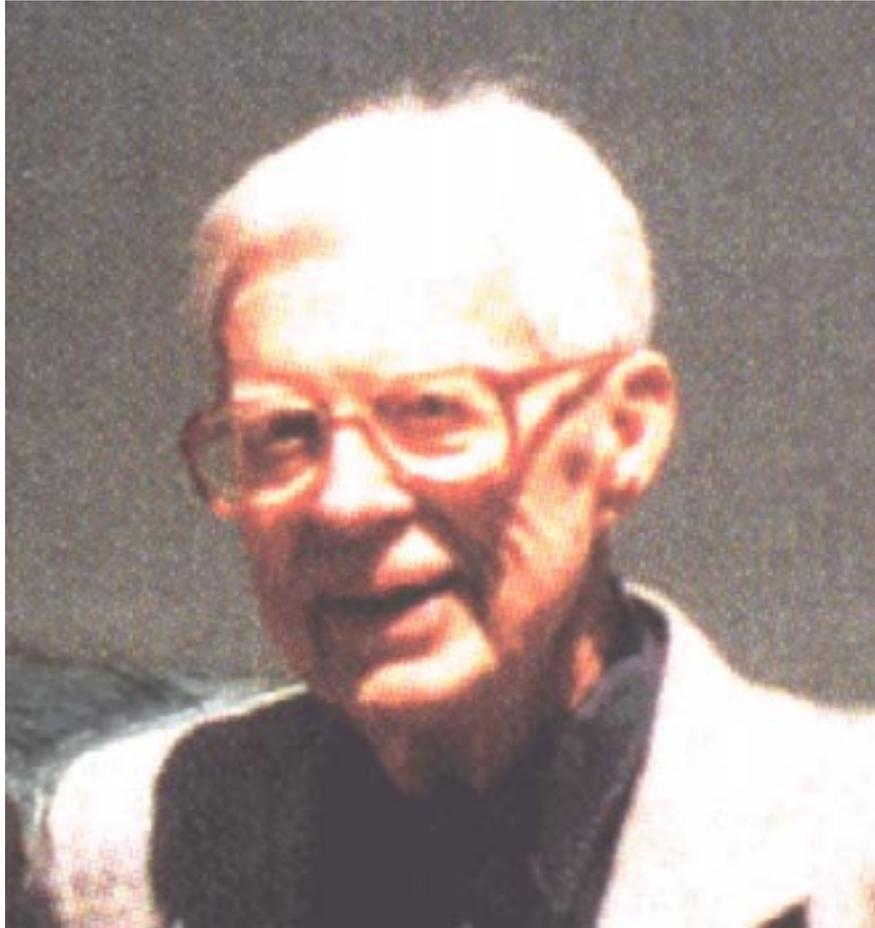


Vol. 7, No. 4

ORDAINED SERVANT



Rev. Henry W. Coray

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ORDAINED SERVANT

Statement Of Purpose

Ordained Servant exists to provide solid materials for the equipping of office-bearers to serve more faithfully. The goal of this journal is to assist the ordained servants of the church to become more fruitful in their particular ministry so that they in turn will be more capable to prepare God's people for works of service. To attain this goal Ordained Servant will include articles (both old and new) of a theoretical and practical nature with the emphasis tending toward practical articles wrestling with perennial and thorny problems encountered by office-bearers.

Editorial Policy

1. Ordained Servant publishes articles inculcating biblical presbyterianism in accord with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and helpful articles from collateral Reformed traditions; however, views expressed by the writers do not necessarily represent the position of Ordained Servant or of the Church.

2. Ordained Servant occasionally publishes articles on issues on which differing positions are taken by officers in good standing in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Ordained Servant does not intend to take a partisan stand, but welcomes articles from various viewpoints in harmony with the constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

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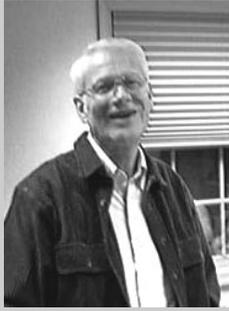
Dr. James Gidley, Mr. David Winslow, Rev. Larry Wilson and Rev. William Shishko

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CHALLENGES OF THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT TO THE REFORMED TRADITION

by

Dr. Richard B. Gaffin, Jr.

Part 2 of A paper delivered at the ICRC
in Seoul, Korea, on October 20, 1997.

THE QUESTION OF CESSATION

An issue that continues, in large part, to divide between the Reformed tradition and the charismatic movement is whether certain gifts of the Spirit, essential to distinctive charismatic spirituality, are present in the church today. Specifically, the debate focuses on prophecy and tongues, and, to a lesser extent, the gift of healing.³⁹ With the complexity of this issue and the time limits on us here in view, I confine myself to some reflections on the disagreement currently present within the Reformed community as to whether a credible case can be made from Scripture, with the passing of the apostles from the life of the church, for the cessation of these gifts, particularly prophecy.

2:1 - Objections to cessationism

³⁹ If it is necessary to say so here, the issue is not whether all spiritual gifts have ceased; they have not (what is at issue is whether or not revelatory word gifts continue). Even less is the issue that all who hold to the cessation of gifts, like prophecy and tongues, do so because they are trapped in an Enlightenment, deistic mind-set that has no place for the direct, supernatural activity of God in creation or within believers (although that may be true of some cessationists). No work of the Spirit, I take it, is more radical, more impressive, more miraculous, and more thoroughly supernatural, than the work he does—now, today, a work of nothing less than resurrecting people who are nothing less than “dead in transgressions and sins” (Eph. 2:1, 5). Beyond any human capacity—rational-reflective, intuitive-mystical, or otherwise—he makes them “alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11). Also not at issue is whether God heals today in medically hopeless situations, in response to the prayers of his people (cf. Jam 5:14ff.), only whether the gift of healing is given today to some, in distinction from others.

A number of Reformed writers hold that such a case cannot be made and that we should be open, in varying degrees, to the possibility or perhaps even expect that one or more of these gifts may occasionally be given today.⁴⁰ Further, and more significantly, in 1991 the synod of the Reformed Churches of Australia adopted, and subsequently has acted to defend, the view that prophecy continues today, and so may be expected and sought.⁴¹

An overall objection to the argument for cessation is that “it is clearly a too-simple and too-mechanical conception of things.”⁴² Such a “strep-theologie,” as it has been labeled, involves positing a discontinuity, a break, between the apostolic and postapostolic periods of the church that draws more from the New Testament than it will bear. More particularly, substantial objection is taken to the

⁴⁰ E.g., L. Floor, *Heilige Gees*, 96-100/*Die doop met de Heilige Geest* (Kampen, 1982), 179-85; W. Jonker *Die Gees van Christus* (Pretoria, 1981), 228-36, 242-45; J. Maris, *Geloof en Ervaring—van Wesley tot de Pinksterbeweging* (Leiden, 1992), 243-50; cf. J. Versteeg, *Het gebed volgens het Nieuwe Testament* (Amsterdam, 1976), 58-61.

⁴¹ The Pastoral Guidelines adopted by the synod and the report (“Word and Spirit”) on which they are based, are perhaps most easily accessible in the *Theological Forum* of the Reformed Ecumenical Council, vol. XX/2&3 (Sept. 1992): 2-48. This double issue also includes a Response I was asked to provide (49-56).

⁴² “Dit is egter klaarblyklik ‘n té eenvoudige ‘n té meganiese voorstelling van sake” (Jonker, *Die Gees*, 243, who also considers cessationist argumentation to be relatively “krampagtig” (“desperate”), 244).

view of most cessationists that the continuation of prophecy in the church today would undermine the sufficiency and completeness of the biblical canon. To the contrary, these noncessationists maintain, New Testament prophecy is not on a par with existing Scripture or apostolic teaching but has a lower (nonbinding, presumably fallible) authority, so that cessationists are deemed guilty of creating a false and entirely unnecessary dilemma. I respond to these objections here in reverse order.

2:2 - A lower view of N. T. prophecy.

There are a number of problems with the lower authority view of prophecy which I can do little more than indicate here.⁴³

⁴³ The authors cited above (n. 40), apart from Floor, do not so much argue this view as assume it (as more or less self-evident?). Here I interact particularly with the extensive argumentation of W. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester, IL, 1988) and *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1994), 1049-61; cf. 1031-43, which overlaps with Floor and the Report of the Reformed Churches of Australia; among other proponents, D. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, 1987), 91-100; R. Clements, *Word and Spirit. The Bible and the Gift of Prophecy Today* (Leicester, 1986). Special note should be taken here of the extensive critique of Grudem's views to which Norris Wilson devoted his 1993 paper to this Conference (*Proceedings*, 116-135). My own objections, briefly expressed here, are substantially the same. Among more recent Reformed critiques, see esp. G. Knight, III, *Prophecy In the New Testament* (Dallas, 1988), O. Robertson, *The Final Word* (Edinburgh, 1993), and R. Ward, *Blessed by the Presence of the Spirit* (Melbourne, 1997), 60-67, 81-87.

If prophecy were equivalent to preaching, then obviously there can be no objection to it continuing today. But this often held view of prophecy, I take it, is almost certainly not the (revelatory) gift in view in the New Testament in passages like 1 Cor 12-14, Eph 4. Nor should there be objection, it's perhaps worth adding here, to what today is often called prophecy—spontaneous, more or less unreflecting Spirit-prompted insight into the application of biblical truth to contemporary needs and situations in the church.

First, this view does not have an adequate explanation for Ephesians 2:20 and 3:5, where within the apostle's sweeping outlook (2:11ff.), the prophets are pictured, along with the apostles, as part of the foundation of the (one) church-house being built by the exalted Christ in the period between his resurrection and return.⁴⁴ The (New Testament) prophets, like the apostles, belong to the (temporary) time of laying the church's foundation, not the period of the superstructure that follows. Specifically, their foundational role, together with the apostles, consists in providing a foundational, once-for-all revelation to the foundational, once-for-all redemption accomplished by the "cornerstone," Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ In view here (as well as in 3:5) are not Old but New Testament prophets, and revelation given through them, along with the apostles, from the vantage point of the realized eschatological endpoint of redemptive history; the concern of the immediate context, 2:11ff., is not the unity/continuity between old and new covenants, but the newness of the new—the inclusion of Gentiles with Jews in the church. This view, I take it, is not subject to serious question exegetically; see, e.g., Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 89-92, my *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 93, and, representative of the virtually universal consensus of recent commentators and monographs, A. Lincoln, *Ephesians. Word Biblical Commentary*, 42 (Dallas, 1990), 153. Hardly convincing, in my judgment, is the contrary argumentation of J. Roberts, *Die opbou van die kerk* (Groningen, 1963), 122-129.

Grudem argues at length that here the "prophets" are not the prophets mentioned elsewhere in Paul but the apostles ("apostle-prophets," "apostles who are also prophets," *Gift of Prophecy*, pp. 45-63).□□But, grammatically, that is highly unlikely at best. See esp. D. Wallace, "The Semantic Range of the Article-Noun-kai-Noun Plural Construction in the New Testament," *Grace Theological Journal*, 4.1 (1983), 59-84. Nor is it likely contextually; in 4:11, Paul's next reference to prophets, in a related context (concern with the makeup of the church), he clearly distinguishes them from the apostles (4:11; cf. 1 Cor. 12:28).

⁴⁵ This verse is important as indicating the revelatory matrix for the eventual emergence of the completed New Testament canon.

Second, the two explicit instances of nonapostolic prophecy in the New Testament—the prophecies of Agabus in Acts 11:28 and 21:10-11—do not support the view that it was nonbinding and/or fallible.⁴⁶ To the contrary, there is no indication in these passages that Agabus spoke anything less than the inspired word of God. In fact, the lower authority view of prophecy is unable to offer a single supporting New Testament example.

Third, some brief comments may be made about several texts frequently offered as evidence that (nonapostolic) prophecy has a lower authority.

⁴⁶ Grudem, for one, has gone to considerable effort to indict Agabus with (well-intentioned, minor) error in the latter instance (*Gift of Prophecy*, 96-102; *Systematic Theology*, 1052-53; so also Carson, *Showing the Spirit*, 97-98.) In general, this attempt suffers from the demand for pedantic precision imposed on Agabus. J. Hilber observes pertinently, “If one’s judgment is rigid enough, similar ‘errors’ in OT predictions can also be cited” (“Diversity of OT Prophetic Phenomena and NT Prophecy,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, 56 (1994), 256). Here I can only observe further that Acts 21:11-14 need to be read with an eye to Luke’s overall narrative flow, noted above (the worldwide, foundational, apostolic spread of the gospel to include non-Jew as well as Jew). Read in that framework, what transpired at Caesarea, including Agabus’ prophecy there, is most naturally read as a fuller account that parallels the tightly compressed description of what was said to Paul earlier at Tyre (v. 4—urged “through the Spirit” not to go on to Jerusalem). For a more extensive response to this view, see *Perspectives on Pentecost*, 65-67.

Both these instances, in turn, illustrate the sweeping truth expressed earlier by Paul himself in giving the Ephesians elders an overall account of his unique ministry: “I know only that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me” (20:23). The fact that on both occasions disciples (perhaps even Agabus himself and others who prophesied) sought to dissuade Paul in no way compromises the Spirit-breathed, infallible truthfulness of what was prophesied. Also, if Agabus made errors, that apparently was lost on Luke. There is no indication that he records this incident other than as it serves his overarching purpose to show the advance of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. What Agabus says is “what the Spirit says to the churches” (cf., e.g., Rev. 2:7).

In 1 Corinthians 14:29, the passage most often cited in support of the lower authority view, the verb applied to prophecy (_____) has a broad semantic range; it may have a variety of senses, depending on the particular context, and may be variously translated (“evaluate,” “test,” “judge,” “weigh”). Here there is nothing in Paul’s usage to demand that, because what is prophesied is subject to “testing,” it is therefore fallible or had a lower authority.⁴⁷

It is difficult to see how 1 Corinthians 14:36a provides convincing evidence of lower authority prophecy. Paul’s question there (“did the word of God originate with you?”) is almost certainly addressed not to the prophets specifically but to the whole church at Corinth, in relation to other churches (see v. 33b). Together with the question in the latter part of the verse, it is “biting rhetoric”;⁴⁸ it has the force of something like “Does the truth begin and end with you?” “Do you have a corner on the gospel and its implications?”

Nor does Paul’s peremptory command to the prophets in verses 37-38 establish their lower authority. No more than his sharp rebuke of Peter in Galatians 2:11-14 means that the latter did not teach with full, infallible authority when he properly exercised his apostolic office. At issue here (and throughout this passage) is not the *content* of prophecy (and

⁴⁷ Note that the Bereans “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true,” and are commended for doing so (Acts 17:11). Does that testing mean that what Paul taught them did not have full, infallible, apostolic authority? Hardly. No more, then, does the testing of prophecy mean that it has a lower, less than fully inspired authority. Pertinent here is the substantial semantic overlap, over the entire range of their usage, that exists between the verb “examine” (anakrinw) in Acts 17:11 and its cognate diakrinw in 1 Cor. 14:29. That overlap, an overlap that includes as well the use of “test” (dokimazw) in 1 Thess. 5:21, can be seen most conveniently in the semantic domain analysis of J. Louw & E. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (New York, 1988), 331-32, 363-64 (esp. sec. 27.44-45, 30.108-09).

⁴⁸ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 710.

its relative authority), but the *conduct* of those who prophesy.

Of itself 1 Thessalonians 5:20 (“do not treat prophecies with contempt”) does not seem to carry much weight, if for no other reason that in 2 Corinthians 10:10 Paul uses the same verb to describe his opponents derogatory assessment of his preaching, as “beneath contempt” (New English Bible). True, this applies to the formal side of his speaking (his “style”), in distinction from that of his letters, but a disparaging reflection on *content* as well can hardly be eliminated.

Fourth, 1 Corinthians 12:28, it seems to me, presents the lower authority view of prophecy with a monumental predicament. Here the order is expressed: “... first apostles, second prophets, third teachers,” There is general agreement that this ranking has to do with value or usefulness.⁴⁹ If that is so, then the lower authority view is left with the following conclusion: in the church, prophecy, always subject to evaluation as fallible and therefore never binding on anyone, is more useful and edifying than teaching based on God’s clear, authoritative, and inerrant word! Prophecy takes precedence over such teaching! An obviously unwanted and unacceptable conclusion, I would hope. Yet how, on this view, can it be avoided?

Finally, virtually all who hold the lower authority view insist that such prophecy as does or may occur today is always subordinate to Scripture and must be tested by it, so that its unimpaired sufficiency and authority is not only not threatened but maintained.

But, we must ask, how will such testing take place? Prophecy in the New Testament (e.g., Agabus), and as it allegedly takes place today, sometimes has a specificity that simply can’t be evaluated by existing Scripture. For instance, a particular course of action urged upon an individual or group on the basis, say, of the contents of a dream, can’t be judged by the Bible other than where the proposed action would involve violating a biblical commandment.

⁴⁹ E.g., Fee, *Empowering Presence*, 190; Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 69.

For the rest, it is a matter of trying to judge “apples” by “oranges.” Scripture by its very nature is silent just on those details that give the dream its specific and distinct (and sought-after) “revelatory” significance and appeal.⁵⁰ The tendency of this view, no matter how carefully qualified, is to divert attention from Scripture, particularly in practical and pressing life issues.

2:3 - The organic nature of revelation.

Rather than it being the cessationist position that is “too mechanical,” it is those who hold that prophecy does or at least may, in principle, continue today, I suggest, who have too abstract and too inorganic a conception of the origin and nature of the New Testament canon and so of the role of New Testament prophecy. What this view fails to assess is that the prophetic activity described in the New Testament takes place, by the nature of the case, in an “open canon” situation (relative to our 27 book canon); in other words, prophecy occurs at a time when the New Testament documents were still in the process of being written. To put it another way, the “canon” (=where God’s word may be found) for the church during its foundational, apostolic period was a fluid, evolving entity, made up of three factors: 1) a completed Old Testament; 2) eventual New Testament and other inspired documents, no longer extant (e.g., the “previous letter” mentioned in 1 Cor 5:9), as each was written and then circulated; and 3) an oral apostolic and prophetic voice. Provocatively stated, the church at the time the New Testament was being written, was not and could not yet be committed, as a formal principle, to the *sola Scriptura* of the Reformation; they lived, to be sure, as we do today, by God’s word, but in doing so they lived by a “Scripture plus” principle of revelation and authority.

⁵⁰ Furthermore, unlike the Scriptures (and general revelation), which are always accessible and open to interrogation apart from their interpretations, on this view there is no access to the underlying revelation nor any way to distinguish it from its fallible report/“interpretation” by the one prophesying. Question (which, unless I’ve missed it, is not really addressed by advocates of this view): why would God reveal himself in such an ambiguous, not to say “inefficient” way?

The noncessationist view being considered here, certainly despite its intention and its clear desire to subordinate contemporary prophecy to Scripture, nonetheless takes us back, anachronistically, to the open canon situation of the early church. But that happens without the control of a living apostolate or, apparently, of those with the companion gift mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:10, which most likely functioned for infallibly distinguishing between true and false prophecy.

This view, it remains difficult for me to see otherwise, opens the door to revelation in the life of the church today that is neither (inscripturated) special, redemptive revelation nor general revelation. What is affirmed is a third kind of revelation that goes beyond both. It is more than “revelation” in the sense of the Spirit’s illumination for today of already revealed truth (Eph. 1:17; Phil. 3:15),⁵¹ more than thoughtful reflection and prayerful wrestling, prompted by the Spirit, about contemporary circumstances and problems in the light of Scripture. In view is additional, immediate revelation, that functions, especially where guidance is concerned, beyond Scripture and so unavoidably implies a certain insufficiency in Scripture that needs to be compensated for.⁵²

But God does not reveal himself, as this view would in effect have it, along two tracks—one public, canonical, for the whole people of God, infallible and completed; the other private, to individual persons and groups, fallible and continuing. I do little more than assert that here, but that assertion, I take it, the fabric of Scripture from beginning to end, as a covenant-historical record, massively supports. During this century, especially, I remind us, we have

⁵¹ The issue, then, is not whether God can be said to “reveal” himself today; of course he does. But in what sense?

⁵² To put my concern here another way, this view blurs the essential difference between being “led” by the Spirit (Rom 8:14) and being “borne” by the Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). The former, the privilege, note, of all, not just some, believers, is not to be confused with the latter, the special, revelatory, redemptive-historical role of some, long since over. To use Calvin’s classic figure of the Bible as the eye-glasses indispensable for understanding ourselves and

become increasingly aware that the Bible is a redemptive- or covenant-historical record, not a systematic-theological textbook or a manual of ethics (as there has been a long tendency to treat it, at least in practice); it is “not a dogmatic handbook but a historical book full of dramatic interest.”⁵³ But there is need as well to recognize, much more frequently than has so far happened, the redemptive-historical rationale not only for the *content* but also for the *giving* of revelation. Here, once again, the *historia salutis-ordo salutis* distinction proves crucial. Revelatory word is tethered to redemptive deed, in the sense of once-for-all accomplishment, not its ongoing application.⁵⁴ With the completion of the latter (redemption) comes the cessation of the former (revelation).

2:4 - The working of the Spirit

Finally, I wish to say here that any sound theology of the Holy Spirit will be left with a certain remainder, an unaccounted-for surplus, an area of mystery. The cessationist position, at least as I wish to maintain and defend it, is least of all driven by a rationalistic discomfort with the supernatural or a desire to have everything tied up in a nice, tidy little package. The truth of John 3:8a, for instance, has to be respected; the sovereign working of the Spirit, like the wind, is ultimately incalculable.

At the same time, however—and this appears to be an increasing danger in our time—we ought

the rest of creation (e.g., *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [Philadelphia, 1960], 1:6:1[Vol. 1, 70]; 1:14:1[160]), prophecy, on this view, is an additional lens that enhances vision; it temporarily augments or, on occasion, may even replace the Scripture-lens. That seems a fair assessment, especially in the light of how prophecy is usually understood to function today.

⁵³ G. Vos, *Biblical Theology. Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, 1948), 26; “The circle of revelation is not a school, but a ‘covenant’” (17).

⁵⁴ See esp. the comments of Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 14-17; “Revelation is so interwoven with redemption that, unless allowed to consider the latter, it would be suspended in air” (p. 24).

not to embrace a kind of “whimsy of the Spirit,” a heightened preoccupation with the unexpected and incalculable and unusual in what he is presently doing in the world. For in his own sovereignty the Spirit has seen fit to circumscribe his activity and to structure what he does today largely according to the patterns revealed in Scripture. Those patterns, not what may take place beyond them, need be and must be our only concern. The truly incalculable in the Spirit’s working today ought to remain just that, *unexpected* and, more importantly, *unsought*. Conversely, what can be anticipated ceases to that extent to be unpredictable.

It seems to me that this point is being missed by proponents of the view that the New Testament leaves prophecy an open and live, but no more than optional, possibility today. In the New Testament there is nothing optional or merely possible about prophecy. It was a normal and integral part of church *order* and life. When God’s people gathered for worship there was nothing unusual about the occurrence of prophecy; it was an expected element in their worship (e.g., 1 Cor 12-14). For the church today prophecy is either mandatory and therefore ought to be sought (1 Cor 14:39), or it has ceased. To entertain some other, presumably more “moderate” option only confuses the church, with the unhealthy consequences I have already tried to indicate.

The cessationist view is accused—I’ve heard it often enough—of trying to “put the Spirit in a box.” But we must not fail to recognize that for now (that is, in the postapostolic era of the church), until Jesus comes, according to Scripture, the Spirit has sovereignly chosen to “box” himself in. The dimensions of this “box” we may never minimize; they are large and liberating, indeed awesome. But, in the freedom of the Spirit, they are fixed. That was the rediscovery granted especially to the Reformation and led, inevitably, to its two-front stance—against the tradition principle of Rome, on the one hand, against the Radical Reformation with its claims of extrabiblical revelations, on the other. On both fronts it asserted what it saw threatened: the inseparability of word and Spirit (*Spiritus cum verbo*), the unbreakable bond between the Spirit’s working and the inscripturated word.

That struggle is not over; it is in fact perennial and carries the potential for undermining the power of the Reformation today. In the name of the Spirit, some continue to place church tradition on a virtual par with Scripture and others claim new revelations and guidance apart from Scripture. Nothing on a par with Scripture and nothing apart from Scripture—that remains the critical issue. Of that Reformed churches surely owe it to the Lord of the church continually to remind both themselves and those in the charismatic movement.

“For the church today prophecy is either mandatory and therefore ought to be sought (1 Cor. 14:39), or it has ceased. To entertain some other, presumably more ‘moderate’ option only confuses the church, with the unhealthy consequences I have already tried to indicate.” - Dr. Richard Gaffin

Women in Office; Especially About “Deaconesses”

Dr. Soon-Gil Hur

Part 1 of an Address presented at the 1997 ICRC in Korea

1. MOTIVATION

Reformed Churches today are challenged to give a clear answer to the question of whether females should be allowed into office in the church. This seems to have a lot to do with the rapid changes in the social position of women. At the end of the twentieth century, the women’s emancipation movement has widely influenced our family, church, and social life.

Most Reformed Churches accordingly have debated the position of women in the congregation. The Church does not live on an island, she exists in the world. Many sisters have risen socially and often take on leading positions, especially since they are better educated than was the case in previous centuries. In such situations some Churches have accommodated their structures to the spirit of the times and accepted a new hermeneutic: the idea that the teaching of the Bible is bound to a certain time and culture. And they eclectically find statements in the Bible that are said to be out of date and difficult to uphold. On this basis, they have introduced women to the office of the Church.¹

Some Churches merely accept female dea-

cons, not allowing women the other offices such as elder or minister of the Word.² However, in other cases it became evident that the acceptance of female deacons was just a first step toward accepting women in the office of elder and even as minister of the Word. Therefore it is very necessary to examine whether God’s Word allows women even to have the office of deacon in the church.

The Bible is the Word of God. God Himself speaks to us from the Bible with absolute authority. God, the Holy Spirit, speaking in the Bible is the supreme judge of all religious controversies and of all private opinion. The Bible is the rule of faith and life.³ Hence the church should listen to what the Bible says (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 20:17-35; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9). There are clear commands and requirements for the office. In the middle ages the Church lost its biblical offices because of the hierarchical development in the Church. But the Churches of the Reformation finally restored the office according to the Scriptures. There were few questions about the office of elder, even though there was some unclarity as to the distinction between the elder and the minister.

One of the clear prescriptions for eldership is that it is limited only to male members, because its task is to exercise authority over the congregation and to correct its members by discipline. This is a clear instruction of the

¹ The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. already had female elders in 1930 and female ministers of the Word in 1957. The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (synodical) accepted female elders in 1967-8. The Christian Reformed Church in North America accepted female elders in 1995 and ordained female ministers of the Word in 1996. The Presbyterian Church in Korea (Tonghap group) accepted female ministers of the Word in 1994. [Editors note: *The above named Church, in the 1930s, was then known as the Presbyterian Church in the USA (or PCUSA). It was renamed—as above—after the union in 1958 with the old United Presbyterian Church of North America.*]

² E.g. The Netherlands Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken) accepted deaconesses in 1996.

³ Westminster Confession 1: 2, 10; Belgic Confession Articles 5 and 7.

Bible. The Holy Spirit says through Paul, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man: she should be silent" (1 Timothy 2:12). Of course, this instruction does not mean an absolute silence of women in all times and places. It is certain that women should not take an authoritative teaching position or a position of authoritative correction (discipline) in the church. But they could pray and prophesy in the congregation (1 Corinthians 11:5). This instruction of silence was given to Timothy not because of the particular culture of Ephesus of that time. It has permanent validity, because the instruction was based on creation. Therefore it is valid in all times and places. For the Word of God, clarifying the reason, says, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived: it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (1 Timothy 2:13-14). This instruction was essentially the same as what Jesus had said earlier. When He was asked by some Pharisees, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" He replied, referring to the ancient law of creation, "Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh' . . . Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate" (Matthew 19:3-6). In the beginning God created man, male and female, in His image, and they were united in love ("bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"). However, there was a differentiation in their respective roles: the male bears the responsibility of leading, and the female is to be his help-mate. The functioning of these different roles is necessary not only in matrimony, but also in congregational life. We conclude, then, that God's Word limits the office of elder to males.

2.2 The office of deacon not limited to the showing of Christian mercy

The Bible does not speak as clearly about the office of deacon as it does about the eldership. There are only two places that clearly mention the deacon as an officer of the church: 1 Timothy 3:8-13 mentions the requirements for this office as it also does for the eldership; in

addition, Philippians 1:1 places deacons next to bishops.

Owing to the paucity of evidence about the office of deacons in the Bible, many differing views have appeared in the history of the Church. Churches that maintain an episcopal system of church government have seen it as an office of the minister of the Word. In the Anglican Church, for example, "deacon" is used to indicate the minister.

What was the function of the deacon in the early Church? It is not described as clearly as the eldership. From 1 Timothy 3 it is clear that the deacon should meet almost the same requirements as the bishop, with the exception of the ability to teach. But it is not easy to determine clearly the function of the deacon. For a long time Reformed Churches have understood its task as showing Christian mercy and caring for the people's material need. Its origin is seen in the seven men in Acts 6, although they are never called deacons in that chapter.

However, a different view of these men has recently been presented in Reformed circles. It has been argued that the seven men cannot be related to today's office of deacon, but rather that they were ordained to ensure the proper functioning of congregational communion.⁴

Reformed scholars have often tried to base the ministry of mercy of the deacon office by referring to the threefold office of Christ. According to this view, diaconal ministry is related to the highpriestly office of Christ. Dr. H. Bavinck's remark is very pointed:

Through the teaching office He teaches, through the office of elder He leads, through the office of deacon He cares for His flock; and through all three He shows Himself to be our highest prophet, our eternal king, and our merciful high priest.⁵

⁴ See J. van Bruggen. *Ambten in de Apostolische Kerk*. Kampen, 1987, pp. 74, 75.

⁵ H. Bavinck *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 4th ed., vol. 4, p. 371.

ESPECIALLY ABOUT “DEACONESSES”

In accordance with this view of the offices, most Reformed Churches have long maintained the position that the task of the deacon is strictly limited to caring for people in need. In the many welfare states of this century, however, the necessity of diaconal ministry has gradually decreased and its work is no longer so closely related to that of showing mercy. As a result their field of ministry has broadened. Nevertheless, the task of the deacons in Reformed Churches has for the most part remained limited to the care of the needy.

However, the ministerial field of deacon is certainly broader than that of showing Christian mercy by caring for the needy. The word *διακονος* means “servant,” “helper,” and it can be understood in a broader sense than giving material help for the needy in the church. Deacons can serve the Church by helping to improve the functioning of the communion of saints or by assisting the pastoral work of the minister or by looking after the congregational gathering on the Lord’s Day. Therefore, it is not desirable to limit the diaconal service to the material care of the needy.

2.3 The difference between deacons and elders

Our next question is where the differentiation between diaconry and eldership lies. It is quite clear that deacons did not have a teaching function, for the requirement “able to teach” is prescribed only for overseers, elders, and not for deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13). Stephen and Philip, two of the seven men found in Acts 6, did preach, but it is not clear whether they were

ordained as deacons, as was mentioned earlier. Deacons are mentioned alongside the bishops in Philippians 1:1, but this does not mean that the deacons were teachers along with the bishops.

However one thing seems to be very clear: elders formed a college distinct from the deacons in the church. The elders of the Church of Ephesus formed a council of elders (*presbyterium*) that laid their hands on Timothy for ordination (1 Timothy 4:14). When Paul called the elders of the Church of Ephesus to him at Miletus, he merely called the elders, not the deacons as well. The contents of his speech was suited only to the elders as overseers of the flock and guardians of the delivered gospel. It was the elders who carried out an authoritative ceremonial act of ordination and exercised authoritative teaching and corrective discipline in the church. No evidence can be found that deacons were involved in this authoritative act.

The word *διακονος* means “one who serves,” “servant,” or “minister.” Hence deacons were really servants who served the congregation just as the word meant. Every believer is living under the command of love and of service (John 15:12). A true Christian serves because the Lord Jesus Christ came to serve in this world (Mark 10:45). The Christian community is a community of love, a community of serving. The Lord wanted to have an office whose leading role was serving in His Church; so He instituted the office of deacon. The prototype of the deacon was Christ. Thus the deacon can be seen as a representative of the serving role of the congregation.

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“Infant Baptism: Optional?”

by

D. G. Hart and John R. Muether



Imagine that a young woman begins to attend your church, and after several months she expresses an interest in joining. She diligently attends the new member class, after which she meets with the Session and gives a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ. When asked if she had been baptized, however, she says that she hadn't, and further, she is persuaded by her reading of the New Testament that baptism is not to be administered in the present age of the church. (As foreign as it may sound to Reformed ears, this form of ultra-dispensationalism gets an occasional airing on some of the Christian radio stations that Orthodox Presbyterians might regularly tune to.) What would your session do? Would it admit into membership someone who refused the sign of membership into the church?

Consider a less farfetched situation. Suppose a young couple inquires about membership. They have made a profession of faith and they are zealous about the doctrines of grace, only they do not believe that the New Testament instructs them to have their two young children baptized. Would your session admit into membership those who refused their children the sign of membership?

For many officers in the OPC, that is not a mere hypothetical question. For members of the Presbytery of the West Coast, it was an issue that provoked the presbytery to over-

ture the General Assembly for advice in 1965. At the heart of the West Coast debate was an apparent clash of two Presbyterian principles: on the one hand, that the church is to receive members merely upon a credible profession of faith, and on the other, that the church is to include children of believers, who are to bear the covenant sign.

Would your session admit into membership those who refused their children the sign of membership?

In arguing for receiving an anti-paedobaptist into the church, some in the West Coast Presbytery likened infant baptism to the doctrine of election. To be sure, OP churches have many members with inadequate understandings of election. Since belief in the five points of Calvinism is not a requirement for membership, why ought we to insist on infant baptism? In both cases, is the church not dealing with the same problem: a Christian who lacks a full grasp of the riches of God's covenant mercy to his people? To demand such belief is to expect too much too soon of brothers and sisters who are young in the faith.

In defending the practice of admitting anti-paedobaptists, one might be tempted to borrow these words from John Calvin: “How unjust shall we be, if we drive away from Christ those whom he invites to him; if we deprive them of the gifts with which he adorns them; if we exclude those whom he freely admits?” The difficulty with invoking these words, however, is that Calvin uses them in the context of depriv-

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ing infants of the sacrament of baptism. So the argument for admission can be turned on its head: it is the non-baptizing parents who are excluding from the church those whom Jesus Christ, the head of the church, has claimed as his own.

The problem, as Robert Churchill saw it, was that more was at stake than an immature understanding of God’s grace. Beyond a manifestation of a weak and immature faith, anti-paedobaptism was also a sinful practice which displeased God. Moreover, it was a dereliction of duty that involved the Session of the church. As Churchill argued in the pages of the *Presbyterian Guardian*, “To bring in the doctrine of election here is beside the point. For while we may be saved with limited knowledge, we are not saved in disobedience.”

The title of Churchill’s article – “*Infant Baptism Optional?*” – echoed a previous question in American Presbyterianism: “Is infant baptism on the decline in the Presbyterian Church?” Long before debates in the OPC, Charles Hodge raised that question in an 1857 article in the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, on the “Neglect of Infant Baptism.” Studying Presbyterian membership statistics and baptism records for the first half of the nineteenth century, Hodge drew the startling conclusion that “more than two-thirds of the children of the church [have] been ‘cut off’ from the people of God by their parents’ sinful neglect, and by the church’s silent acquiescence therein.” This “work of destruction” was prompting the church in “fast deserting” its tradition, threatening to render infant baptism a “dead letter” in American Presbyterianism. Among the causes, Hodge cited these: the rise of indepen-

dency among Presbyterian congregations, the failure of churches to instruct its people in the duties of the Christian faith, a failure to recognize baptized children as members, and the widespread neglect of family worship in Presbyterian homes.

To bring in the doctrine of election here is beside the point. For while we may be saved with limited knowledge, we are not saved in disobedience.

Hodge’s remedy was the strict and rigorous enforcement of the ordinance of infant baptism. Quoting the Westminster Confession, Hodge argued that “the church has no right to receive into full membership those who intend committing ‘the great sin of contemning or neglecting’ this holy sacrament.” So he urged, “Let the Assembly insist that the

Presbyteries under her care do *require* all members within their respective jurisdictions to conform to the requisitions of our Confession of Faith and the teachings of the word of God” (emphasis original).

But Hodge’s plea would go unheeded, not only in the Presbyterian Church, but also among his own family. His son, J. Aspinwall Hodge, a Presbyterian pastor in Hartford, Connecticut, argued in his *What is Presbyterian Law?* (1882): “Parents declining to present their children for baptism are not to be refused on account of scruples concerning infant baptism, yet in every such case the Session must judge of the expediency of admitting them.”

As the OPC General Assembly discussed the West Coast overture, it established a study committee before which it placed this question: “Does the Constitution of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church permit church sessions to receive into communicant membership those who refuse to present their children for baptism on account of scruples concerning infant baptism?” When the

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committee returned the next year, its report contained the same tension and ambivalence that characterized the debate within the overturing Presbytery. It underscored the seriousness of infant baptism by denying that it entailed a non-essential truth!

The defect of the person not persuaded of this aspect of God’s revealed counsel is not concerned with what is peripheral but with what is basic in the Christian institution. And the person who resolutely refuses to present his or her children for baptism is rejecting the covenant promise and grace which God has certified to his people from Abraham’s day till now. It is this perspective that lends gravity to the offense.

But one member of the study committee urged that the church must not act with “undue severity and harshness” toward believers with these convictions: “Shall we allow such a believer to seek his fullest spiritual fellowship in a communion less faithful to the gospel than ours?”

In the end, the 33rd General Assembly sent the report to Sessions for study and passed a motion declaring “that the admission to membership of those who cannot in good conscience present their children for baptism is a matter for judgment by Sessions.” In heeding the advice of the younger Hodge, the church’s location of the decision into the hands of the Sessions was, in the words of one member of the study committee, following the “genius of Presbyterianism.”

On the other hand, does the General Assembly’s decision beg too many questions that are critical for Presbyterians? Will this practice create a variant on the “halfway covenant” of

colonial Presbyterianism? Might it result in the decline that Charles Hodge warned, where laxity of practice will lead to errors of doctrine, such that “Presbyterianism will lose its power?” And what about Robert Churchill’s query: will infant baptism become optional in the OPC?

This brings us back to the examples with which we started. What difference is there between the two situations? The OPC study report would lead us to conclude that there is none: “It is not proper to

make any differentiation in respect to meaning, intent, and obligation between adult baptism and infant baptism. There is one baptism.”

It is not proper to make any differentiation in respect to meaning, intent, and obligation between adult baptism and infant baptism. There is one baptism.”

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USE OF THE WORD 'AMEN'

by

Dr. R. Dean Anderson, Jr.



Here in the Reformed churches (Liberated) in the Netherlands we are in the process of rethinking many aspects of our liturgy. One of the areas under study is the liturgical use of the word "amen". Many churches these days are following the advice of our last Synod and introducing a communal "amen" into the worship services. For this reason the local Sessions of the churches I serve (in the villages of Katwijk and Valkenburg) will also be studying the appropriateness of a communal "amen" in worship. The reason for my short study concerning the use of the small word 'amen' in the Bible is the ongoing discussion about changes in the liturgy in our churches. As a result of decisions taken at the recent synod at Berkel, these matters will also need to be discussed in the local congregations of Katwijk and Valkenburg. I must confess that prior to this study I would not have suspected that I would reach the conclusions which are presented here. I must also add that this brief article is not necessarily the last word on this matter. However, I do believe that I have raised some food for thought.

The Meaning of 'Amen'

The word 'amen' comes from a Hebrew root which in its various verbal forms can mean: to support, to be loyal, to be certain, and to place faith in. The cognate particle 'amen' is commonly translated as 'truly'.¹

It is remarkable that this word is generally not translated in the (Greek) New Testament. The Greek speaking churches in the first century after Christ, appear to have been confronted with a Hebrew word that they could not easily translate. The word 'amen' is certainly not the only Hebrew word which the new churches used in its original form. Consider only the word 'Abba' (= father); although the use of this word is always immediately followed by a translation (Mark 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). With the word

'amen' this is not considered necessary.

Yet Luke does sometimes translate this little word when it is used by the Lord Jesus in a very special manner; namely, at the beginning of a sentence in order to emphasize His words (see note). Luke then sometimes uses the translation, 'truly' or 'verily' (Luke 4:25; 9:27; 12:44; 21:3). Further, in Rev 1:7 and II Cor 1:20, and possibly Luke 12:5, 'amen' is translated as 'yes' (= 'even so'). In the Septuagint (the current Greek translation of the Old Testament in the time of the Lord Jesus) outside of the apocryphal books, the word 'amen' is left untranslated only three times (1 Chron 16:36; Neh. 5:13; 8:6).² Once it is translated as 'truly' and every other time as 'may it be so'.³ The very literal Greek translation of Aquila (2nd century after Christ) always translates 'amen' as 'truly'.⁴

The translation 'may it be so' is supported in the Old Testament itself where the word 'amen' is followed by the words 'may the Lord do so' (1 Kings 1:36; Jer. 28:6).

Beyond these indications about the meaning of 'amen' we must also look at the use of this word. The context in which a word is used is very important in determining its meaning.

Use in the Old Testament

The first thing that strikes us in the Old Testament is the limited use of the word "Amen". We meet it only thirty times, five times as a double word, so that there are only twenty-five passages where we find it. The use of the word can be categorized under four headings of which the first two are by far and away the most important.

1. Acceptance of a curse expression (16 times) When priests (or other officebearers) uttered a curse-formula on behalf of the Lord then the addressee(s) accepted the consequences of it with the word "Amen". See Numb. 5:22; Deut. 27:15-26; Neh.5:13; Jer: 11:5.

2. Concurrence with an expression of praise to the Lord (10 times). "Amen" is also used after a baruch (praise) formula by the person speaking the formula (Ps 41:14; 72:19; 89:53) as well as all those who hear it (Ps 106:48; 1 Chron. 16:36; Neh 8:6). This type of praise-formula has a standard structure and always begins with the word Baruch: translated as "Blessed/Praised be....".

3. Concurrence with a prophecy or an announcement made by an other person (2 times. In Jer 28:6 Jeremiah expresses agreement (sarcastically) with the (false) prophecy of Hananiah in the words: "Amen! The Lord do so". In 1Kings 1:36 Benaiah concurs with David's announcement that Solomon will be anointed as king. He literally says: "Amen! May the Lord, the God of my lord the king, say so." The fact that both these passages appear to translate the word amen may give the impression that we are dealing with exceptional situations.

4. As a characteristic of God. In Is. 65:16 the Hebrew text twice speaks of "the God of (the) Amen". Because some think this difficult to translate many often chose to correct the text to "the God of truth".⁵

Equally important as the texts where we find the word "amen" are the places where it is not used. Two points are noteworthy. First, we note that, although "amen" is often used in signification of accepting a curse-formula, it is never used to accept a blessing! Secondly, "amen" is never used to conclude a prayer.

Use in the New Testament

In the New Testament the word "amen" is used 129 times (statistics according to the 4th edition of Nestle / Aland). This number can, however, be deceptive. Ninety-nine times it is used by our Lord Jesus Himself in a very unusual manner. He often begins a sentence with this word or uses it to give emphasis to what He is saying (e.g. Matt. 7:28-29). As our present study concerns the liturgical use of the word "amen" we will not delve further into Jesus' manner of speaking.⁶

Beyond the foregoing this word is used thirty times. When we apply the same categories as we

used for the Old Testament then we see the following...

1. Acceptance of a curse expression. There are no examples of curse-formulas in the New Testament. This category is thus not applicable.

2. Concurrence with an expression of praise for the Lord (23 times). A statement of praise (at times, but not always, in the same form as used in the Old Testament) is often concluded with an "amen" by the person expressing it (Rom.1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; Phil.4:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 4:11; 5:11; 2 Pet. 3:18; Jude 1:25; Rev. 1:6; 7:12) as well as by those present who hear it (1 Cor. 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:20; Rev. 5:14; 7:12; 19:4.).

In addition to the texts already cited we may add Matt. 6:13 where, according to many manuscripts, an expression of praise (followed by "amen") concludes the Lord's Prayer.

3. Concurrence with a prophecy or an announcement made by an other person (2 times). In Rev.1:7 and 22:20 we find a prophecy / announcement concluded with an amen. In the first passage the amen is expressed by the one making the announcement, John, himself. In the second passage John utters an amen to the word of the Lord Jesus. In Rev.1:7 the word "amen" is used in addition to its translation "yes". In Rev.22:20 John repeats the words with which he concurs. As in the Old Testament so also here the impression is given that this is an extra-ordinary use of the word "amen".

4. As a characteristic of God. The texts from Isaiah discussed above appear to receive an echo in Rev.3:14 where "the Amen" is used as a title for Jesus.

In addition to these categories we may add two more...

5. Confirmation of a blessing formula. A blessing formula (greeting) is often confirmed with a concluding "amen" by the person passing on the blessing (cf. Rom. 15:33; Gal. 6:18). Many manuscripts also add an "amen" to the following texts: Rom. 16:24; 1 Cor. 16:24; 2 Cor. 13:14; Phil.4:23; Col. 4:18; 1 Thess. 5:28; 2 Thess.3:18; 2 Tim. 4:22;

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Tit. 3:15; Philemon 1:25; Heb. 13:25; 1 Pet. 5:14; Rev. 22:21.

Seeing that these texts are all at the end (or nearly at the end) of a letter it is difficult to decide if they should be separated from the following category. Such difficulty is increased when we notice that blessings at the beginning of letters (e.g. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3 etc.) are never concluded with the word "amen"!

6. As a conclusion. Just as in the previous category the word "amen" was used as a conclusion, it is also used as such in many manuscripts of the first two letters of John (without a preceding word of praise or blessing). The same goes for Mark 16:9 in the so-called short ending of that gospel. This use for the word amen was frequently employed in the early Christian church. In this way the "amen" marks the end of the story or letter.

Conclusions

The most frequent use of the word "amen": is to affirm praise to the Lord. This may be expressed by the speaker as well as the hearers.

It is a remarkable fact that the word "amen" is never used in the Bible to affirm a blessing directed at oneself.⁷ I would suggest that this would be considered haughty and therefore inappropriate. If someone is so kind as to say something good about me it would be very rude to respond with "Amen, it is true and certain"! This would certainly apply to a blessing received from the Lord. The practice, which is becoming more and more popular, of allowing the whole congregation to say "amen" after the blessing at the end of the worship service ought to be rejected. If an "amen" is uttered after the blessing then it should be spoken by the minister/elder as a kind of conclusion in line⁸ with the examples in category 5 above.

Equally remarkable is the fact that "amen" is not used to conclude any prayers in the Bible. In the Lord's Prayer the "amen" affirms the expression of praise that concludes the prayer. I do not know when, in the course of the centuries, it became common to use "amen" as a conclusion for prayer.⁹ For us it has a practical advantage

since we pray with our eyes closed. In Bible times men prayed by lifting up their eyes toward heaven with outstretched arms. This meant that everyone could see when the prayer was finished. That is not so easy when everyone has their eyes shut.

In the early Christian church by far the majority of prayers ended with an expression of praise concluded with an accompanying "amen" (following the example of the Lord's Prayer), and that is possibly a good idea for us. While not required, it is appropriate to conclude our prayer with an expression of praise. The concluding "amen" would then also receive a richer meaning.

I also have a few remarks with regard to our liturgy. If it is inappropriate to say "amen" after a blessing directed toward ourselves then the "amen" after the votum is also inappropriate. The votum ('Our help is in the name of the Lord ...') is expressed by the minister/ elder on behalf of the congregation. The congregation expresses its dependency on God, His goodness and grace by which He desires to be our help. It would, however, be possible for the whole congregation to utter the votum!

The expression of "amen" after the greeting at the beginning of the service does not follow biblical examples either. When it occurs it is a result of the uses noted in category 5. It certainly may not be expressed by the congregation since the greeting brings a blessing intended for the congregation itself.

In the liturgies in use by us at present we do not have a separate place for a spoken expression of praise for the Lord. That does not mean that we cannot find expressions of praise for the Lord in our worship services (consider the psalms, prayers, etc.), but it does not form a separate part of the liturgy. This is was not so in the synagogue services around the time of the Lord Jesus. They began with such an expression of praise. This use of a praise formula in Christian form was copied by the apostles who often begin their letters in this way (cf. 2 Cor 1:3-5; Eph. 1:3-14; 1Peter 1:3-5). The most well known baruch (praise) formula in the New Testament is probably the first half of the so-called Song of Zachariah (Luke 1:68-75).¹⁰ I would like to suggest to the deputies

for liturgy that a praise formula (possibly from the aforementioned texts) could follow the greeting.

In this way we could give form to a part of the liturgy from the Jewish synagogue which was used by the apostles and is often echoed in the psalms (eg. Ps 72:18-18; 144:1-2; etc.). If this element remains absent in the liturgy, it is still possible to let the sermon end with an expression of praise. It would be very fitting for the whole congregation to conclude such an expression of praise with their "amen". The texts listed above show that both in the Old as well as in the New Testament it was common for the whole congregation to communally express their "amen".

¹ Note that I do not wish to suggest that the use of other wordforms from the same root are necessarily trustworthy indicators for the meaning of a word. On this point see J. Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language* [OUP, 1961] 100-106.

² For the sake of completeness, the word "amen" is used 6 times untranslated in the apocryphal books.

³ Respectively, aleethoos (Jer. 35:6, MT 28:6) and genoito.

⁴ Pepistoomenoos.

⁵ The suggested emendation only concerns the vowels which (in Hebrew) do not belong to the original text. Instead of "ameen" the reading "omen" is suggested. In Isa. 25:1 the word omen ("truth") is used, but it is a hapax (i.e., a word that only occurs once). In addition, it should be noted that the Septuagint and Aquila both read ameen instead of omen at Isa. 25:1.

⁶ It is unfortunate that this use of the word "amen" is disguised in most Bible translations. Even if it would sound strange to our ears to read: "Amen, amen, I say unto you ...", we ought to realize that it would have sounded just as strange to a Greek reader of the Gospels!

⁷ It is sometimes suggested that where "amen" is used in passages like Rom. 15:33; 16:24 and Gal. 6:18 Paul is thinking of the congregations who would have spoken this "amen". Paul, however, never indicates this in any way in his letters. It is a theory. In order to make this theory plausible, it must first be demonstrated that there was an established practice whereby a communal "amen" was spoken after the giving of the blessing. This is not easy. The only information which we have from the first century AD is 1 Cor. 14:16 where we learn that it was the practice (at least in Corinth) to say a communal "amen" after a praise-formula (Blessed / Praised be

the Lord ...").

From the second century AD we learn that it was the practice (at least in Rome, but see also Dionys.Alex. in Eus. HE. 7.9.4) to say a communal "amen" after the praise-formula at the end of the thanksgiving prayer in the Lord's Supper liturgy (Just. 1 Apol. 65.3). We do not possess any other information from this century concerning the "amen" in the worship service. It may be mentioned that in the worship services of the great synagogue in Alexandria around the middle of the second century AD it was the practice to say a communal "amen" after a praise-formula (Tosefta, Sukka 4.6).

From the much later source, the Babylonian Talmud (eighth century AD) we learn that an "amen" was communally spoken after each of the three sections of the Aaronic blessing (Sota 39b - that Jews around the time of the third century AD no longer felt any objection to an "amen" after a blessing-formula may be deduced from Mishnah, Sota 7.5).

All things considered, there is no real evidence for a communal "amen" after blessing-formulae in the time of the New Testament. A theory concerning such an "amen" in Paul's letters can therefore not be made plausible.

⁸ The earliest example that I know of is to be found in the apocryphal book Tobit 8:8.

⁹ The earliest example that I know of is to be found in the apocryphal book Tobit 8:8.

¹⁰ For Jewish practice see the tract *Berakoth* in the Mishnah.

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Evolution: The Materialist Juggernaut

A Christian Challenge

Part 1

by

Gregory Edward Reynolds, M. Div. © 1997



Introduction

Juggernaut was an incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu, whose idol was carried through the streets of ancient India on a large cart for public adoration. So blind was the devotion of the common people that many threw themselves in the path of the cart and were crushed to death. Thus “juggernaut” has come to refer to “anything that exacts blind devotion.”

It is my contention that Darwinism or Evolution is a theory rooted in Materialism that exacts blind devotion of its adherents and their students in Western institutions of learning. This devotion explains the almost fanatical rejection not only of the idea of creation and design but also the rejection of a growing body of evidence that does not comport well with the conventional Evolutionary wisdom.

This lecture is an intellectual challenge to those who believe that Evolution is a “fact of science.” A mounting array of evidence from cosmology, molecular biology and biochemistry is challenging Darwinian Evolutionary science at its foundation. My point in this lecture is that Darwinism is a theory based on a number of unproved assumptions that do not account for a number of recent scientific discoveries. The theory itself is rooted in a philosophical commitment to Naturalism. Naturalism or Materialism assumes that all reality is ultimately physical or material. Thus mind or spirit is reducible to material reality, God and religion are banished to the land of irrelevance.

While most people are aware of the “debate” between Evolutionists and Creationists, few are aware that there is a raging debate within the scientific community itself over the theory of Evolution. I believe that establishment Evolutionary science has a vested interest in suppressing this fact.

1. My Position: Historic Christianity.

Let me state at the outset that my position is Historic Christianity. I believe that the revelational

philosophy of Christian Theism is not only true but that it is the only philosophy adequate to the challenges of life and thought. I believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and that the God of the Bible created all things out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). Creeds such as *The Nicene Creed* and *The Westminster Confession of Faith* give a more detailed summary of my position.

2. My expertise: Pastor-Theologian not scientist.

I speak to you this evening, however, not as a scientist, but as a pastor and a theologian. The current debate between Creationists and Evolutionists interests me on several levels. First, it of obvious interest as a matter of Christian truth. Consistent Evolutionists are Atheists. Christians are Theists. Second, the debate is important because of the epistemological questions involved. Since I believe that historic Christianity is intellectually both satisfying and defensible I consider the dichotomy, which many make, between faith and science unacceptable. As a Creationist I am enthusiastic about the scientific enterprise and find the debate in the public forum frustrating because both Creationists and Evolutionists are relatively ignorant of the relationship between knowledge and faith, and the relationship of both faith and knowledge to science.

Thus I intend to deal with this issue at the theoretical level, using sample evidence from various scientific disciplines. My challenge will be for you to apply what I say to your area of expertise. If I can awaken anyone from their dogmatic slumber I will consider this lecture to have been worth giving. I would be a fool to claim to have all the answers in any area of this debate. My main intention is to show that establishment Evolutionary science has not allowed many of the right questions to be asked. As often as it appears to be a juggernaut it looks like an ostrich with its head firmly plunged into the sand.

3. The thesis:

Recent evidence discovered in the astronomical and biochemical scientific disciplines suggests fundamental weaknesses in the theory of Evolution that

most Evolutionary scientists are unwilling to deal with according to the rules of their own discipline. This further suggests that a theoretical faith commitment to certain presuppositions which lies outside the realm of scientific inquiry is the foundation for Evolutionary science.

4. Definitions:

Evolutionist - One who believes that "life arose from nonliving matter and subsequently developed"¹ "by a naturalistic process in which parent species were gradually transformed into quite different descendent forms by long branches ...of transitional intermediates, without intervention by any Creator or other non-naturalistic mechanism"² over long periods of time. I will use Darwinist as synonymous with Evolutionist. Neo-Darwinism is simply a mid-twentieth century academic revitalization of classic Darwinism.

Creationist - One who believes that God created all things out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*). He designed all things and controls them by His Providence. Man was specially created with dominion over the creation. Note that only some creationists believe in a six day creation and a young earth. That is not what I will be arguing for here. Phillip Johnson refers to this narrower view as "creation-science".³ I would prefer not to use that term because many Creationists are not part of the "creation-science" movement (cf. The Institute for Creation Research). The broader definition is that held by the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA), a Creationist alternative to the National Academy of Sciences.

I. The Phenomenological Problem With Evolutionary Science

Due to my stated purpose, as well as time constraints, the following are meant to be provocative samples, not exhaustive discussions.

1. Evolutionary Science does not have adequate hypotheses to account for the extant history of life (fossil record) and other evidence or its absence.

"Darwin's most formidable opponents were not clergymen but fossil experts."⁴ Even one of Darwin's most loyal supporters, T. H. Huxley found the absence of transitional intermediates in the fossil record troubling. Darwin himself asked: "Why, if species have descended from

other species by insensibly fine gradations, do we not everywhere see innumerable transitional forms? Why is not all nature in confusion instead of the species being, as we see them, well defined?"⁵

The problem has only become more acute after almost a century and a half of searching. Even Evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould admits that "The history of most fossil species includes two features particularly inconsistent with gradualism: 1. Stasis. Most species exhibit no directional change during their tenure on earth.... 2. Sudden appearance. In any local area a species does not arise gradually by the steady transformation of its ancestors; it appears all at once and 'fully formed'."⁶ Gould considers this failure to find a "vector of progress" in the history of life to be "the most puzzling fact of the fossil record".⁷ He even refers to "the extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record" as "the trade secret of paleontology". Evolutionary Paleontologist Niles Eldredge is even more candid: "We paleontologists have said that the history of life supports [the story of gradual adaptive change], all the while really knowing that it does not."⁸

Particularly telling is the reaction of Evolutionists to scientists with a contrary opinion. Nineteenth century Harvard professor and scientist Louis Agassiz responded to *The Origin of Species* by denying that there was any "parental descent" connecting the various species. By his death in 1873 Agassiz had long been isolated and ignored by students and colleagues alike.⁹

Presently there is a rapidly growing movement called Cladism in the area of biological classification. The "cladograms" produced by this school show relationships among living and fossil species in terms of structural and other similarities, but omit hypothetical common ancestors. In other words the diagrams only depict what we have actually observed and discovered. This new method of depiction has raised the ire of not a few committed Darwinists.¹⁰ The missing *links* are still missing. As a 1980 *Newsweek* article so aptly put it: "The missing link between man and the apes...is merely the most glamorous of a whole hierarchy of phantom creatures. In the fossil record, missing links are the rule: the story of life is as disjointed as a silent newsreel, in which species succeed one another as abruptly as Balkan prime ministers." (*Newsweek*, Nov. 3, 1980, 95).

2. Evolutionary Science does not have adequate

hypotheses to account for new micro-scientific evidence.

It was in the arena of micro-science that Darwinians once saw such promise of confirming Evolution. And it is just here that some of the most insurmountable obstacles have recently appeared. It is important to note that the Neo-Darwinian synthesis in the middle of the twentieth century occurred prior to the advent of modern biochemistry.¹¹ So problematic is the evidence of biochemistry to the theory of Evolution that biochemist Michael Behe maintains that even if the fossil record was continuous (which it decidedly is not), Evolution does not explain the micro molecular world.¹²

Kettleford's now famous observation of "industrial melanism" in the peppered moth has, for years, been put forth as a classic example of the mechanism of natural selection at work. The problem with this observation is that the light and dark moths do not demonstrate development through mutation and natural selection, but rather adaptability within the genetic structure of a given species. For the camouflage to work both light and dark moths must exist simultaneously, rather than evolve one from the other.

The veriest Creationist does not find genetic variation within species boundaries problematic.¹³ Creationists of all stripes have always maintained adaptability and change among the "kinds" of animals spoken of in Genesis 1. Micro-Evolution is no proof of Macro-Evolution. Johnson asks: "Why do other people, including experts whose intelligence and intellectual integrity I respect, think that evidence of local population fluctuations confirms the hypothesis that natural selection has the capacity to work engineering marvels, to construct wonders like the eye and the wing?"¹⁴ Johnson later on gives a hint: "The trick is always to prove one of the modest meanings of the term, and treat it as proof of the complete metaphysical system."¹⁵ This is precisely the nature of "industrial melanism" in the Darwinian scheme. It must be remembered that the claim of Darwinism is not that relationships exist among living things, but that "those relationships were produced by a naturalistic process in which parent species were gradually transformed into quite different descendent forms by long branches ... of transitional intermediates, without intervention by any Creator or other non-naturalistic mechanism."¹⁶

Mutational change among fruit flies is in the

same category. What is absent in such experiments is a change of species. The changes, however dramatic they may in some cases be, always yield only fruit flies. The invocation of vast time periods, as we shall see, is another all-purpose explanation that explains nothing. The mechanisms for such changes have simply not been discovered. The added fact of the presence of the experimenter in attempting to demonstrate *natural* selection by *random* mutations is no small problem for the Darwinist. The surreptitious inclusion of a "design agent" in the process is telling.

The problem really comes into focus when we compare what we know now about microbiology compared to what was assumed in Darwin's day. Fellow scientist (biologist) and admirer Ernst Haeckel once declared that a cell is "a simple little lump of albuminous carbon".¹⁷ This is what biologist Michael Behe refers to as *Darwin's Black Box*. Haeckel could not have been further from the truth. The complexity of a single cell, not to mention every element in that cell, is nothing short of mind boggling. That very complexity represents a gigantic obstacle to Evolutionists. Evolutionary theory simply cannot explain either the origin of life or its development to its present state of irreducible complexity.

Evolutionary science makes the classic simplistic mistake of assuming that the whole is the sum of its parts (the fallacy of composition). Take, for example, the eye. How could the parts develop by "infinitesimally small inherited variations, *each* profitable to the preserved being?" Evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould posed the question: "What good is 5 per cent of an eye?" He answers that it might be useful for something other than sight or more likely, though not as good as 100 per cent vision it would be better than no sight at all. Phillip Johnson responds as a good lawyer: "The fallacy in that argument is that '5 per cent of an eye' is not the same as '5 per cent of normal vision.' For an animal to have any useful vision at all, many complex parts must be working together."¹⁸ An automobile cannot function at all with partially-developed parts or without *all* of the parts.

It is often forgotten that there was articulate scientific dissent to Darwin's theory in Darwin's day. In 1871 St. George Mivart opined: "What is to be brought forward (against Darwinism) may be summed up as follows: That 'Natural Selection' is incompetent to account for the incipient stages of useful structures. That it does not harmonize with

the coexistence of closely similar structures of diverse origin. That there are grounds for thinking that specific differences may be developed suddenly instead of gradually. That the opinion that species have definite though very different limits to their variability is still tenable. That certain fossil transitional forms are absent, which might have been expected to be present... That there are many remarkable phenomena in organic forms upon which 'Natural Selection' throws no light whatever."¹⁹

Angus Campbell notes: "In Darwin's day, the chemistry of sight and how the body fights disease were all black boxes. In the face of ignorance it is forgivable to assume that there might be some simple explanation. Only since the 1950s, when the structure of the first protein molecule was resolved, have we understood the unforgivable exactitude of protein sequencing. Professor Mike Behe has argued that in the case of the cilium and many other structures we are dealing with 'irreducible complexity.' Darwin had argued that if a single structure could be shown that in principle could not have been formed by intermediate structures his theory 'would absolutely break down' (Darwin, 189)."²⁰ Darwin himself said, "To suppose that the eye... could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest possible degree" (*The Origin of Species*).²¹

Codiscoverer of DNA, Francis Crick has written: "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have been satisfied to get it going."²² Crick has been reduced to positing the theory of "directed panspermia." "The basic idea is that an advanced extraterrestrial civilization, possibly facing extinction, sent primitive life forms to earth in a space ship."²³ Besides the purely speculative nature of this hypothesis, it simply begs the question.

Such speculations indicate a faith commitment to the Evolutionary theory. Dr. Hubert P. Yockey in an article titled "A calculation of the probability of spontaneous biogenesis by information theory" in the *Journal of Theoretical Biology* concluded, "One must conclude that, contrary to the established and current wisdom, a scenario describing the genesis of life on earth by chance and natural causes which can be accepted on the basis of fact and not faith has not yet been written."²⁴ Since 1977 the facts have proved to be even more elusive.

Stephen Meyer's article titled "The Origin of Life and the Death of Materialism" (*Intercollegiate Review*, Spring 1996) is a brilliant survey of present origin of life theory and research. The gist of his conclusion is that the only explanation for the origin of the information encoded in DNA is "agent causation." The order of the chemical makeup of DNA does not explain the presence of the highly complex information encoded therein, which is not dependent on the medium in which it is encoded. As chemist Michael Polyani has said: "Whatever may be the origin of a DNA configuration, it can function as a code only if its order is not due to the forces of potential energy. It must be as physically indeterminate as the sequence of words is on a printed page. ... To illustrate the distinction between order and information compare the sequence 'ABABABAB' to the sequence 'Help! Our neighbor's house is on fire!' The first sequence is repetitive and ordered, but not complex and informative. The second sequence is not ordered, in the sense of being repetitious, but it is complex and also informative."²⁵ In other words "The information in DNA also transcends the properties of its material medium."²⁶ "The information-carrying capacity of any symbol in a sequence is inversely proportional to the probability of its occurrence."²⁷

"While many outside origin-of-life biology may still invoke 'chance' as a causal explanation for the origin of biological information, few serious researchers still do."²⁸ Meyer uses probability research to consider the "probabilistic hurdles that must be overcome to construct even one short protein molecule of about one hundred amino acids in length" by chance.²⁹ Conclusion: 1 chance in 10¹³. Biochemist Michael Behe has compared these odds to "a blindfolded man finding a single marked grain of sand, hidden in the Sahara Desert, not once, but three times."³⁰ Sir Fred Hoyle, Michael Denton and Henry Quastler have come to similar probability conclusions.³¹

Meyer concludes: "During the past forty years, every naturalistic model proposed has failed to explain the origin of information - the great stumbling block for materialistic scenarios. Thus, mind or intelligence or what philosophers call 'agent causation,' now stands as the only known cause capable of creating an information-rich system, including the coding regions of DNA, functional proteins, and the cell as a whole. ... Consequently, a growing number of scientists now suggest that the information in DNA justifies making what prob-

ability theorist William Dembski and biochemist Michael Behe call 'design inference.' ... The materialistic science we have inherited from the late nineteenth century, with its exclusive conceptual reliance on matter and energy, could neither envision nor can it now account for the biology of the information age."³²

Even Darwinist Cairns-Smith displays doubts when describing the genetic evidence, "After all what impresses us about a living thing is its in-built ingenuity, its appearance of having been designed, thought out - of having been put together with a purpose ... The singular feature is the [enormous] gap between the simplest conceivable version of organisms as we know them, and components that the Earth might reasonably have been able to generate ... But the real trouble arises because too much of the complexity seems to be necessary to the whole way in which organisms work."³³

Notably absent from Ruse's history of biological Evolution, written in 1996, in his chapter "Contemporary Debates," is any mention of Behe or his biochemical challenge to Evolution. He does, however, note that with reference to the idea of "Absolute progress" in "professional evolutionary biology...no satisfactory epistemic criterion of such progress has yet been given."³⁴

Behe comes to a startlingly comprehensive conclusion: "The impotence of Darwinian theory in accounting for the molecular basis of life is evident not only from the analyses in this book (*Darwin's Black Box*), but also from the complete absence in the professional scientific literature of any detailed models by which complex biochemical systems could have been produced ... In the face of the enormous complexity that modern biochemistry has uncovered in the cell, the scientific community is paralyzed."³⁵ "The result of these cumulative efforts to investigate the cell - to investigate life at the molecular level - is a loud, clear, piercing cry of 'design!' The result is so unambiguous and so significant that it must be ranked as one of the greatest achievements in the history of science."³⁶

3. Evolutionary Science does not have adequate hypotheses to account for new macro-scientific or astronomical evidence.

Brandon Carter's *Anthropic Principle* was first publicly articulated in his now-famous lecture to the International Astronomic Union in 1974. In that lecture Carter "pointed to what he called a number

of astonishing 'coincidences' among the universal constants — values such as Planck's constant, h , or the gravitational constant, G . It turns out that infinitesimal changes in the values of any of these constants would have resulted in a universe profoundly different from our own, and radically inhospitable to life."³⁷ Ever since the emergence of the Big Bang theory a host of technical observations has pointed to a universe that has been intricately *designed* to support human life.

In this new evidential environment several notable physicists have been challenging the Atheistic assumptions of Evolutionary physicists. British-born physicist Paul Davies has enlarged on the "questions raised by the Anthropic Principle in a series of books, without attempting to draw firm conclusions (and who was rewarded with the prestigious Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion in 1995)."³⁸ Tulane University physicist Frank J. Tipler and astrophysicist and cosmologist John D. Barrow have published a large volume of reflections on the scientific, philosophical and theological implications of the Anthropic Principle. In *The Physics of Immortality* (1994) Tipler attempted a scientific proof of God complete with complex equations. Even several prominent theologians such as Ted Peters, Arthur Peacocke, and John Polkinghorne, the latter two of which are also scientists, have used Carter's observations to bolster traditional arguments from design for the existence of God.³⁹

In light of this sampling of the phenomenological problems challenging Evolution's explanatory power, I quote Jerry Coyne of the Department of Ecology and Evolution at the University of Chicago: "We conclude—unexpectedly—that there is little evidence for the neo-Darwinian view: its theoretical foundations and the experimental evidence supporting it are weak."⁴⁰

¹ Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), ix.

² Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1991), 89.

³ *Ibid.*, 4, fn. 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 134, fn. 1.

- 11 Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, 24.
- 12 Ibid., 22.
- 13 cf. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 68.
- 14 Ibid., 27.
- 15 Ibid., 151.
- 16 Ibid., 89.
- 17 Thomas Bethell, "A New Beginning: Darwin revisionism goes mainstream," *The American Spectator* (September 1996): 17. Cf. Stephen C. Meyer, "The Origin of Life and the Death of Materialism," *The Intercollegiate Review* (Spring 1996): 25.
- 18 Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 34.
- 19 Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, 30.
- 20 John Angus Campbell, "John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, and the Culture Wars: Resolving a Crisis in Education," *The Intercollegiate Review* (Spring 1996): 48.
- 21 Ibid., 51, fn. 8.
- 22 Stephen C. Meyer, "The Origin of Life and the Death of Materialism," *The Intercollegiate Review* (Spring 1996): 28.
- 23 Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 108.
- 24 Hubert P. Yockey, "A calculation of the probability of spontaneous biogenesis by information theory," *Journal of Theoretical Biology* (Vol. 67, 1977): 398.
- 25 Meyer, "The Origin of Life," 37.
- 26 Ibid., 38.
- 27 Ibid., 43, fn. 76.
- 28 Ibid., 32.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., 33.
- 31 Slick, Matthew J. "The Odds are Against Evolution," Internet: Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry Root Page: 1.
- 32 Meyer, "The Origin of Life," 39, 40.
- 33 Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 109, 110.
- 34 Michael Ruse, *Monad to Man: The Concept of Progress in Evolutionary Biology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 534.
- 35 Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, 187.
- 36 Ibid., 232, 233.
- 37 Patrick Glynn, "Beyond the Death of God," *National Review* (May 6, 1996): 28.
- 38 Ibid., 30.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, 29.

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