Conclusion

In future volumes we will explore the depths of each sola individually. We pray this doctrinal deep dive causes your knowledge of God to deepen and your love for God to soar. And may it all be for God's glory.

not "co-redemptrix with Christ," they have not gone far enough as to correct the practice of praying to (or "through") Mary, a practice which functionally attributes divine qualities to her and can cross the boundary of idolatry.

BOOK REVIEW: ABORTION

The Story of Abortion in America: A Street-Level History 1652–2022

Book by Marvin Olasky and Leah Savas

Review by Taylor Lazenby

IN 1973, ABORTION was unjustly codified into American law with the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade*. That year, the floodgates opened for the mass murder of unborn image-bearers for nearly fifty years. Throughout those decades, constitutional challenges would be presented—and defeated. One of the primary reasons given for the upholding of *Roe* against subsequent constitutional challenges was the incorrect belief that the right to an abortion was deeply rooted in the nation's history and tradition. When *Roe* was finally overturned in *Dobbs v. Jackson* in 2022, Justice Samuel Alito wrote in the majority opinion that “*Roe* either ignored or misstated this history. ... It is therefore important to set the record straight.”

In *The Story of Abortion in America*, Marvin Olasky does indeed set the historical record straight. Drawing on extensive primary sources spanning the pre-colonial era through the early twenty-first century, Olasky demonstrates that American communities and courts consistently viewed abortion as a moral wrong and a prosecutable offense. While a Christian ethic certainly shaped the nation's conscience on abortion, Olasky also shows that the immorality of abortion was rooted in a shared corporate understanding that unborn children possessed inherent value and were worthy of legal protection. Unfortunately, medical practices and technology advanced, social norms shifted, and a liberal sexual ethic came to the fore in American life. The historic consensus gave way to a progressive

cultural moment that allowed a decision like *Roe* to take place.

What makes this book compelling is not only the historical clarity that Olasky provides, but also the moral sobriety. He tells real stories about real people and shows the tragic consequences of abortion on both individuals and society. At the same time, he highlights those who courageously defended unborn life before the modern pro-life movement existed.

If you care about justice, you should care about history. Justice is predicated on one's ability to know the truth. Historical clarity is the only soil in which moral sobriety can flourish. *The Story of Abortion in America* is a valuable resource for anyone seeking to understand the true historical landscape behind the abortion debate today. Pastors and church members alike would do well to read this book as a tool to better fight for the right to life.

THOUGHT FOR FOOD

Disembodied Busybodies

Andrew Ballard

ONE OF MY main complaints against conspiracy theories is that they are so unproductive.

By “conspiracy theories” I have in mind here explanations of major events which posit a nefarious, invisible force pulling the strings and coordinating the demise of the average joe. I mean to demonstrate in this article that conspiracy theories are not *only* unhelpful, unmanly, and ungodly when they are untrue, they are *also* inherently a lie, even when they are not.

Conspiracy theories are a lie in their very medium.¹ They have the form of activity, but accomplish nothing. This is perhaps the chief danger they pose to young men—they enable a life of busyness, while allowing neglect of business. It is a danger that increasingly entices the young men in our churches, families, and communities. And so it is worth speaking to.

Idleness in an Internet Age

The apostle Paul commanded the Thessalonians to “keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us” (2 Thess. 3:6). The apostle and his companions had provided the counterexample: “toil and labor” from sunrise to sunset and back again. It could be summed up as *You earn the right to eat*. But despite his example, some believers *still* walked in such idleness, which Paul described as people who are, “Not busy at work, but *busybodies*.” (2 Th. 3:10)

Paul’s rhetoric bites. Though his neighbors work hard around him, this so-called “brother” labors to evade responsibility. While others are gainfully employed, he skirts around and attempts to avoid. The “busybody brother” is not a man of *no* activity; rather, he is recognized by a *flurry* of activity. He displays a monumental effort, always hard at work to make sure he hardly works. This image, coupled with Paul’s command that they should instead work “quietly,” suggests these brothers were characterized by loudness, perhaps attention-seeking, and irresponsibility.

Sometimes “idleness” connotes a responsibility left unmet; other times, Paul seems to have *ineffectiveness* specifically in view. Neither sense is sensible for the able-bodied saint. When a Christian hurries upon the nowhere-path of the busybody, it is like a car sitting at a green traffic light. The car’s engine is on; gas is burning. Energy is being expended, maybe the engine is even being revved. But no ground is covered. Nothing productive is being accomplished. *Idleness* is the promise possibility, the frenetic facade of fruitfulness, the apparition of activity. It looks less like the sluggard on the couch and more like the neighborhood gossip taking her product door to door.

The age of the internet has not removed this door-knocking temptation, but relocated it. Where busybodies previously visited houses, they now visit pages and post on pinboards. The internet has not erased idleness, but ushered in the day of the *disembodied* busybody.

And young men have a unique susceptibility. My ambition and love for action make nice hooks for my attention. When it comes to political commentary, I’m allured by the promise that I can be involved

¹ They may be a lie in their content as well, but that’s for the podcasters.

in “what’s happening.” Over the past decade and a half, the online scuffles have moved from the walls of Facebook to the towers of Twitter. Men are more likely to get in a food fight on X, wage war in the YouTube comments section, soak in the mainstream news, or memorize statistic after statistic, all for the same underlying reason: *We want to be where the action is. We want to be in the room where it happens.* Jeremy Pierre describes the dangerous draw of political commentary: “The latest outrage on *this* political issue promises the self-satisfaction of being right, making the virtue of *real* service to others seem unnecessary.”²

Further Down the Rabbit Hole

Conspiracy theories take us even further into the labyrinth.

Conspiracy theories grew in popularity with “the Deep State” conversations when Joe Biden resigned and The Machine™ selected Kamala Harris. Given how Biden was forced out by an unnamed group of elites, and given the sort of “hive mind” people noticed in the responses of mainstream media, Christians grew increasingly concerned about “who’s *really* pulling the strings.” After the election, the internet sleuths focused on the mystery enshrouding Jeffrey Epstein.

More recently, as some media personalities began reckless postulations about Charlie Kirk’s assassination, it became clear to me that this goes further than *topical* fascination. It suggests a mood of cynicism and suspicion, which says and *cannot stop saying*, “What’s *really* going on here?”

The question is the answer. The critique is the point. The theorist is “just asking questions.” Eventually, that is *all* he can do. He becomes unable to believe *anything* he hears. It’s not hard to see how the

2 Jeremy Pierre. (June 11, 2025). “The Culture War Hits Close to Home: Loving Wisdom, Spotting Stupidity,” *Lexington Rd*, SSM, p. 20. Retrieved from <https://equip.sbts.edu/publications/magazine/the-culture-war-hits-close-to-home-loving-wisdom-spotting-stupidity/>. Emphasis added.

systematic, cynical erosion of previous beliefs might ultimately lead to a crisis of faith.

What’s the right response, then? If you know someone flirting with conspiracy thinking, encourage them to take the Long View. The *long* view asks, “What will God hold me accountable for on the last day, when I see him face to face?” The hobby of spelunking into the world of conspiracies is a neat way of shirking responsibility. It quickly becomes just a way to get out of doing your duties. The investigative responsibility of someone uncovering *the truth* of what’s going on in the world will keep one shut up in his house. But he will stay “inside,” he will stay *busy* accomplishing *nothing*, he will stay *idle*, all the while justifying it with cries of lions in the streets and cabals in the capitol.

Especially Conspiracy Theories

Conspiracy theories are a lie insofar as they are a form of idleness. And the temptation to idleness can take a distinctly masculine form. When it does, and that masculine temptation conceives and gives birth to masculine sin, it produces a uniquely masculine shame. It is unbecoming, out of step with the gospel, and unmanly for men to eat the bread that others labored to earn, while refusing to provide for themselves.

Now, you might not be eating anyone else’s physical bread. You might have your podcasts *and* your own income, thank you very much. But are you benefitting from communities and institutions built by the blood, sweat, and tears of others? You pour your energy into figuring out *just what is going on* behind the closed doors at the tops of the cultural towers. And while you are preoccupied with the busyness of theorizing, others are occupied with the business of building. Building marriages, and families, and businesses, and schools, and churches. Building a city for our children, and a kingdom for our God.

Are you building something? Or are you just another disembodied busybody?

This is the call to young men diving down the rabbit holes. Here is what a busy pastor, husband, and dad can say. I cannot explore every underground maze you want to map out. I cannot research and disprove or improve every conspiracy theory on the internet. I do not have the time.

And *neither do you*. You have work to do. You were not made by God to live as a disembodied busybody. You were appointed by him to be an able-bodied builder of things that last. When you stand before him on that day, do you think he will ask whether you had a proper map and timeline to account for the nefarious plots of the Rothschilds, the Deep State, the CIA, the government of Israel, the Clintons, the Epsteins?

Or do you think he will ask you what you built? Whether you invested your time and energy into a marriage, a family, a church, a people, a nation, a kingdom? Whether you ran the race well and proclaimed the gospel before the curtain closed?

Put away the conspiracy thinking. Don't be a disembodied busybody. We have work to do. Let's build something together.

VICE, VIRTUE, VERSE

GLUTTONY often appears in close company with laziness, poverty, and drunkenness. One of the Greek words for "gluttony" is literally "stomach." It is a vice of excess. One is controlled by his stomach, driven by her appetite. *Gluttony* could be used as a broad category for overconsumption in general.

The issue with gluttony is indeed the excess, and not the food itself. God's creation is good, and we should enjoy it, "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. 4:4). Moreover, there are times for feasting as well as fasting. But all things

in good proportion—whether that's food, sleep, spending, alcohol, entertainment, or even laughter.

Diagnostic questions: Is it feasting, or gluttony? Can you say "no" before you know you need to? Does it cause harm—relationally, physically, financially? Does your consumption lead you to pause and thank God, or to plunge quickly into the next round of consumption?

SELF-CONTROL is expressed by different words in the Bible. One Greek word for *self control*, *ἐγκρατεύομαι* (*enkrateuomai*), is used twice in the New Testament, once in 1 Corinthians 7:9, and once in 9:25. Paul uses it to describe one's ability to refrain from marriage. The victorious athlete "exercises self-control in all things."

This type of self-control means not only refraining from what is bad, but also doing what is difficult. The athlete resists his temptation to eat junk food; he also chooses what may be less "craveable" but is more nutritious. Socrates is known to have said, "Abs are made in the kitchen," and the athlete knows this too well.

Put this virtue against this vice. Biblical self-control that overcomes gluttony will not only *passively resist* the temptation to consume in excess but will also *actively pursue* something better to be filled with.

EPHESIANS 5:18–21 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit*, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

ASK A PASTOR

In Jesus' Name?

QUESTION: *Pastor, why don't you close your prayers in the name of Jesus?*

ANSWER: I loved this question, because it taught me something I did not actually know about myself—sometimes I don't say “in Jesus's name” at the end of prayers!

Maybe the more accurate answer is that *I haven't thought about that in a while*. There *is* a reason for this difference in my prayers, and I hope an explanation will be edifying.

I do not have any problem with ending my prayer with the words, “In Jesus's name, Amen.” I usually pray that way with my kids at home. But, I think there is a difference between *using* those specific words and *doing* what those words mean. I am more concerned with the heart than with the form.

Jesus speaks about praying “in [his] name” in several spots in Scripture. He doesn't explicitly say this means we should end our prayers with “In Jesus's name, Amen.” And when he gives us an example of how to pray, he says to do something like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.”
(Matt. 6:9–13)

Notice that he doesn't end it with “in my name” or “in Christ's name,” or even “in the Father's name.” But instead, he starts off saying, “Father, *hallowed* be your name,” which basically means, “May you be respected and honored in all things as holy!” So that gives me an idea of what it means to pray “in someone's name.” It means I pray with an attitude of reverence and reference toward them. So that's part of what I think it means to pray “in Jesus's name.”

Another helpful text would be the third commandment, which says, “Do not take the Lord's name *in vain*.” That doesn't mean, “Don't say ‘Oh my God’” or “Don't use the word ‘God’ in a curse.” Rather, it means, “Don't misrepresent God by claiming to be his people and representative but then act in such a way that brings him dishonor and offense.”

Also, Jesus says that “where two or more are gathered *in my name*, I am there with them.” That doesn't mean that once we say “In the name of Jesus Christ” he suddenly shows up. Jesus is not like Beetlejuice in that way. No, it means that when we gather as believers to honor him in corporate worship, he is with us.

So, all that is to say, I pray “in Jesus's name” by honoring and revering him in my prayers and by addressing him directly. *Sometimes* I will highlight this by ending with the words, “in the mighty name of Jesus Christ” or “in Jesus's name” at the end. But Jesus also warned against us using words and phrases simply out of habit so that we forget what they mean. If I end a prayer the exact same way every single time, it is easy for that to become a thoughtless habit. I want to be very careful to nip

any thoughtlessness or empty ritualism in the bud of my heart.

Ironically, if I *said* “In Jesus’s name” but it was just an empty, habitual exercise, and if the rest of my prayer didn’t really honor and revere him, then I actually have *not* prayed in Jesus’s name, even if I use those words at the end—and *that* sounds a lot to me like what God warned us about in the third commandment! So I use that phrase sparingly, in hopes that it will help me and others *truly* pray in the name of Jesus Christ, as he commanded.

What a good question. Thank you!

*Under the Kingly Rule of Christ,
Pastor Andrew*

P.S. - Here is the prayer I prayed to open up one message in 2025, to give you a written example of how I try to honor Jesus *throughout* my prayers.

Jesus Christ, you are our head. You are our chief, our leader, our shepherd, our Lord, our King. It is from you that the whole body builds itself up in love. So, build your Church. Equip me, now, Lord, as a gift of teaching. Use this time to feed your body with the feast of your Word. Help us to learn you, and help us to love like you. Amen.

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