

The Confessor's Tongue for November 24, 2024

23rd Sunday After Pentecost; St. Philaret the Merciful, Prophet Nahum

In honor of St. Maximus the Confessor, whose tongue and right hand were cut off in an attempt by compromising authorities to silence his uncompromising confession of Christ's full humanity & divinity.

Prayers of the Prayerbook: Evening Prayer 3

Fr. Justin Frederick

In order to pray better and appropriate more deeply the meaning of our customary prayers, we are reflecting on some of those prayers in this series.

The Church encourages Christians to undertake a brief examination of conscience at the end of the day, reviewing one's words, thoughts, and actions over the course of the day against the standard of Christ. The third evening prayer provides a means of doing this.

The prayer is one of a few addressed directly to the Holy Spirit. This is because it is the Holy Spirit who works in our conscience to convict us of sin. We see our sin and agree with the testimony of our conscience against us and ask God's forgiveness.

The prayer lists a considerable number of likely sins. It does not assume we have committed all of them in the course of the day. We aim always to confess things we have actually done and to which our conscience testifies. Thus, prayer prefaces each sin with an "if"—if I have done this, have mercy on me.

O Lord, the Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth: have compassion and mercy on me, Thy sinful servant! Absolve me, who am unworthy. Forgive all the sins I have committed this day both in my humanity and my inhumanity, behaving worse than beasts in sins voluntary and involuntary, known and unknown, from my youth, from evil suggestions, haste and despondency. If I have sworn by Thy name or blasphemed it in thought; if I have reproached anyone or become angered by something; or slandered or saddened anyone in my anger; or have lied, or slept unnecessarily; or a beggar has come to me and I have despised him; or have saddened my brother or quarreled with him; or have judged someone; or have allowed myself to become haughty, proud or angry; or, when standing in prayer, my mind has been shaken by the wickedness of this world; or have entertained depraved thoughts; or have over-eaten, over-drunk or laughed mindlessly; or have had evil thoughts or seen the beauty of someone and been wounded by it in my heart; or have spoken inappropriately; or have laughed at my brother's sins when my own transgressions are countless; or have been indifferent to prayer; or have done any other evil that I can not remember – for I have done all this and more: have mercy, O Master, my Creator, on me, Thy despondent and unworthy servant! Absolve, remit and forgive me, in Thy goodness and love for mankind that I, who am prodigal, sinful and wretched, may lie down in peace and find sleep and rest. May I worship, hymn and praise Thy most honorable name, with the Father and His only-begotten Son, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

We confess that we behave worse than the beasts. This is not because beasts are sinful. They are guided by the instinct God implanted in them. They do what God made them to do. Man, made in God's image, *A publication of St. Maximus Orthodox Church, 2026 West Oak, Denton, TX, 76201 (940) 293-3032*

does not do what he was made to do. Made standing upright to look up to heaven and commune with God he instead fixes his attention down upon the earth and concerns himself with earthly things. The possible sins listed in this prayer are all ways in which man may fall short of his calling and behave "worse than beasts."

We may not do all these things every day, but almost for certain, over the course of our lives, we have done all these things.

We ask forgiveness for the things that have defiled us in the course of the day, the things in which we have fallen short of God's glory, so that we "may lie down in peace and find sleep and rest" and not be tormented by a bad conscience or evil memories.

Book Review: *Darwin's Bluff*

Robert F. Shedinger

Seattle; Discovery Institute Press, 2024

The assessment of great thinkers and actors in history is conveyed to us with an oral tradition and mythology that is often not justified by the facts of their lives or the content of their writings. Too many professors are content to pass on the assessments of their own teachers without critically reading the materials for themselves. Hence, it is wise when assessing a seminal thinker to go back to read him for oneself. One may thus discover that the conveyed tradition is inaccurate.

Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* published in 1859 was greedily devoured and quickly accepted by Europeans who had lost their living Christian faith in Christ but had no reasonable explanation for the existence of the world and its many creatures to replace the dogma of creation. Darwin (1809-1882) has been hailed as a hero and model of science, following the evidence to a conclusion in pursuit of the truth no matter how it upset the religious. His theory of evolution and the descent of species is considered the holy grail of modern science without which nothing can be properly understood.

Robert Shedinger has delved deeply into Darwin's world, reading his extensive collected correspondence with many eminent scientists and thinkers of his day. His digging has uncovered many facts which call into question the hallowed position Darwin and his theory hold in the modern world.

At the heart of his research is his finding that Darwin himself considered his *Origin of Species* a mere abstract, a brief summary of his provocative theory, and not a thorough, comprehensive, substantiated exposition of it. Many who favorably read his work at the time perceived that it did not make a conclusive case. It lacked evidence to support in rigorous scientific manner its central thesis of the transmutation of species by natural selection. George Bentham, who accepted Darwin's theory, found the

evidence to support it wanting. The unchanging nature of a large number of species in the fossil record troubled him. "I feel I am one of your converts," he wrote, "but I cannot satisfy myself that I am right at all points, and therefore cannot go all lengths with you." Darwin readily admitted the defect in his work, promising to provide the needed proof in a larger work to come. That work, entitled *Natural Selection*, was three quarters finished. Darwin promised he would see it published in "two or three years". But he never did. It was published only posthumously in 1975, more than a century later.

Why did Darwin not publish his big book in his lifetime to supply the evidence for his hypothesis expressed in his *Origin of Species* abstract? An answer to this question Shedinger pursues through the rest of Darwin's career. Instead of finishing *Natural Selection*, Darwin took up a study of the fertilizing mechanisms in orchids and published a monograph on it in 1862. In 1868, he published *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, which was an expansion of the first two chapters of *Natural Selection* into a two-volume work, and, in 1871, a long book *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. Despite all Darwin's promises, his acknowledgement of the need to provide the facts that would support his theory of natural selection, and the eager anticipation of his readers, Darwin never delivered.

A look at *Natural Selections* after it was finally published in 1975 gives an indication of why he did not publish it. It reveals that the work lacked the decisive evidence to establish the hypothesis as a theory, "the long catalog of dry facts" that Darwin had promised to provide. Darwin realized he lacked the decisive evidence, and gave up the project. In Shedinger's assessment, Darwin "knew he could not make a convincing empirical case for the creative powers he had claimed for natural selection."

What is shocking is how many scientists and others have bought into the Darwinian mythology established by the abstract *Origin of Species* without the necessary evidence. His initial readers had faith that he had the evidence but had not yet been able to publish it. Commitment to the theory ran ahead of the scientific evidence. Their faith was misplaced. The evidence was lacking.

Today, Darwinism is a theory in crisis. Scientists, despite their commitment to a material origin of all things, recognize that Darwin's theory is an inadequate explanation for the vast variety of species we observe. They have over the years provided many modifications and continue to debate until this day. But because of their commitment to materialism and a definition of science that excludes divine action, they continue to hold to the only theory that offers them hope for a 'scientific' explanation. They passionately believe the mythology of Darwin that sprang up quickly around him.

Darwin wrote his book on Orchids as a "flank movement' on the enemy". Shedinger writes, "Darwin knew very well why he decide to publish his orchid book instead of completing and publishing the big book on species. The big book would not have addressed the criticism leveled at the *Origin* by Darwin's "enemies." With the orchid book Darwin tried to outflank those

enemies by laying before them a detailed description of the exquisite contrivances found in orchids—thus hoping his readers would themselves draw the natural conclusion and see in these adaptations the power of natural selection at work. Perhaps they would then view his argument in the *Origin* in a new and more favorable light."

Darwin's flank attack did not succeed with his critics. Others who read the Orchid book found in it convincing evidence of intelligent design, not of natural selection. Harvard botanist Asa Gray saw the ingenious contrivances in the fertilization of orchids as the work of an intelligent designer. George Dickie, a Scottish botanist wrote Darwin, "I frankly confess that I cannot comprehend how [the adaptations] can be explained by 'natura selection' or what relation they have to that view."

While scientists and the atheistic and materialistic defenders of science continue to sing the praises of the courageous and brilliant Darwin who discovered the truth about the origin of species and the descent of man and vanquished religious superstition forever, a reading of Darwin himself reveals a very different picture.

Darwin's Bluff is now available in our library. Fr. Justin

Notes on Our Ways of Serving Liturgy

Those of us who have attended some of the early morning Divine Liturgies in the past few months may have noticed that we have been serving some of these differently from the way we serve on Sunday and Thursday mornings. Here we offer a brief explanation of this.

The rubrics for serving actually call for the Royal Doors to remain shut after the Great Entrance all the way up to Holy Communion. Our general practice has been to close after the Entrance and open again for the Creed and the Anaphora. But we have been keeping the doors closed at the early liturgies.

More importantly, though we read the Anaphora aloud on Sundays, Thursdays, and Feasts, we have begun to follow the prescribed practice of reading it quietly in the altar while the choir sings over it.

This is the practice generally followed in Russia, on Mt. Athos, and the Greek Monasteries here in the U.S., and in many places in the world.

The priest does not plan to change what has been our normal practice. The anaphora will continue to be read aloud on Sundays, Thursdays, and feasts. But for variety and to allow us to experience the Liturgy as it is most often served in the world, the priest has been serving it with the Anaphora read silently at some early Liturgies during the week.

Upcoming Events 2024

- 6 December: St. Nicholas
- 7-9 December: Fr. Justin in Alpine
- 14 December: Slavonic Divine Liturgy 9:30 a.m.
- 16 December: Holy Unction, 6:00 p.m.
- 24 December: Nativity Eve Vespertal Liturgy at noon, Vigil at 6:00 p.m.
- 25 December: Nativity of our Lord, 8:00 a.m. Liturgy

GLORY BE TO GOD FOR ALL THINGS!

The Besetting Sins of Our Land: Greed & Bribes

Fr. Justin Frederick

The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender. *Proverbs 22:7*

In 2023, the U.S. government had revenues of \$4.4 trillion; its expenditures were \$6.1 trillion. The debt of the Federal government stands at \$36 trillion.

What this means: you have an income of \$100,000 a year. You spend \$140,000 a year. Your consumer debt stands at \$800,000. How do you feel about your finances? Can you live like this?

Excessive spending and debt show lack of self control, greed, and purchase of influence.