

Vol. 8, No. 1

ORDAINED SERVANT



The Committee on Christian Education

Published by
The Christian Education Committee
of

THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

January, 1999

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.

**Published for the Christian Education Committee of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church
under direction of
Dr. James Gidley, Mr. David Winslow, Rev. Larry Wilson and Rev. William Shishko**

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Ordained Servant (USSN pending) is published quarterly by Pleroma Press, PO Box 242, 5645 73rd St SW, Carson, ND 58529-0242. Copies to ordained officers of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church are paid for by the Committee on Christian Education. Others remit \$12 per year. Periodicals postage pending at Carson, ND. POSTMASTER send address correction changes to Ordained Servant, PO Box 242, Carson, ND 58529-0242.

Please send all materials intended for possible publication in *Ordained Servant* to the Editor, G. I. Williamson, 406 Normal College Ave., Sheldon, IA 51201. (Or send it in a text file, by Email to: williamson.1@opc.org). Please send all requests for additional copies, or back issues, to the Publisher, Stephen Sturlaugson, PLEROMA PRESS, Box 242, Carson N.D. 58529. Telephone: 701-622-3862 (Email: StephenS@westriv.com), or download them from The Orthodox Presbyterian Church's Web site on the Internet at: <http://www.opc.org>.

This issue marks the beginning of the 8th year of publication of *Ordained Servant* It is our sincere hope that it has served the church well, and not only the Orthodox Presbyterian Church but also others from around the world who have accessed our internet web site (at <http://www.opc.org>). But *Ordained Servant* is only a small part of what is now available. Through the diligent work of the Rev. Stephen Pribble there is now available, at that site, some of the historic General Assembly papers which have marked the life of the OPC, as well as the doctrinal standards of the Church (with proof texts), and a selection of other resource materials. It is also now possible to send e-mail to most of the pastors of the OPC (those who use computers) by use of an address that is easy to remember. Mine, for example, is simply: williamson.1@opc.org (and, for most of our pastors, you would only need to substitute their last name for mine to have it right. You would need to change the number, of course, when it comes to a name like Miller or Smith because there are so many—but you get the idea). It is our hope that through the OPC web site *Ordained Servant* will do its part in reaching to the ends of the earth in promoting the cause of Christ.

In this issue we present the second part of Dr. Soon-Gil Hur's paper on the subject of women deacons. We do this despite the fact that we (the editor, as well as overseers of the editor) are not convinced by Dr. Hur's paper. We do it, rather, because we believe it is very important for the members of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)—and especially pastors, ruling elders and deacons of the OPC—to be well informed of the views and practices of other churches that belong to the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) in which we now hold membership. It was at the 1997 ICRC convened in Seoul, Korea, that this paper was presented. Four representatives were there on behalf of the OPC, and they were thus able to hear it. But it is our hope

that by publishing this paper—even though we do not agree with its conclusions—many other office-bearers of our church will be stimulated to think further on this subject as a result of Dr. Hur's paper.

One of the good things that we've learned from the use of e-mail is the advantage of brevity. Have we not all learned that we can usually say all that we *need* to say much more succinctly than we used to say it before this modern wonder came along? In deference to this present-day preference for getting to the point my overseers have urged me to try to keep the length of the articles in *Ordained Servant* as short as possible. So if you have something that you want to say through the pages of *Ordained Servant* please try to keep it down to four pages, or less (single spaced 12 point type).

The cover of this issue features a recent picture of the Committee on Christian Education. The men shown are—from left to right—David Winslow, John Muether, Doug Felch, Doug Clawson, Larry Wilson, Alan Strange, Tom Tyson, G.I. Williamson, John Galbraith, Kingsley Elder, Paul MacDonald, Allen Curry, William Shishko, James Gidley and George Miladin (Larry Woiwode is also a member of the Committee but was unable to attend the October meeting and therefore missed out on the picture).

From time to time we still get requests for back issues of *Ordained Servant* and most of those originally printed are now long since gone. We would therefore again draw attention to the fact that *all of the back issues of Ordained Servant are readily available for electronic download at our <http://www.opc.org> web site.*

Women in Office; Especially About “Deaconesses”

Dr. Soon-Gil Hur

Part 2 of an Address presented at the 1977 ICRC in Korea

3. DEACONESS

We come now to the main question. If deacons are not involved in authoritative teaching and authoritative disciplinary action, but only in serving, is it possible to have female deacons in congregational life? Is there any evidence in the Scriptures or any trace in history? The Scriptures show us some positive evidence that women were involved in diaconal work in the congregation. 1 Timothy 3:11, Romans 16:1, 1 Timothy 5:3-16, and Acts 6:1-6 are the main places of evidence given in the Bible.

3.1 “Women” (γυναίκες) in 1 Timothy 3:11

The group of women mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:11 has become the centre of much controversy. Many of today’s exegetes come to the conclusion that they were female servants (deaconesses). Its significance is derived from the fact that “the women” appear in the midst of describing the qualifications necessary for the office of deacon. Who are these women?

The Greek word can mean wives. Its definition is therefore dependent upon a consideration of the context. Exegetes bring forth various translations and opinions: wives of overseers and deacons, wives of deacons, female deacons, and a group similar to but distinct from deacons (male).

They cannot be wives of both bishops and deacons.⁶ It is more likely that they were the wives of deacons. However, in this case the question arises: if Paul intended to talk about the wives of deacons, why did he not add the possessive pronoun “their?”

⁶ Calvin says this about this text, “He speaks of the wives of both elders and deacons, because they have to assist their husbands in their office.” *Commentary on 1 Timothy*

⁷ Nicholas, D.R., *What’s a Woman to do in the Churches?*, Good Life Productions Inc. 1979, p. 40.

Instead of using “their,” Paul refers to the women in a manner which makes them parallel to the bishops and deacons, implying a new but similar class of persons.⁸ He says, “The women likewise.” The significance of these words becomes very clear when it is set alongside the introduction of the bishops (vs. 2) and of the deacons (vs. 8). Paul said, “A bishop must be . . .” “Deacons likewise (must be),” “The woman likewise (must be).” The correlation between the three seems to be very clear.

It ought also to be noted that both the sentence introducing the deacons and the one introducing the women do not have verbs of their own, but presume the verb already used to describe the elders: *δει*, ‘must be.’⁹ The requirements for the deacons and the women run parallel.

Thus the context, and the parallelism between the three groups (overseers, deacons, and women), and the parallelism between the prerequisites for the women and the deacons would have us conclude that the women of 1 Timothy 3:11 cannot be wives of the deacons. They must be a group of women who are similar to the deacons, or very closely related to the work of the deacons. It consequently may be said that they were deaconesses, even though it cannot be stated with absolute certainty. We may at least conclude that they were assistant-deacons.¹⁰

⁸ Schreiner, T.R., “The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership, A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching” in John Piper and Wayne Grudem (eds.), *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, Crossway Books, 1991, pp. 213,214. Van Bruggen, pp. 112,113.

⁹ See the study of James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, Zondervan, 1981, especially pp. 223-233.

¹⁰ Hendriksen, W., *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972 reprinted, p. 133.

3.2 Phoebe, ‘A servant of the church’ in Rom. 16:1

Is there any other place in the Scriptures that the idea of deaconess can be supported with? We ought not to base our understanding of the deaconess on just one text alone. Scripture must always be read in the light of parts of other Scripture. “When there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.”¹¹ “There is a unity of the Scriptures.”

There are some other places in the Scriptures which point in the direction of the institution of deaconess. One of them is Romans 16:1 in which Phoebe is called “a servant (δῆκονος) of the Church at Chencrea.” Regarding the word δῆκονος there are dividing opinions between exegetes. Bible translations therefore, differ from each other (AV: a servant; RSV: a deaconess; NIV: a servant (deaconess in footnote), Korean Bible: a servant). Δῆκονος can simply mean “servant,” or “the one who serves,” “minister,” or even “deacon” as an office. The meaning must be determined according to the context.

If δῆκονος was never used as a title of office in the Scriptures, δῆκονος here must be understood simply as a servant or minister. But it was used as a title of office (1 Timothy 3:8; Philippians 1:1). Had Phoebe been a male, we would have immediately assumed this reference to be a reference to the office of deacon. The fact that Phoebe is female has resulted in differing opinions. However, this word points into the direction of office, because the women in 1 Timothy 3:11 may be assumed to be deaconesses. She, whom many believe to have been the bearer of Paul’s letter, was introduced to the Church of Rome in terms of her relationship to her Church, and further commended on the basis of her past service to God’s people. She must have had a particular function in the church. The word δῆκονος cannot as yet be a technical term to denote the office of deacon. It could be understood simply in terms of a regular pattern of service undertaken by her on behalf of her local church. It would be premature to speak of an established office of diaconate. One, hereby, can propose that only later on did the term δῆκονος function as indicator of an office, namely in 1 Timothy 3.¹² It seems certain,

¹¹ Westminster Confession, 1:9

¹² Dunn, J.D.G. *Romans 9-16 (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 38b)*, Word Books, 1988, p. 887.

however, that the word δῆκονος was already crystallizing as a title for an office. A question, then, may be put: if it was already being used as an official title, why did Paul use the masculine δῆκονος, and not “deaconess?” In that time the feminine “deaconess” did not exist. So in the case of Phoebe, δῆκονος, the masculine form of ‘deacon,’ was used for both men and women.¹³ Phoebe was in Rome in some sort of official capacity, as δῆκονος of the Church in Chencrea. It is clear that she was a female servant.

It is as yet impossible to say with absolute certainty that the office of deaconess was introduced in the early Church. But it can be said with certainty that 1 Timothy 3:11 and Romans 16:1 clearly point in a positive direction. Further the fact that the women who were endowed with spiritual gifts were employed for the upbuilding of the Church by the Lord also makes us think in this direction. It is very interesting that Paul had a number of female fellow-workers. He, for example, refers to Priscilla, Euodia, and Syntyche (Romans 16:3; Philippians 4:2). His ministry involved a significant number of women as fellow-workers.

What was then the role of the women in his ministry? It cannot be said in a single word. One must look for detailed information in the Scriptures. There is evidence that Priscilla, with her husband, taught Apollos in her house (Acts 18:24-28). But one cannot conclude from this that she was acting as an elder or teacher in a formal sense, because one cannot find any female ruling elder or female teaching elder in the New Testament, as this sort of office, which includes the exercising of authority over men, was prohibited for women (1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 14:33-35). One can, however, safely conclude from the women among Paul’s fellow-workers that they were involved in the missionary enterprise and for the upbuilding of the Church with endowed gifts. Thus one can safely say that Phoebe was a very active servant (deaconess) and helper who faithfully served for the edification of Chencrean church life.

3.3 “Widows” in 1 Timothy 5:9 and in Acts 6:1

The possibility that deaconesses existed in the apostolic church is strengthened by the interpretation of the widows mentioned in 1 Timothy 5:9 and

¹³ Hurley, p. 231

in Acts 6:1. Widows in both these places appear to indicate a deaconess.

3.3.1 “Widows” in 1 Timothy 5:9

With respect to the “widows” of 1 Timothy 5:9 there are also dividing views. Some exegetes see them as the widows in need.¹⁴ But Calvin figures they were deaconesses. He introduced two sorts of deacons according to his interpretation of Romans 12:8 and 1 Timothy 5:9-10. He, in the first place, refers to the deacons who distribute the alms according to Romans 12:8: “He that gives, let him do it with simplicity; . . . he that shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” And the second kind of deacon refers to those who devoted themselves to the care of the poor and sick. He says,

“Of this sort were the widows whom Paul mentions to Timothy (1 Timothy 5:9-10). Women could fill no other public office than to devote themselves to the care of the poor. If we accept this (as it must be accepted), there would be two kinds of deacons: one to serve the church in administering the affairs of the poor; the other, in caring for the poor themselves.”

It is noteworthy that Calvin understood the widows who were deaconesses in the church to have had a “public office.”

It seems to be very clear from the context that the widows were some sort of female servant.¹⁵ Paul commands, “Honour widows who are real widows” (vs. 3). If one reads this in the context of the whole chapter, he will quickly see that “honour” does not refer to financial care for the widows. Verse 18 makes reference to financial care for widows, but does not use the word “honour.” Paul further commands, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honour” (vs. 17). Verse 18 then goes on to speak about the financial care for the elders, but it does not speak of “honour.” In the verses 9-15 Paul speaks about widows who are more

¹⁴ J. Hurley says that the early churches cared for the widows in Jerusalem and Joppa. According to him the Greek-speaking widows in Jerusalem (Acts 6:1) and the grieving widows at the death of Dorcas were the widows in need (Acts 9:39) (p. 121).

¹⁵ For an in depth study see Van Bruggen, pp. 119-140 (“Weduwen in ere”).

than sixty years of age and who can be enrolled in something. This would certainly not be for financial support, because it would be very strange if only widows over the age of 60 and of good testimony would receive financial support. Therefore it is clear that in these verses Paul does not command honour for widows by means of financial support. “Honour” means much more than financial support. Real widows are worthy of honour, thus they can be enrolled. Real widows are not simply determined by the age sixty. They are distinguished from the widows who have children and are supported by their brothers and sisters (vss. 3-5 16). These real widows are not connected to financial matters, but to a special task, as the word “enroll” indicates. The Greek word “καλεγεσθαι” means “recruit,” “appoint,” and the verb points to the people who are called and set apart for a special task. Thus in verse 9 we can think of it as the appointment of a widow to a special task. What this task consisted of is not clearly indicated. It may not have been necessary for Paul to mention it, because the congregation in Ephesus already knew the institution of serving widows. However, verse 13 gives us some hints, namely, that the task included going around from house to house for the upbuilding of the church.

In concluding this consideration of the widows in 1 Timothy 5 we may ask whether these widows are the same as the women mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:11 or perhaps similar to them. They could belong to the same group, because 3:11 makes no reference to the marital status of the women. Both the women and the widows were clearly appointed to a permanent task. Why then two references in the same letter? someone may ask. It is not strange that the apostle wrote about the same group twice, because in 3:11 he deals with the qualification, while in chapter 5 he discusses them in connection with mutual relationships in the church. He deals with overseers in chapter 3, but he also deals with them (elders) in chapter 5. Consequently it is possible that the elderly widows were appointed as women for diaconal help. Whatever the case, one thing is very clear: that some widows (women) were appointed for the task of upbuilding congregational life.

3.3.2 “Widows” in Acts 6:1

The ministry of widows for the upbuilding of congregational life seems to have been a common thing in the congregation of Jerusalem. Many ex-

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egetes see the Greek widows as those who were neglected in the receiving of financial care. But there are also other exegetes who understand them as not being allowed to share in the distributing of care. From what we have so far seen about widows, the latter seems to be a more correct interpretation. The whole point depends on how one understands “the daily ministration” in Acts 6:1. There are different translations: NIV and RSV: “the daily distribution;” Korean Bible: “the daily relief.” Does it mean the daily caring for the poor?

It can be assumed that widows in general were poor and needed financial care in that time. But it was not always true. Dorcas in Joppa was a disciple of the Lord called Tabitha (Dorcas; Acts 9:36-45). She was always doing good and helping the poor. She had made many robes and clothing for the poor. When she died, many widows came to her place and wept, showing Paul the robes and clothing that Dorcas had made “while she was still with them.” When one closely looks into this story, one cannot say that she had made clothing for these widows. There is no sign at all of it. Dorcas might also be one among the widows. They could have been doing good works together by making clothing and robes for the poor and for the disciples of the Lord. Of course, this does not mean that all widows were rich. One can only say that widows were not always poor and surviving on alms.

When we read Acts 6:1 in the context of the previous chapters, it would be very strange to think that a group of Greek widows were neglected from the distribution of goods. Acts 2:45 and 4:35 inform us that everyone had according as he had need. It is surprising to hear that a group of widows all of a sudden were neglected and left in poverty. If this were true, there was racial discrimination in the first congregation! However, there is no trace of this at all, for the congregation was united in the Lord. Therefore it is unreasonable to say that the murmuring of the Greeks broke out because their widows were neglected in the distribution of financial assistance. The Greeks murmured for another reason.

There is a possibility that “the daily ministration” does not mean “daily care for the needy” but something different. Pay careful attention to what the twelve said to the multitude of disciples when instructing them to look out for seven men. The

apostles wanted them “to serve at tables,” so that they might devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (vs. 2). Thus we notice that the point of the whole matter was “table service.” From the “table” in verse 2 “the daily ministration” (vs. 1) gets a new meaning.¹⁶ If one accepts this new meaning, it is clear that the reason for the Greek murmuring was not because their widows were neglected in the material distribution but because their widows were being neglected when it came to serving at these tables, dispensing mercy. It was well known that the first congregation had the daily table service. Acts 2:46 says, “And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts . . .” (see also 5:42; “every day”). The daily table was the table of the communion meal, and at the same time a meal for the needy. In that time the congregation in Jerusalem grew fast and the twelve apostles could not sufficiently manage the distribution of alms and the daily table service alone. “Every day in the temple and at home” they had meetings and communion meals. Believers had meetings not merely in one home, but in many homes and at many places. Obviously they had to have some helpers. At the daily meeting and the table service some Hebrew widows could have been involved in the proper administration of the communion meal as helpers. For this ministry the Greek widows were thoughtlessly bypassed, and neglected. It is difficult to say what sort of capacity the widows had in that time. One thing however, is sure, they performed a positive ministration at the daily meeting and table. One may see here in Acts 6 a glimmering of the widows (deaconesses?) of 1 Timothy 5. Here one can safely say that women were endowed with spiritual gifts and the widows were employed for the welfare and upbuilding of the Church of the Lord, even though it is difficult to say in what capacity the widows served at the daily table. It, however, is certain that they were helpers of the daily table, and were a sort of deaconess.

4. HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Thus far we have seen that women were actively involved in the congregational life of the apostolic

¹⁶ See Van Bruggen, p. 67. Read also pp. 65-72 “De taak van ‘De Zeven’” (Handelingen 6:1-7).

Church. There is some evidence that deaconesses of some form existed.

This apostolic practice was continued in the early Christian Church. Traces can be found in early Christian history. Pliny, a Roman mayor, who was sent by Trajan to Bythynia mentions in his letter two female slaves who were called “deaconesses” (*ministrae*).¹⁷ It was evident that these two women had an office in the church, because they were called deaconesses. Until the 5th century traces of female deacons can be found. In a letter of the well-known preacher Chrysostomos (5th century) we come across a rich and faithful woman, Olympias, who was a female deacon.¹⁸

In the time of the Reformation Calvin introduced female deacons in the Church of Geneva. As mentioned already, Calvin understood the real widows of 1 Timothy 5 to be deaconesses, and he installed the office of the care of the poor. Reformed Churches in Europe followed his example and had deaconesses until the office gradually disappeared after the 17th century. The convent of Wezel (1568), which was an assembly of the Reformed churches in captivity, decided that female deacons could be introduced. In 1578, after the return from captivity, a congregation in Amsterdam actually had female deacons.

5. CONCLUSION

From this study it can be concluded that women were involved in the ministry of the church, not excluded from it. They were members of the body of Christ (Galatians 3:26-28; 1 Corinthians 12:27) and were endowed with spiritual gifts to serve the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:4, 27).

However, there is a distinction between the role of men and that of women both in married life and in church life. Women are not allowed to exercise authority over men. This is a clear command of the Scriptures (1 Timothy 2:11-14; 1 Corinthians 14:33-36). According to this instruction they are not permitted the office of elder which exercises authority over men by discipline and by preaching the gospel in public.

¹⁷ Plinius Minor, *Epistulae* X, 96.8 (A.D. 112 or 113).

¹⁸ Edition in *Sources Chretiennes* 13bis (A.M. Malingrey, 1968).

However, the ministry of Christian mercy and assistance for the well-being of the congregation can be performed by them. As this paper has noted, traces of female services to the congregation can be found. In regards to the capacity of the female ministry nothing can be said with absolute certainty. Nevertheless, it can be assumed with confidence that in the apostolic church there were deaconesses (the women in 1 Timothy 3:11 and Romans 16:1), and female assistants (the widows in 1 Timothy 5 and Acts 6). It is not clear whether the real widows in 1 Timothy 5 were deaconesses. They seem to have been in a different category from the other women (deaconesses), because relatively strict rules were applied to them—they should be no less than sixty years of age and could not remarry, thus their position was permanent. This differentiation however does not affect at all the fact that women were employed for the upbuilding of congregational life in the church.

Finally, the issue is whether there is a command to have female deacons or whether it is permitted to have female deacons in the church today. The institution of eldership (bishop) is a matter of the command of the Lord (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), and it must exist in the church. However, the office of deacon is different from the office of elder. In the Scriptures there is no command to ordain deacons, we are merely told of their existence and their requirements. However, the installation of the office of deacon seems to be a right, even obligatory, because Scripture deals with elders and deacons in a parallel fashion (1 Timothy 3:2-13; Philippians 1:1) and they were offices in the apostolic church.

The case of deaconesses is different from these two offices. If one accepts the existence of female deacons in the early church, it can in principle be considered along with male deacons. But the institution is not a matter of command, not even when it comes to male deacons. When we do acknowledge the office of deaconess, it is difficult to indicate what its precise relationship is to the office of the male deacon. There is a possibility that deaconesses were assistants of deacons, because, even in the field of ministration, leadership is necessary. Taking such things into consideration one needs to be very cautious in approaching the matter of female deaconry.

The installation of female deacons may not be a matter of obligation for the church, because its exist-

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ence cannot be proved with absolute certainty in the Scriptures. However, one cannot disregard it because there is very positive evidence for its existence, and many sisters were employed for the well-being of the Church of the Lord. Therefore, when a Church introduces female diaconry, one can not say that it is unscriptural. But there must be a clear distinction between eldership and diaconry, and between male and female deacons. In the Scriptures there is evidence for the ordination of elders (1 Timothy 4:14; Acts. 14:23), but there is no clear evidence for the ordination of deacons.¹⁹

In regards to female deacons it is even more unclear than male deacons. Therefore, it is advisable that a distinction be made between male and female deacons. The Korean Churches have had deaconesses for a long time. But there is a clear distinction between male deacons and female deacons. Male deacons are ordained with the laying on of hands by the session (*presbyterium*), but female deacons are not ordained as such. Male diaconry is permanent but female diaconry bears the character of a temporary office (a one year term). Female deacons function as assistants to the male deacons.²⁰ This institu-

¹⁹ It is not clear whether the Seven, who were ordained with the laying on of hands, were deacons. They were never called as such and there is no evidence that they performed diaconal service after their ordination. Two of them, Stephen and Philip, are also known to us as preacher or evangelist (Acts 7; 8:4-40; 21:8). They were ordained in order to administer and supervise the daily ministration (table service) because there was murmuring from the Greek people for their widows. It is possible that the office was installed as a temporary measure, because no succeeding persons are found just as in the apostles' case. See Van Bruggen, pp. 66-75.

²⁰ Korean deaconesses also assist in the pastoral works of the minister of the Word by visiting the members of their ward. They also assist office bearers in the congregational service on Sunday by receiving people at the entrance of the church and assisting with the collection during the church service. Besides the female deacons there are female exhorters whose office is permanent though without ordination. This office in principle belongs to a temporary office. The requirements for this office, however, are more strict than those for female deacons. They must be at least 45 years old (not over 60!). Their function is to visit from house to house and to report to the ministers of the Word. Their ministry is subservient to the pastoral work of the ministers. This institution is similar to that of the real widows in 1 Timothy 5, even though most of them are not widows at all!

tion was not introduced due to the influence of a new hermeneutic, but for the efficient functioning of congregational life and the upbuilding of the Church.

It can be said that the institution of female diaconry in Korean Churches is based on Scriptural principles. The Church of the Lord is living in the apostolic teaching and tradition. It is very important to preserve this teaching in a changing world. However, there is also some risk that a church is too tenaciously bound to its own tradition which was created in special historical circumstances. It is a duty of the Church of the Lord to continually search the Word of God under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and to persistently reform the life of the Church according to the norm of the Scriptures. When it is found necessary to change well-established practices for the well-being of the congregation and in accordance with Scriptural principles, one should take the resolute step of breaking with tradition. In this regard some Reformed Churches seem to have some weakness in their zeal to be a guardian of Reformed tradition. This can be said also in regards to deaconesses in the church. There is certainly no command of the Lord nor absolute evidence for the installation of this office, but the Scriptures clearly point in that direction and give some positive evidence. So it seems good for the well-being of the Church of the Lord that she employ women for the edification of the Church according to the Scriptures.

Dr. Soon-Gil Hur is a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Korea [Kosin]. He graduated from Kosin Seminary in 1960, was a pastor 1962-1966, did a Th.M. at Kampen, graduating in 1969 and received a Th.D. from Kampen in 1972. He pastored a Free Reformed Church in Australia 1978-1987, was a professor at Kosin Seminary from 1972-1977, was President 1988-94 and is currently an adjunct professor at Kosin Seminary. He has published a number of books and articles. His doctorate at Kampen was titled “Presbyter in volle rechten; het debat tussen Charles Hodge en James H. Thornwell over het ambtvan ouderling.”



The Forgotten John Murray

(October 14, 1998 - May 8, 1975)

by

D. G. Hart and John R. Muether



Wednesday, Oct. 14th, 1998 was the centenary of John Murray's birth. Whether or not numbers divisible by ten are more important than others (a biblical case can be made for multiples of seven), such anniversaries do provide an opportunity to reflect on the contributions of saints who have gone before us. And because of Professor Murray's accomplishments at Westminster Seminary, aside from his own ministry in OPC, this date invites us to acknowledge the debt Orthodox Presbyterians owe to the man from whom two generations of OPC ministers learned systematic theology.

Professor Murray was the youngest of eight children born to Alexander and Catherine Murray, a poor, Free Presbyterian Church family who lived in the Highlands of Scotland. Their accommodations were so modest that Murray shared a bed with his two sisters until he turned six, at which point he opted to sleep with his five brothers. As a boy, he was no saint; one biographer relates the story of how Murray set fire to a stack of oats beside the family home and proceeded to deny having anything to do with it. But he also grew up never having known himself to be outside the covenant of God's grace. Unlike his father, Professor Murray never experienced a conversion. The ways of the Presbyterian home in which he was reared stayed with him throughout his life.

One of the old lines about Murray, who wore a glass eye, was that if you wanted to determine which eye was real, you should look for the one that had the trace of a smile — that was the glass eye. He lost his right eye while fighting in World War I as a member of The Black Watch, a war that also took the lives of two of Murray's brothers. After the war Murray went on to study at the University of Glasgow where he enjoyed math and theology, and in choosing between the two decided to pursue the ministry. To prepare for that

calling, Murray left Scotland to study at Princeton Theological Seminary. Though he did well — well enough to earn a fellowship for graduate study — Professor Murray's intent was always to return to Scotland and serve in a parish of the Free Presbyterian Church.

The door to ministry closed, however, after his graduation from Princeton and during his advanced studies at New College, Edinburgh. While in Scotland Murray preached often and pursued licensure and ordination in the Free Presbyterian Church. But a controversy had erupted over whether church members could use public transit to attend worship services on the Lord's Day. The Free Presbyterian Church ruled that such transportation violated the teaching of the Fourth Commandment and disciplined one particular minister for publishing a book entitled, *May Sabbath-Keeping Prevent Church-Going*. Murray disagreed with the church's decision even though he was a strong sabbatarian. He believed the poor's use of public transit to attend worship was compatible with the Shorter Catechism's teaching on acts of "necessity and mercy." Unable to enforce the church's rule, Murray had to find an alternative, which he did when Caspar Wistar Hodge, the chair of the department of theology at Princeton Seminary, invited him to teach there as an instructor in systematic theology. He taught at Princeton, with some distress, for the academic year of 1929-1930 was the first year of Westminster's existence. The next year he joined the faculty at Westminster, and the rest, as they say, is history. But not quite. After thirty-six years of teaching at Westminster, and after serving as a minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for thirty years, Murray retired from his duties in the United States and returned home. At which point, at the age of 68 he married, fathered two children, preached and lectured throughout the Great Britain, and for the last three years of his life, pastored a small Free Church only two miles from

The Forgotten John Murray

the place of his birth. He died on May 8th, 1975 after a quick and painful bout with cancer.

According to Sinclair Ferguson, Murray's demeanor in the classroom and on campus seemed austere, which explains in part the joke about his glass eye being the one that twinkled. But Murray was not without a sense of humor, such as the time when students in Machen Hall were making too much noise and he came down the stairs from his suite and rather than looking in on the students who could tell by the footsteps that Murray was approaching, took out his glass eye, positioned it in his fingers, and then poked it instead of his head around the corner of the door jam, signaling his displeasure with the racket. In keeping with Highlands piety Murray was also known to enjoy a cigar and Scotch whiskey, though how he drank while living on dry campus might qualify as one of life's great mysteries. And then there is the story of how after the observance of the Lord's Supper Professor Murray would go up to the table and dispense the remaining bread and wine to the children in order to underscore the point that these elements were not holy in themselves.

But Professor Murray was not a favorite of the students nor did he gain an international reputation for his humor or for his habits of relaxation. He was a first-rate theologian who carried on the Princeton tradition of doing systematic theology exegetically. At the heart of Murray's writings was the work of God's grace. To put it another way, explaining the mechanics of grace was the motive behind the trilogy of books through which Professor Murray established his reputation. In 1954 he wrote *The Covenant of Grace*. He followed that up a year later with *Redemption — Accomplished and Applied* and finished his study of the covenant in 1959 with *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*. Finished is probably too strong since his two-volume commentary on Romans, perhaps Murray's greatest work, was written during the

years that he wrote this trilogy and his exegesis of Paul's epistle directly informed his understanding of the covenant of grace, the imputation of Adam's sin, and the sufficiency of Christ's mediatorial work.

In fact, Murray's commentary on Romans stands as a monument to the tradition of systematic theology practiced at Princeton and Westminster which extends all the way back to Charles Hodge who also wrote a commentary on Romans. The theologians associated with Westminster and the OPC have been unusual in their ability to write both commentaries and systematic theology when typically it has been the biblical scholars who produce the commentaries and the theologians who write the systematics. Murray's accomplishment was all the more unusual when we take into account his ethical writings, the first of which was a study of divorce, published initially in 1953, and then his *Principles of Conduct*, published in 1957. These books demonstrate not only the practical aspect of Murray's theological interests, but also reflect his work as a churchman since his book on divorce was originally written for and published by the Committee on Christian Education of the OPC.

Yet, there is one area where Professor Murray is almost entirely disregarded. This is ironic since his stature remains so high and his writings are still read by most OPC ministers. To be sure, no one is infallible. But it is odd that someone who is deemed so wise on almost all the subjects about which he wrote could be brushed aside on one particular topic. That subject is exclusive psalmody, a topic that cannot be ignored if we would do full justice to Murray's convictions and practice.

Murray, of course, came from a church where psalms were the rule — all Presbyterians do for that matter. It is just that the Free Presbyterian Church has held on to the Reformed tradition of song in corporate worship longer than most Presbyterian

These books demonstrate not only the practical aspect of Murray's theological interests, but also reflect his work as a churchman since his book on divorce was originally written for and published by the Committee on Christian Education of the OPC.

denominations in America. Professor Murray was convinced, just as many Reformed and Presbyterian theologians were before him, that the Bible required the singing of psalms in corporate worship. His argument, like all of his theology, was grounded in the text of Scripture. He examined all the instances of song in the New Testament and found that on all such occasions the New Testament church would have sung only psalms in corporate worship. For instance, when our Lord instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, at the end of the ceremony he sang a hymn with his disciples, and that hymn was the cycle of Psalms from 113 to 118. In 1 Cor 14 Paul also talks about song in the assembly of the church and Murray argued that the songs the church sang were psalms. Finally, he looked at Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 where Paul exhorts believers to sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. But Murray did not think that the words, hymns and spiritual songs, referred to songs other than the psalms. Instead, he argued that hymns and spiritual songs designated particular sections of Israel's psalter, in which case Paul was commending psalms for the edification of believers.

Now, there are many who will say that Professor Murray's exegesis was flawed at this point and that he may have been guilty of reading back into the text the grounds for his own practice. And certainly, the exegetical case is not air tight. But such concessions do not counter one of Murray's main points, which is the value of singing God's inspired word in praise to God. If we believe that THE inspired Word is better than uninspired words, in other words, if we take our doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible seriously, it would appear that the words inspired by God for the purpose of his praise are better than the efforts of uninspired writers. Of course, the verse of metrical psalms is not inspired, but neither are the translations of the Bible that we read in corporate worship as the Word of God. And an even greater concern is that the psalms do not reflect the fullness of God's revelation in the New Testament. But if Christ is everywhere present in the Bible, as Reformed biblical scholars teach, and if the songs of praise in the book of Revelation are any pattern, not only for new covenant worship but also

for worship in glory, then we may find that the psalms are just as full of God's revelation as any other part of Scripture.

Aside from the aesthetic argument that the form of praise that pleases God most is his own infallible word, there are pragmatic considerations that tip the scales in Murray's favor. One is the current battle that is going on in our churches over music in worship. If we all sang only psalms the worship wars would end. Neither side would be happy, but at least the debates over praise songs and traditional hymns would cease. Then there is the consideration that comes from the life of Professor Murray himself. Many of the people who visited him as he died from cancer remember Murray leading his friends in the singing of psalms. Dying words can make for stirring conclusions to biographies. Certainly, among the last words spoken by believers, J. Gresham Machen's telegram to Professor Murray has to rank well up there — "the active obedience of Christ, no hope without it." But even better may be those of a saint who takes comfort from the words of Scripture in song and at the same time sings praise to his God and redeemer.

Maybe exclusive psalmody is not required in Scripture. But until we know the psalter as well as Professor Murray did, until we know which psalms to sing for comfort, which to sing for praise, which to sing for confession of sin, we may want to think about singing only the psalms. This may not be a sufficiently principled reason, but sometimes the lives of saints are more persuasive than the most careful exegesis or the keenest logic.

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Evolution: The Materialist Juggernaut

A Christian Challenge

Part 1
by
Gregory Edward Reynolds, M. Div. © 1997



Part II.

The Epistemological Problem With Evolutionary Science

1. Evolutionary Science contradicts the “scientific method” of true science by assuming certain pre-suppositions about ultimate reality but claiming that it begins with observable phenomena.

The Scientific Method

The problems in the debate between Evolutionists and Creationists stem from a failure to address the more fundamental epistemological issues.

It is critical then to focus on the “scientific method” established and espoused by scientists themselves. In *Darwin on Trial* Phillip Johnson makes a clear statement that nicely sums up the basic attitude of this method: “the evidence must be evaluated independently of any assumption about the truth of the theory being tested.”⁴¹ In overturning a 1981 Arkansas statute requiring “balanced treatment to creation-science and to Evolution-science” Federal District Judge William Overton summed up five essential characteristics of science: [McLean vs. The Arkansas Board of Education]⁴²

1. It is guided by natural law;
2. It is explanatory by reference to natural law;
3. It is testable against the empirical world;
4. It’s conclusions are tentative - that is not necessarily the final word; and
5. It is falsifiable.

Evolutionary Scientist Stephen Jay Gould praised Overton’s opinion: “Judge Overton’s definitions of science are so cogent and so clearly expressed that we can use his words as a model for our own proceedings.”⁴³

The first two criteria are misleading to the general public. “Natural law” is not something inherent in nature but a human construct based on empirical observation and experimentation. The recurrence of certain *apparent* cause and effect relationships is called a “law.” This is another way of saying that there is observable order in the world. But the phenomena of observation do not come with labels or references to a Law Book of Natural Statutes. In fact, a *natural law* is really a principle of high probability based on repeated observation and prediction. Accordingly *natural laws* are always being revised. “Scientific laws don’t generally explain or cause natural phenomena, they describe them.”⁴⁴ It is because of this tentativeness that Judge Overton indicated that scientific conclusions cannot be considered the “final word.” It is also the reason for the fourth principle that a hypothesis must be testable and the fifth principle that it must be falsifiable.

Karl Popper is well known for championing the principle of falsifiability. He believed that the theory which explains everything explains nothing. “The wrong view of science betrays itself in the craving to be right.”⁴⁵ The search for confirming evidence only betrays prejudice for the theory. The dismissal of evidence that challenges the hypothesis undermines the scientific enterprise. References to the “fact of Evolution” betray a denial of the “falsifiability criterion”. Popper once wrote that “Darwinism is not really a scientific theory because natural selection is an all-purpose explanation which can account for anything, and which therefore explains nothing.”⁴⁶ Johnson observes: “What they [Darwinists] never find is evidence to contradict the common ancestry thesis, because to Darwinists such evidence cannot exist. The ‘fact of Evolution’ is true by definition, so negative information is uninteresting, and generally

unpublishable. If Darwinists wanted to adopt Popper's standards for scientific inquiry, they would have to define the common ancestry thesis as an empirical hypothesis rather than a logical consequence of the fact of relationship. ...Popper was to warn that 'Confirmations should count only if they are the result of *risky predictions*.' (Popper uses Einstein's General Theory of Relativity as an example of risky) If Darwin had made risky predictions about what the fossil record would show after a century of exploration, he would not have predicted that a single 'ancestral group' like the therapsids and a mosaic like *Archaeopteryx* would be practically the only evidence for macro Evolution."⁴⁷

Darwin himself insisted that the problem with the fossil record of his day was the inadequacy of the record and not the inadequacy of his theory: "I do not pretend that I should ever have suspected how poor a record of the mutations of life, the best geological section presented, had not the difficulty of our not discovering innumerable transitional links between the species which appeared at the commencement and close of each formation, pressed so hardly on my theory."⁴⁸ Scientist Stephen Jay Gould lets the epistemological cat out of the bag when he baldly states "human beings evolved from ape-like ancestors whether they did so by Darwin's proposed mechanism or by some other, yet to be identified."⁴⁹ In light of such unscientific assertions the Piltdown Man scandal should not surprise anyone.

Scientific findings are, by their very nature, always subject to revision, sometimes even to complete reversal. For example, the mechanistic worldview of Newton has been sharply revised in light of the observations of Einstein and Heisenberg. Why then do Darwinists so often speak and write in such an unscientific way?

The Limits of the Scientific Method

Thomas Kuhn and his epoch making (1970) work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* may help us to understand. Kuhn maintains that "science employs paradigms as organizing concepts in guiding research."⁵⁰ A *paradigm* is not merely a theory or

hypothesis, but a worldview, a culturally prejudiced way of looking at the world. In other words all so-called "facts" are viewed from a perspective made up of certain presuppositions about the ways things are. This worldview is the historical, intellectual context in which science functions. Many, if not most, scientists are not aware of this epistemological given. Thus their lack of epistemological self-awareness leads them to "attempt to force nature into the preformed and relatively inflexible box that the paradigm supplies". Furthermore, phenomena that do not "fit the box are often not seen at all."⁵¹

When enough scientists observe enough evidence that doesn't fit the conventional wisdom a "crisis" occurs. Michael Denton in *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* claims that the Evolutionary paradigm is in the midst of just such a *crisis*. Since a paradigm is not a single hypothesis or theory it is not falsifiable in the same way.⁵² Thus as crisis gives way to a new or revised paradigm it again takes on the characteristics of what Kuhn calls *normal science*. It is, therefore, epistemologically naïve to refer to Evolution as a *fact*, or even to scientific knowledge as *certain*, as in the phrase "the assured results of science". One would need to be infinite in order to make apodictic statements about present reality, not to mention past reality. The point is that no observer of anything is without bias. As evolutionary historian Michael Ruse observes, "nearly all of us come to evolution through the popular realm - it is not as if we get a disinterested introduction to the subject."⁵³

2. Evolutionary Science makes truth claims that are beyond its competence.

By failing to recognize or admit the existence of an assumed paradigm scientists often speak as if science not only discovers truth, but that science is the only source of true knowledge. Thus Creationism is written off as a matter of faith, as if scientists, particularly materialistic scientists, do not assume any ultimate principles, which are not empirically verifiable. So virile is this faith that its suppression and denial of recent cosmological alternatives to Darwinism borders on fanaticism, the very thing they claim to fear so in their opposition.

Darwinism or Scientific Naturalism is rooted in a philosophy of Materialism which asserts that all of reality is physical or material. There is no spiritual or mental reality. What appears to be mind is actually explicable in material terms. This is similar to ancient Monism, which sought to explain all of reality in terms of a single principle, e.g. Thales claimed that "all is water." Thus Darwinism is an all encompassing worldview or religion. Speaking at the centennial celebration of the publication of *The Origin of Species*, in 1959 Julian Huxley enthusiastically asserted: "This is one of the first public occasions on which it has been frankly faced that all aspects of reality are subject to Evolution. ...In the Evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer either need or room for the supernatural. The earth was not created, it evolved. So did all the animals and plants that inhabit it, including our human selves, mind and soul as well as brain and body. So did religion ...Finally, the Evolutionary vision is enabling us to discern, however incompletely, the lineaments of the new religion that we can be sure will arise to serve the needs of the coming era."⁵⁴

Now let us look at the basic tenets of this worldview, Evolutionary Materialism.

#1 - The Exile of God

David Asman, the editor of the editorial page of The Wall Street Journal recently rejected an op-ed piece I submitted because I asserted that Darwinism is inherently Atheistic. In response I pointed out that simply because some people are inconsistent in their reasoning, and therefore posit what is known as Theistic Evolution, is no reason to deny the truth of my assertion. Huxley said it in 1959 as we just heard: "In the Evolutionary pattern of thought there is no longer either need or room for the supernatural." Despite Darwin's politic claims to be an agnostic, he wrote to the recalcitrant Charles Lyell: "I would give nothing for the theory of natural selection, if it requires miraculous additions at any one stage of descent."⁵⁵

In *The Blind Watchmaker* Dawkins comments: "In Darwin's view, the whole point of the theory of Evolution by natural selection was that it provided

a non-miraculous account of the existence of complex adaptations."⁵⁶ Stephen Hawking and Carl Sagan are happy to reassert the Nietzschean conclusion that God is dead. "And so it was that the great idea arose that there might be a way to know the world without the god hypothesis."⁵⁷ Sagan suggests that we revere the Sun and stars. Dawkins sums it up best, "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist."⁵⁸ Such Monism leads naturally to the second unproved assumption of the Materialist.⁵⁹

#2 - The Primacy of Matter (Cause and Effect in a Closed System)

Sagan insists that matter is eternal and that this is the ultimate reality. In other words the universe is a closed system of material cause and effect. As David Hume pointed out long ago the idea of cause and effect is unwarranted, and indeed impossible, on the basis of empirical knowledge. Based on the idea that all knowledge comes from empirical experience, the *idea* of cause and effect relationships can only be based on custom. Furthermore since we cannot experience the future, therefore all prediction is based on pure supposition. Empiricism fails because it assumes the existence of a mind and ideas (space and time) prior to experience, and yet claims that there are no ideas without experience. The idea of cause and effect surreptitiously assumes what can only be the product of design. No wonder Hume's Empiricism leads to skepticism.

#3 - The Ultimacy of Chance (Random Universe)

In defining Evolution George Gaylord Simpson said: "Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind."⁶⁰ Chance is the Prime Mover of the Evolutionary world.⁶¹

#4 - The Certainty of Empirical Knowledge

Carl Sagan nicely sums up the Evolutionist's faith: "First: there are no sacred truths; all assumptions must be critically examined; arguments from authority are worthless. Second: whatever is inconsistent with the facts must be discarded or revised. We must understand the cosmos as it is and not

confuse how it is with how we wish it to be.”⁶² The “facts”, of course are the infallible observations of Evolutionists. The problem is that neither of these two propositions is a fact. They are the way Evolutionists wish the cosmos to be.

None of the above dogma can be proved by the scientific method. This is reminiscent of the Logical Positivists’ assertion that nothing is real except the empirically verifiable. This assertion is itself not open to empirical verification.

In *Monad to Man: The Concept of Progress in Evolutionary Biology* (1996) Michael Ruse concludes, “Not only has evolution functioned as an ideology, as a secular religion, but for many professional biologists that has been its primary role. It has not been a mature (or proto-mature) science, governed by epistemic norms, nor has that necessarily been an end ardently sought.”⁶³ “Evolutionists take their belief in scientific Progress and transfer it into a belief in organic progress.”⁶⁴

Patrick Glynn, Resident Scholar of the American Enterprise Institute, in a recent article in the *National Review* (May 6, 1996) registered his astonishment over the fact that the revolutionary work of cosmologist Brandon Carter in positing his “Anthropic Principle” has been largely, and often purposely, ignored by the majority of the scientific community: “... the *a priori* commitment to the atheist notion of the random universe has proved so powerful in our time as to send many scientists scurrying to find logical, and sometimes illogical, arguments to explain away the massive evidence that threatens to refute it.”⁶⁵

This radical challenge to the hegemony of the “chance universe” of Darwinian thought has not come from Christian theologians or “creation scientists” but from the heart of the scientific establishment. The molecular biologist Michael Denton’s *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (1985) and Berkeley law professor Phillip E. Johnson’s *Darwin on Trial* represent a growing number of embarrassing critiques of Darwinism. The double standard exhibited by the Evolutionists’ refusal to seriously consider the challenge belies a nar-

row-mindedness hitherto thought possible only in fundamentalists preachers who still defend the verdict of the Scopes trial. The fact that many Darwinian scientists have asserted that a “random universe” is an hypothesis *preferable* to that of belief in a supernatural design, elucidates the nature of their commitment.

Glynn laments this state of affairs: “The double standard at work here is breathtaking: a host of scientists, from [Bertrand] Russell to Richard Dawkins to Carl Sagan, are free to use loose surmises based on Darwin’s theory to buttress the public case for atheism; but the moment scientists begin marshaling rather considerable and persuasive evidence for the opposite case, their speculation risks being branded by colleagues as “unscientific”.⁶⁶ The point is that all *scientific inquiry* and its conclusions, especially when it comes to cosmology, are debatable.

It must be evident by now that I am not denying the validity of presuppositions *per se*. No one can think, observe or experiment without them. It is ironic to note, as Alfred North Whitehead once implied in *Science and the Modern World* (1925), the dependence of modern science on a Christian worldview. Modern science could not have arisen without the “medieval insistence on the rationality of God, conceived as with the personal energy of Jehovah... The faith in the order of nature which has made possible the growth of science is a particular example of a deeper faith.”⁶⁷ Philosopher of Science Stephen Meyer notes: “Despite the now well documented influence of Christian thinking on the rise of modern science from the time of Ockham to Newton, much of science during the nineteenth century did take a decidedly materialistic turn.”⁶⁸ Modern science arose in the context of belief in the distinction between the Creator and his creation. It assumed, therefore, that there is a discernible order in the creation that could be explored and exploited for the benefit of mankind. Even the idea of progress is based on a Christian view of history. Evolutionary scientists continue to assume a discernible order in the world while denying the foundation for this assumption. The result is a disturbing set of con-

traditions. Chance and order cannot co-exist. Man cannot be insignificant and responsible at once. As we shall see it is precisely the intelligence discernible in the order of the cosmos that cannot be explained on the basis of Evolutionary assumptions.

Science, evolutionary or otherwise, cannot by the very nature of its methods and goals explain the origin, sustenance or meaning of life.

It is, therefore, at the epistemological level that the debate between Evolutionists and Creationists must be understood and engaged. Only then can we meaningfully discuss scientific inquiry at the phenomenological level.

41 Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 73.

42 Ibid., 111, 112.

43 Ibid., 184.

44 Meyer, "The Origin of Life," 39.

45 Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 146, 147.

46 Ibid., 21.

47 Ibid., 152, 153.

48 Ibid., 47.

49 Ibid., 66, 67.

50 Ibid., 118.

51 Ibid., 119.

52 Ibid., 120.

53 Ruse, *Monad to Man*, 539.

54 Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 150.

55 Ibid., 33.

56 Ibid., 162.

57 T. M. Moore, "Beyond Creation vs. Evolution: Taking the Full Measure of the Materialist Challenge," Internet: Contra Mundum Root Page (1-23-96 tew): 3.

58 Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, 9.

59 Ibid., 4.

60 Ibid., 114.

61 Moore, "Beyond Creation vs. Evolution," 4.

62 Ibid., 6.

63 Ruse, *Monad to Man*, 530.

64 Ibid., 538.

65 Glynn, "Beyond the Death of God," 31.

66 Ibid., 32.

67 Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 19,24.

68 Meyer, "The Origin of Life," 24.⁵⁹ Ibid., 4.

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Pastor to Pastor: The Riches of Spurgeon (pt. 3)

by William Shishko



One of the duties of the minister is to “do the work of the evangelist” so that his ministry will be truly fulfilled, cf. 2 Tim. 4:5. Simply put, this means that no Christian ministry is complete without specific and earnest efforts to bring the Gospel to sinners with the goal of seeing some, if not many, of them brought to Christ as Savior and Lord. This work, we believe, is accomplished primarily by preaching, for the Gospel preached is God’s unique power unto salvation to all those who believe, cf. Rom. 1:16.

This Gospel preaching is to display the very heart of God who freely calls sinners to come to Himself. *“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.”* Is. 55:1f. It ought to demonstrate through Christ’s representative the hearty offer of Jesus Himself who cried, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* Matt. 11:28. Such preaching should be marked by such apostolic fervor that it can say boldly, truthfully, and freely, *“Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were plead-*

ing through us: we implore you (i.e. “we beg you”) on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” 2 Cor. 5:20. And none of this zeal for a Gospel freely offered to sinners should be hindered by our commitment to Calvinism; indeed our belief that God does, indeed, have an elect whom He will save by the ministry of the Word should be the great spur to our evangelistic energies.

Nevertheless, such evangelistic zeal is (much to our shame) far too uncommon in Reformed pulpits today. In some cases a non-evangelistic spirit creates churches in which orthodox ministers “preach to the choir” from week to week (or perhaps it would be better to say “from weak to weak”!). In other cases, reaction to superficial and manipulative evangelism has created the opposite error of doing no (or very little) evangelism. In still other cases the frigid atmosphere of “hyper-Calvinism” has cooled or frozen the burden to proclaim genuinely free grace to sinners. In most situations, however, good ministers have been less the evangelists than they ought to be simply because they have not seen good models of evangelism that is truly bound by the Word of God and done within the strictures of historic confessional orthodoxy.

As in so many other areas, Charles Spurgeon provides a model that is rich with insight for and application to our own day. Spurgeon, “The Prince

SPURGEON’S CALL TO MINISTERS AS SOUL-WINNERS

“Do not close a single sermon without addressing the ungodly, but at the same time set yourself seasons for a determined and continuous assault upon them, and proceed with all your soul to the conflict. On such occasions aim distinctly at immediate conversions; labor to remove prejudices, to resolve doubts, to conquer objections, and to drive the sinner out of his hiding-places at once. Summon the church members to special prayer, beseech them to speak personally both with the concerned and the unconcerned, and be yourself doubly upon the watch to address individuals... Be well prepared for the appropriate season “when kings go forth to battle.”

From “On Conversion as Our Aim”, in Spurgeon’s *LECTURES TO MY STUDENTS*

of Preachers” was always “The Prince of Evangelistic Preachers.” In sermons that were second to none in doctrinal content, often including lines and phrases that were bodies of divinity in miniature, Spurgeon never neglected pointed, personal, and passionate calls for his hearers to trust in Christ Jesus alone for salvation.

Even the reading of Spurgeon’s sermons brings a sense of the earnestness and urgency with which Spurgeon pleaded with those who were present under his actual preaching. He used every righteous motive to, without hesitation or embarrassment, press the issues of life and death, heaven and hell, everlasting bliss and everlasting misery upon his hearers. Note the penetrating vividness of this conclusion to his sermon, “The Water of Life”, preached in 1867. Also pay attention to how the preacher sensitively identifies himself with his congregation, without ever giving up the role of the herald who speaks in the second person to those gathered to hear the Word of the Lord:

God grant that there may be no...postponing here, lest we postpone ourselves into eternity, where there are no acts of pardon past. May we have Christ now. We may not live to see tomorrow’s sun. Albeit that the sun is well-nigh gone down, yet the light of this evening may not have gone before our life may be ended. How near to death we stand, and yet we scarcely think of it! Right on the edge of our graves sometimes we are, and yet we sport and laugh as though we had a lease of life! You forget death, most of you. The cemetery is so far out of town, but still you should not quite forget, for the hearse goes to and fro with awful regularity, and the church bell that tolls is not rusty, and those words, “Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes” are still familiar to the ears of some of us. It will soon be your turn to die. You, too, must gather up your feet in the bed, and meet your father’s God; God grant

In sermons that were second to none in doctrinal content, often including lines and phrases that were bodies of divinity in miniature, Spurgeon never neglected pointed, personal, and passionate calls for his hearers to trust in Christ Jesus alone for salvation.

that you may be found right with him. Little do I know for whom these sentences may have a special bearing; but they may have a bearing, dear friend, upon you. I see some of you dressed in black; you have had to go to the grave mourning because of others: that black will be worn by others soon for you, and the place that now knows you shall know you no more for ever. Oh! by the frailty of life, by the near approach of the Master, or by the certainty of death, I pray you see to it that you breathe the prayer, “Lord, give me of thy grace.” The Lord help you to pray it. Amen.”

Unlike evangelistic preachers who fall into the trap of Arminianism, Spurgeon is clear that only the sovereign grace of God can truly bring a soul to faith in Christ. Yet, at the same time, he makes memorable use of the full range of motivations to call these souls to decision, e.g. the inevitability of death, the brevity and unpredictability of life, the return of Christ. How much this is like the wise father who tells both biological and spiritual children, “Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.” (Prov. 27:1); and how well this conforms to the apostolic model of an urgent messenger imbued with the truth that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” and as a ministerial outflow can say, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:10f.). Reformed ministers today who rightly stand against the manipulative techniques of evangelism based on flawed and erroneous views of the human will should ask themselves if, in throwing out the dirty bath water of Arminianism, they have also thrown out the baby of genuine biblical urgency in pleading with the lost. Spurgeon surely did not!

Spurgeon’s evangelistic calls appeared at some point in every sermon. Like lightning that

strikes in various places during a strong summer storm, Spurgeon's appeals to those who were unconverted or undecided with respect to Christ and the Gospel came at various places in his powerful sermons: sometimes in the introduction, periodically in the various points of his messages, and very often at the conclusion. This master preacher seemed to study to avoid sameness in both the place and manner of his evangelistic applications. As a fisher of men he cast his net thoughtfully and drew it in always anticipating a catch. And, following his own dictum that "genuine love to God and fervent love to man make up the great qualification for a pleader," Spurgeon's appeals were marked by a tender earnestness that could not help but bring the compassion of God to a congregation through the heart, mind, and energies of the preacher. In this excerpt from a sermon appropriately entitled "Earnest Expostulation", based on Romans 2:4 (Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?) one can feel the influence of a Minister who has pleaded with God for sinners before he pleads with sinners for God:

"Weary, but not quite wearied out, O impenitent man, I plead with thee! Though thou hast so often been pleaded with in vain, once more I speak with thee in Christ's stead, and say – Repent of thy sin, look to thy Saviour, and confess thy faith in his own appointed way. I verily believe that if I had been pleading with some of you to save the life of a dog I should have prevailed with you a great while ago. And will you not care about the saving of your own souls? Oh, strange infatuation – that men will not consent to be themselves saved; but foolishly, madly, hold out against the mercy of God which leads them to repentance. God bless you, beloved, and may none of you despise his goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering."

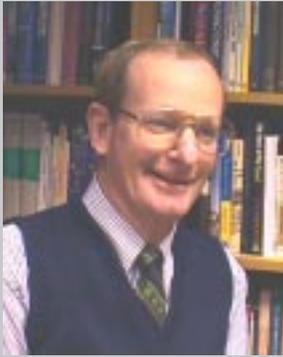
In our Reformed commitment to address the congregation corporately as "saints" we may resist the concept of doing individual pulpit discipline by using terms such as "O impenitent man",

but let us remember that Paul himself could say in his address to the Galatians (4:19), "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you" and to the Corinthians "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? -- unless indeed you are disqualified. (II Cor. 12:5). While we may reject what we believe to be Spurgeon's approach to dealing discriminatingly with the congregation as a "mixed multitude" of individuals, (actually, dealing with the congregation as a de facto gathering of sinners and saints), let us avoid the error of dealing with the congregation under a de facto "presumptive regeneration." Spurgeon was possessed with the passionate heart of a passionate God who earnestly pleaded with His people: "Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!" (Ezekiel 18:31f.). May God grant something of this passion to us, and deliver us from the practice of excusing our own coldness by criticizing the kind of heat given forth by someone else.

(To be continued).

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ELDER TO ELDER

“Home Visitation and Family Devotions”

by

Ruling Elder David Winslow

When you visit in the homes of your congregation this coming year I predict that one of the more pervasive problems that you and fellow elders will note is the lack of family devotions. You will hear families who say they don't have the time, schedules too chaotic with working parents passing each other like two ships in the night, or fathers who feel inadequate so they don't feel comfortable doing it...excuses excuses excuses. My own personal favorites were that my wife didn't keep a Bible handy or that I had to go to a Session or Trustees meeting. Yes, that's right, too busy with church work to lead my own little ones to Christ. Those excuses can be embarrassing can't they?

My fellow elders we do need to address the excuses in our own lives if we are to deal with those in the lives of the congregation. We need to lead by example. Pastor Bill Warren's example was the most helpful to me as a young father and new elder. He would have short devotions with his family after each meal. Over the last dozen years we have been able to develop consistency in doing the same thing in our home. When we eat together as a family we finish with Bible reading and prayer. Now my Bible sits within hand's reach. My wife and children expect me to read and pray even if I need to be brief because of other commitments. Needless to say, our enjoyment of our God and even His glory have been advanced by these humble efforts.

As Orthodox Presbyterians we will be visiting in homes where the parents promised at the time of their child's baptism to instruct their children in the Reformed Faith, pray with and for them, endeavor by all the means appointed by God to bring

them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Directory for Worship page 146). On the basis of these promises elders may urge the flock to make use of family devotions as part of the fulfillment of those promises. Two of the three ordinary means of grace are at hand in family devotions, and I do not believe that it is appropriate to shift all the responsibility for the nurture of our children to the weekly church meetings or to the Christian School. Christian households must necessarily reflect the glory of Christ that is in the greater household, the Church, And since the Church is marked by her devotion to Christ in prayer and attention to his Word so should the Christian family.

In our home visits we must encourage fathers to exercise headship in this area of family life and mothers to assist their husbands in this covenantal responsibility. There is a partnership the balance of which must be maintained. Unfortunately it is often upset by the husband who shirks his duty to lead mother and children, or conversely the gifted mother who usurps the father's role. As the visiting elders discuss with the family what they are doing for family devotions it would be good to be prepared with ideas that can be of help in various situations.

“Nourish the body, nourish the soul” is my simple way of stating a concept that young the children can readily understand. For thousands of years it has been the practice of devout Christian homes to join the fellowship of breaking bread together with the fellowship of Bible reading, singing, and prayer. While this custom appears to have fallen victim to dual income families, our American love affair with sports for all

ages, not to mention endless electronic entertainments with little recreational value, it is one worth preserving if at all possible. In our household mother does the morning devotions at the breakfast table before the children go off to school and father does the evening devotions at the dinner table. The other time for family devotions with young children is before the youngest goes off to bed. That is a great time for gathering in the family circle for Bible reading and family prayer.

Materials for devotions can be an important aid in helping make the family worship meaningful to all members. The Christian family must have devotions that are Christ-centered. It is after all the word of Christ that is to dwell in us richly; He is our life, we have died with Him and our lives are now hidden in Him. We can no longer read our Old Testaments as if it were still 400 BC! The family that is in Christ is part of the new creation; the old has gone the new has come with all the heavenly glory of the Son of God Himself. But doing this is not always as easy as one would think since we seem to have almost a natural tendency toward a moralistic approach to the exercise of our religion. This is true of much of the devotional aide materials that are available as well. Another problem is that so many books use pictures of Jesus to depict the biblical scenes of His life. We think this is more than unfortunate; it is a violation of the 2nd commandment as question 109 of the Larger Catechism clearly states.

Three suggested aides for families:

The Child's Study Bible by Catherine Vos. This is excellent with a theocentric/chistocentric approach to the stories that probably reflects the fact that her husband G. Vos did a good job with his own family devotions as well as assisted in editing the book. A razor can easily remove the pictures of our Lord without damaging the text. Good for ages 3-10 yrs.

Leading Little Ones to God by Marian Schoolland. Bible teachings (more than just stories) covering who God is, the work of the Son and

the Spirit, the response of faith and obedience, prayer, and the ministry of the Church. Each section includes songs and suggested prayers. The text does contain pictures of Jesus which we simply did not show to our children. Good for ages 3-10 yrs

Promise and Deliverance by De Graff. This four volume set covers the narratives of the Bible from Genesis to Acts. Designed to help Sunday school teachers, De Graff's basic approach is to see that the narratives are given a redemptive-historical flavor that focuses on the Lord of the Covenant and His gracious saving of His people in Christ. This is very helpful material to use along side reading through the Bible. Good for ages 5-adult.

Questions for the Elders to consider:

- 1) Are our own "devotional houses" in order so that we are examples to the flock?
- 2) What devotional materials can we as elders recommend to our members for their use?

Editor's note: *Ordained Servant* would like to publish a more complete list of devotional materials in a future issue and would solicit submissions from our readers that include a very brief review.

David Winslow serves as a ruling elder in the Garden Grove Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Garden Grove, California. He is a member of the General Assembly's standing Committee on Christian Education and serves on the Ministerial Training Subcommittee.



About Children in the Worship Services of the Church

(A Reply to a Young Parent's Questions)

by Pastor David King

In my experience (27 years now as a pastor, a few before that as a pew-sitter), the people most disturbed by noisy children are their own parents. Most of the rest of us are so grateful to have families with young children in our churches that we gladly tolerate their noise. Of course, some children are a problem. Usually they just need to be disciplined and their parents share in the blame for their distracting behavior. But we must surely make allowance for those who are just coming to understand the teaching of Scripture. Another observation from my experience is that the sooner children are expected to sit (relatively) quietly through a worship service, the sooner they are able to—and the sooner they actually begin to—"get something out of it." If we assume that young children can't handle "adult" worship (which may be saying something not very good about our worship) and therefore send them out of the place of worship, or out to some kind of 'service' tailored to them [Sesame Street style church, oh boy!], guess what? They soon come to expect "church" to be entertaining. Well then: when they get to be 5 or 6 are they going to want to join the big people? All that has been accomplished by this all too common practice is that the necessary time for adjustment has been postponed until they are bigger and can squirm and distract even more effectively. I have seen this; it's not just theory. Also, in at least some of these cases, there is an underlying problem: Mom and Dad are letting junior call the shots in life based on what he wants and what he enjoys.

To deal with the matter with a little more substance: The church is a gathering of the covenant people of God. Our children—even the babies—are part of that covenant community. When God's people meet for worship they present themselves before the Lord for His blessing and to bring offerings of praise and worship to Him. And in his word the Lord does not say, "Adults only" when you come to worship Me. Quoting the Gospel passage about Jesus saying, "Let the children come to Me" is appropriate to discussion of this matter. On that occasion his disciples took the view that the Lord had important things to teach and that a lot of noisy children would interfere with him doing so. But our Lord stopped everything to take even tiny children (Greek: βρεφη, infants [Lk. 18:15]) in his arms and bless them and declare that the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these..."adult" disciples take note!

Yes, it is a struggle sometimes with squirmy, high-energy young children. It was doubly so for my wife, with our five children, because I couldn't be in the pew to help her. She once said, "I don't think I've heard a whole sermon in years." I understand, but that goes with the territory; people should expect these things if they have babies! There are lots of things that have to be dealt with that aren't necessarily pleasant or easy. But if you hang in there it won't be too long before your child will settle down (reasonably for a child). If you persevere, in other words, and don't get too hyper about it yourself, progress will be made. And that is not all: it seems that there is always some loving

About Children in the Worship Services of the Church

grandmother type who will welcome a chance to help by holding one of the little ones—this is especially true when a mother has more than one little child to cope with!

If it is Scriptural teaching that families ought to worship together, I think it follows that worship services should be somewhat child-friendly. I do *not* mean puppet shows for sermons or singing "Arky, Arky". But pastors can address themselves directly to the youngest members of the congregation in their sermons. And they can ask themselves, when preparing sermons, how to make the main point—or points— of the sermon plain enough for a child to grasp. I know (boy, how I know!) that not everything in a sermon can be made clear to young children, and it is the responsibility of parents to be their children's primary teachers. But we can have some regard for the weakness of their flesh (if you can't say it in under 30 minutes, who's going to remember it anyway?); we can look them in the eyes and speak God's word right to them (when appropriate). We can pick some music that is at their level (not childish, but simple and uncomplicated).

When our children were little, we did not serve them meals in another room. They ate with us at mealtime. But we did cut their food up into small bites. It doesn't seem to me that it is too much to ask for some small bites in the worship service for the small members of the congregation. There is no need to violate or even bend the Regulative Principle to do that. And finally: to be honest. I must add that I have a better grasp of the theory stated above than of its actual practice.

David King is pastor of the Christ Presbyterian Church, a congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Janesville, Wisconsin. This material in this article was originally part of an e-mail response to questions on the internet, and with permission revised for *Ordained Servant*.