

REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

MORAL THERAPEUTIC DEISM

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Would you agree with the following assertions? Honestly, could you add your “Amen” to these statements?

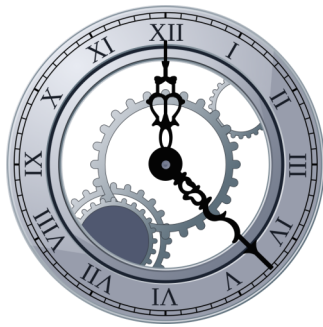
1. A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself
4. God doesn't need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

If those five statements summarize your beliefs, and can act as your creed, then you are a Moral Therapeutic Deist, not a Christian.

This phrase – Moral Therapeutic Deism – was first introduced in 2005 by two sociologists in a book entitled Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers. The authors, Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, surveyed a large number of American teens, and found these five ideas to be central to their religious opinions.

First of all, it is Moral in the sense that it emphasizes a certain traditional morality. There is good and evil, right and wrong, fair and unfair, just and unjust. Those moral categories are important, if vaguely defined. The central purpose of religion, in their opinion, is to produce moral people. “Be good” and “do good” are the first and second great

commandments. This is really moralism, or works righteousness. It is not about a transforming relationship with the Triune God, but just being a nice person who “plays well with other children.”



Second, it is Therapeutic. This approach to religion leans heavily on psychological theories of therapy. Others have observed the triumph of therapy in all matters of human life, such that the cure for everything is “counselling.” This therapeutic revolution has changed all sins into psychological conditions needing extended treatment, psycho-analysis, and psychiatric drugs. (for an interesting analysis, read Richard Ganz' book Psychobabble published by Crossway Books).

Finally, it is Deism. Not Trinitarian Christianity, but good old-fashioned Deism. Deism says there is a god somewhere “out there” who created the universe. He is the grand Clock Maker, who designed this clock, wound it up and let it run. He sits back and watches it from a great distance. He is uninvolved in the daily lives of his planet or his creatures. He watches with amusement, and occasional concern. He will only intervene in the direst circumstances, when asked.

This is not Christianity – not even close. Ours is a redemptive religion where we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He must save us – we can't work our way to heaven by being good. Yes, we believe in morality too, but a morality that is according to God's word and that flows from regenerated hearts. Morality is the fruit of a true and lively faith, not the root of our

Volume 12, Issue 3

March 2017

Inside this issue:

<i>Pastor's Article</i>	1
<i>The Lord's Garden</i> by J.C. Ryle	2-5
<i>March Birthdays and Anniversaries</i>	6
<i>Trueman on Luther</i>	7
<i>Culver's Fundraiser</i>	7
<i>March Calendar</i>	8
<i>Save the Date</i>	9
<i>Admirals Game</i>	9
<i>Fellowship Meal</i>	10
<i>Help Needed</i>	10
<i>Recipe Corner</i>	11
<i>Spurgeon Corner</i>	12
<i>Front Page Concluded</i>	12
Mnemonics...	
• <i>Trueman on Luther, 16th</i>	
• <i>Presbytery, 17-18th</i>	
• <i>Fellowship Meal, 19th</i>	
• <i>Session Meeting, 21st</i>	
• <i>Dinner/Discussion with Young Members, 31st</i>	

Continued on last page...

The Lord's Garden

by J. C. Ryle

The Lord Jesus Christ has a garden. It is the company of all who are true believers in Him. They are His garden.

Viewed in one light, believers are Jesus Christ's spouse. They are all joined to Him by an everlasting covenant that cannot be broken; wedded to Him by the marriage of faith; taken by Him to be His for ever, with all their debts and liabilities, with all their faults and imperfections. Their old name is gone, they have no name but that of their Bridegroom. God the Father regards them as one with His dear Son. Satan can lay no charge against them. They are the Lamb's wife: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His" (Cant. 2:16).

Viewed in another light, believers are Christ's sister. They are like to Him in many things. They have His Spirit; they love what He loves, and hate what He hates; they count all His members brethren; through Him they have the spirit of adoption, and can say of God, "He is my Father." Faint indeed is their resemblance to their elder Brother! And still they are like.

Viewed in a third light, believers are Christ's garden. Let us see how and in what way.

I. Jesus calls His people a garden, because they are altogether different from the men of the world. The world is a wilderness: it brings forth little but thorns and thistles; it is fruitful in nought but sin. The children of this world are an untilled wilderness in God's sight. With all their arts and sciences, intellect and skill, eloquence and statesmanship, poetry and refinement, -with all this they are a wilderness, barren of repentance, faith, holiness, and obedience to God. The Lord looks down from heaven, and where He sees no grace, there the Lord can see nothing but a "wilderness" state of things. The Lord Jesus Christ's believing people are the green spot of the earth; the oasis amidst barren deserts; they are His garden.

He calls His people a garden, because they are sweet and beautiful to His mind. He looks on the world, and it grieves Him to the heart: He looks on the little flock of His believing people, and is well pleased. He sees in them the fruit of His travail, and is satisfied. He rejoices in spirit when He sees the kingdom revealed to babes, though the wise and prudent receive it not.

As in the day of Noah's sacrifice, He smells a sweet odour and is refreshed. It is very wonderful, very mysterious! Believers are vile in their own eyes, and feel themselves miserable sinners; yet Jesus says, "Thou art all fair, ---sweet is thy voice, --thy countenance is comely, --beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, fair as the moon, and clear as the sun" (Cant. 1:15, 4:7, 2:14, 6:10, etc.). Oh, the depths! It sounds incomprehensible and almost incredible; but it is true.

He calls His people a garden, because He delights to walk among them. He sees the children of this world, but He mingles not with them. His eyes are on all their ways, but He does not come down to talk with them, as He did to Abraham, like a man with his friend...

He calls His people a garden, because they are useful, and bear fruit and flowers... The heavens declare the glory of God, --the trees, the corn, the grass, the flowers, the streams, the birds speak forth His praise, --but the man of the world does nothing to show that he cares for God, or serves God, or loves God, or feels grateful for Christ's redeeming death.

The Lord's people are not so. They bring Him some revenue of glory. They bear some little fruit, and are not altogether barren and unprofitable servants. Compared to the world, they are a garden.

II. The Lord's garden has a distinctive peculiarity about it. It is a garden inclosed.

There is an inclosure round believers; or else they never would be saved. This is the secret of their safety. It is not their faithfulness, their strength, or their love, it is the wall around them which prevents their being lost. They are a "garden inclosed."

They are inclosed by God the Father's everlasting election. Long before they were born, -- long before the foundations of the world, God knew them, chose them, and appointed them to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ. The children of this world do not like to hear this doctrine proclaimed. It humbles man, and leaves him no room to boast. But whether it is abused or not, the doctrine of election is true. It is the corner-stone of the believer's foundation, that he was chosen in Christ before the world began. Who can rightly estimate the strength

Ryle Continued...

of this inclosure?

They are inclosed by the special love of God the Son... He invites all, but He quickens whom He will, and brings them to glory. He prays for them: He prays not for the world. He intercedes for them, that they may be kept from evil, that they may be sanctified by the truth, that their faith fail not. Who can fully describe the blessedness of this inclosure?

They are inclosed by the effectual working of God the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of Christ calls them out from the world, and separates them as effectually as if a wall were built between them and it. He puts in them new hearts, new minds, new tastes, new desires, new sorrows, new joys, new wishes, new pleasures, new longings. He gives them new eyes, new ears, new affections, new opinions. He makes them new creatures; they are born again, and with a new birth they begin a new existence. Mighty indeed is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit! The believer and the world are completely put asunder, and everlastingly separated. You may place a believer and an unbeliever together, marry them, join them under one roof, but you cannot unite them any more into one piece. The one is part of the "garden inclosed," and the other is not. Effectual calling is a barrier that cannot be broken.

Who can tell the comfort of this threefold wall of inclosure! Believers are inclosed by election, inclosed by washing and intercession, inclosed by calling and regeneration. Great is the consolation of these threefold bands of love around us, the love of God the Father, the love of God the Son, the love of God the Holy Ghost! A threefold cord is not easily broken.

Does any reader suppose for a moment that all this was not needed? I believe that nothing short of this threefold inclosure could save the Lord's garden from utter ruin. Without election, intercession, and regeneration, there is not one soul who would get to heaven. The wild boar out of the wood would break in and devour; the roaring lion would come in and trample all under his feet. The devil would soon lay the Lord's garden level with the ground.

Blessed be God for this, that we are "a garden inclosed!" Blessed be God, our final safety hangs not on anything of our own,--not on our graces and feelings, --not on our degree of sanctification,--not on our perseverance in well-doing,--not on our love,--not

on our growth in grace,--not on our prayers and Bible-readings, --not even on our faith. It hangs on nothing else but the work of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If this three-fold work inclose us, who shall overthrow our hope? If God be for us, who can be against us?...

Let believers open their sleepy eyes, and try to understand the value of their privileges! This is the most blessed part of the Lord's garden. It is a "garden inclosed." I believe if there was no election, there would be no salvation. I never saw a man who would be saved if it depended in any wise on himself. Let us all thank the Lord Jesus, every day, and thank Him from our hearts, that His people are a chosen and guarded people, and that His garden is nothing less than "a garden inclosed."

III. The Lord's garden is not empty: it is always full of flowers. It has had many in time past, it has many at the time present. Believers are the flowers that fill the Lord's garden.

I will mention two things about the flowers in the garden of the Lord Jesus. In some things they are all exactly like one another. In some things they are as various and diverse as the flowers in the gardens of this world.

(a) In some things they are all alike.

(1) They have all been transplanted. Not one of the Lord's flowers grew naturally in His garden. They were all born children of wrath, even as others. No man is born with grace in his heart. Every believer among the Lord's people was at one time at enmity with Him, and in a state of condemnation. It was the grace of God that first called him out of the world. It was the Spirit of Christ who made him what he is, and planted him in the garden of the Lord. In this the Lord's people are all alike: they are all transplanted flowers.

(2) The Lord's flowers are all alike in their root. In outward things they may differ, but underneath they are all the same. They are all rooted and grounded on Jesus Christ. Believers may worship in different places, and belong to different churches, but their foundation is the same,--the cross and the blood.

(3) The Lord's flowers are all at their beginning weak. They do not come to full maturity at once. They are at first like new-born babes, tender



Ryle Continued...

and delicate, and needing to be fed with milk, and not with strong meat. They are soon checked and thrown back. All begin in this way.

(4) The Lord's flowers all need the light of the sun. Flowers cannot live without light. Believers cannot live comfortably unless they see much of the face of Jesus Christ. To be ever looking on Him, feeding on Him, communing with Him,--this is the hidden spring of the life of God in man's soul.

(5) The Lord's flowers all need the dews of the Spirit. Flowers wither without moisture. Believers need daily, hourly, to be renewed by the Holy Ghost in the spirit of their minds. We cannot Live on old grace, if we would be fresh, living, real Christians. We must be daily more filled with the Spirit. Every chamber in the inward temple must be filled.

(6) The Lord's flowers are all in danger of weeds. Flower-beds need constant weeding. Believers need daily to search and see that they do not let besetting sins grow on undisturbed. These are the things that choke the actings of grace, and chill the influences of the Spirit. All are in peril of this; all should beware.

(7) The Lord's flowers all require pruning and digging. Flowers left alone soon dwindle and grow small. No careful gardener leaves his roses alone all the year round. Just so believers need stirring, shaking, mortifying, or else they become sleepy, and incline like Lot to settle down by Sodom. And if they are slow about the work of pruning, God will often take it in hand for them.

(8) The Lord's flowers all grow. None but hypocrites and wolves in sheep's clothing, and painted Christians, stand still True believers are never long the same. It is their desire to go on from grace to grace, strength to strength, knowledge to knowledge, faith to faith, holiness to holiness. Visit a border of the Lord's garden after two or three years' absence, and you will see this. If you see it not, you may well suppose there is a worm at the root. Life grows; but death stands still and decays.

(b) But while the Lord's flowers are all alike in

some things, they are various and diverse in others, even as the flowers in our own gardens. Let us consider this point a little.

Believers have many things in common, one Lord, one faith, one baptism of the Spirit, one hope, one foundation, one reverence for the Word, one delight in prayer, one newness of heart. And yet there are some things in which they are not one. Their general experience is the same, and their title to heaven the same: and yet there are varieties in their specific experience. There are shades of diversity in their views and feeling. They are not so altogether and completely one that they can quite understand each other in all things, at all times, and in all points. Very important is it to bear this in mind! Believers are one in genus, but not one in species, one in great principles, not one in all particulars, one in reception of the whole truth, not one in the proportion they give to the parts of truth, one in the root, but not one in the flower, one in the part that only the Lord Jesus sees, not one in the part that is seen of the world...

(1) Some that grow in the Lord's garden are like the flowers which are brilliant and showy in colour, but not sweet. You see them afar off, and they attract the world's eye, and their tints are beautiful, but you can say no more.

These are frequently the public Christians, - the popular preachers,--the speakers on platforms,---the lions of listening companies,--the people talked of, and pointed at, and run after. Such persons are the tulips, and sunflowers, and peonies, and dahlias of the Lord's garden, wonderful,

gaudy, bright and glorious in their way, but not sweet.

(2) Some are like those flowers which make no show at all, and yet are the sweetest.

These are the Christians whom the world never hears of; they rather shrink from public observation. They hold on the even tenor of their way, and pass silently on towards home; but they sweeten all around them.

These are they that are rare and hard to find:

*“They
are the
Lord’s
flowers,
beautiful
in their
place and
in their
way.”*

Ryle Concluded...

but the better they are known, the more they are loved. Ask their true character in their own homes, and in their families,--ask husbands, wives, children, servants, their character, and you will soon discover that not a tenth part of their beauty and excellence is known by the world. The nearer you go, the more perfume will these dwellers in the Lord's garden give out. These are the Lord's violets,--valued by only few, but to those who know them, oh, how sweet!

(3) Some in the Lord's garden are like those flowers which cannot live in cold weather.

These are the Christians who have but a little strength, who faint in the day of adversity, who only flourish when everything around them is smooth and warm. A cold wind of trial, and unexpected frost of affliction, nips them and cuts them down. But the Lord Jesus is very merciful; He will not suffer them to be tempted above what they can endure. He plants them in sheltered and sunny places of His garden. He protects them and hedges them round by strong plants, to break the cold. Let no man despise them. They are the Lord's flowers, beautiful in their place and in their way...

(5) Some in the Lord's garden are never so sweet as after rain.

These are the Christians who show most grace under trial and affliction. In the day of sunshine and prosperity they become careless: they need the shower of some sorrow to come down on them to make their full excellency appear. There is more beauty of holiness about their tears than about their smiles: they are more like Jesus when they weep than when they laugh. These are the roses of the Lord's garden: lovely and sweet and beautiful at all times, but never so much so as after rain...

And now let me wind up with a few words of practical application.

There is one thing about the Lord's garden, which I see nothing like in this world.

The flowers of this world all die, and wither and lose their sweetness, and decay, and come to nothing at last. The fairest flowers are not really everlasting. The oldest and strongest of nature's children comes to an end.

It is not so with the Lord's flowers. The

children of grace can never die. They may sleep for a season; they may be taken away when they have served their generation, and done their work. The Lord is continually coming down to His garden and "gathering lilies," laying flowers in His bosom one after the other; but the Lord's flowers shall all rise again.

When the Lord comes again the second time, He shall bring His people with Him. His flowers shall live once more, more bright, more sweet, more lovely, more beautiful, more glorious, more pure, more shining, more fair. They shall have a glorious body like their Lord's, and shall flourish for ever in the courts of our God.

(1) Reader, are you in the Lord's garden, or are you in the wilderness of this world?

You must be in one or the other. You must take your choice. Which have you chosen, and which do you choose now? The Lord Jesus would fain transplant you.

He strives with you by His Spirit. He would fain add you to the number of His beloved ones. He knocks at the door of your heart by word and by providence. He whispers to your conscience, "Awake, arise, repent, be converted, and come away!"

Oh, turn not away from Him that speaketh! Resist not the Holy Ghost. Choose not your place in the wilderness, but in the garden. Awake, arise, and turn away from the world.

(2) Reader! the wilderness or the garden! Which will you have? If the wilderness, you will have your own way, run wild, grow to waste, bring forth fruit and flowers to yourself, become a barren, unprofitable, useless plant, live unloved and unlovable to yourself, and at last be gathered in the bundle with the tares, and burned!

If the garden,--you will not have your own way. But you will have what is far better, you will have God and Christ for your own. You will be cultivated, watered, tended, moved, pruned, trained by the Lord Jesus Himself; and at last your name shall be found in the bundle of life.

From The Upper Room, Chapter XV "The Lord's Garden" by J. C. Ryle.

March Birthdays



Wedding Anniversaries



Trueman on Luther

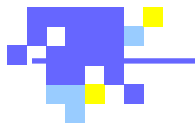
On Thursday night, March 16 at 7:00pm at Calvary OPC, Dr. Carl Trueman will be presenting a seminar on Martin Luther. Dr. Trueman teaches Church History at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. This seminar is sponsored by the Christian Education Committee of our Presbytery as the Spring Seminar before Presbytery. Everyone is invited.



Culver's Pine Haven Fundraiser

On March 21st, the three Sheboygan Culver's Restaurants will donate 10% of any purchase made (with an accompanying flyer at time of purchase) toward the Women's Auxiliary. Flyers are available on the shelf in the hall for you to pick up!





Grace OPC

March 2017

Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ



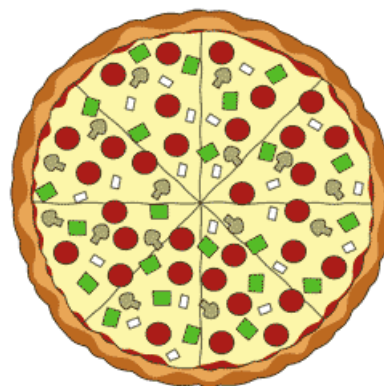
Church Office:
4930 Green Valley Ln
Sheboygan, WI 53083

Phone: 920-565-2160
Website:
graceopcsheboygan.com
Email:
graceopc@tds.net
revbriandjong@gmail.com

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5 Meadowview Manor 3:00 p.M.	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 Dr, Carl Trueman speaking at Calvary OPC 7:00 P.M.	17 Presbytery in Cedar Grove	18 Presbytery in Cedr Grove
19 Fellowship Meal	20	21 Session Meeting 6:30 P.M.	22	23	24	25
26 Lord's Supper A.M.	27	28	29	30	31 Dinner/ Discussion with Younger Members	

Save the Date!

Save the Date - Family members of Tom & Leila Ver Velde are going to host a Tip Night at the Oostburg Pizza Ranch, on Monday, April 3. More information to come.



Admirals Game

The Social Fellowship Committee is planning a fun outing. We've reserved seats for an Admirals hockey game on Friday, April 7th, at the UW Milwaukee Panther Arena. Ticket price is \$14 each and needs to be turned in to Bob or Debbie Boss by Wednesday, March 22. If you'd like to go but prefer not to drive, please let the Boss's know and they will work on making carpool arrangements. You're welcome to bring your friends as well!



Fellowship Meal

We are planning a Fellowship Meal for
Sunday, March 19th. All are welcome to join!
More details will come.



HELP NEEDED

We will soon be saying goodbye our church secretary, Susan. We need someone to replace her. If you or someone you know is interested, please speak to Pastor Brian or one of the elders.



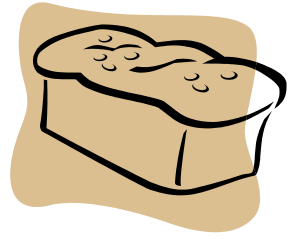
Zucchini Bread

- ★ 3 eggs
- ★ 2 c. sugar
- ★ 1 c. oil
- ★ 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- ★ 2 c. peeled, coarsely grated, loosely packed zucchini
- ★ 2 c. flour
- ★ 1 tsp. salt
- ★ 1 tsp. baking soda
- ★ 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- ★ 1 Tbsp. cinnamon
- ★ 1 tsp. nutmeg
- ★ 1/4 tsp. cloves
- ★ 1 c. chopped nuts (optional)
- ★ 1/2 c. raisins (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Beat eggs until frothy, add sugar, oil and vanilla. Beat until thick. Stir in zucchini. Sift together dry ingredients and add to zucchini mixture, mix well. Stir in nuts and raisins. Pour into 2 greased and lightly floured 9 x 5 x 3 inch bread pans. Bake 1 hour or until done.

Shary De Troye

Note: This recipe is from my mother-in-law, Liz. It is a family favorite! We can enjoy it year-round by grating zucchini in the summer/fall and freezing it in zip-lock bags for later use.



“The eyes
of all look
to You,
And You give
them their food
in due time.
You open
Your hand
And satisfy
the desire of
every living
thing.”



Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

Grace OPC

Church Office:
4930 Green Valley Ln
Sheboygan, WI 53083

Phone: 920-565-2160
Website: graceopcsheboygan.com
Email:
graceopc@tds.net
revbriandejong@gmail.com

CHECK OUT THE AUDIO:

**SERMONAUDIO.COM/
GRACESHEBOYGAN**

CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE:

GRACEOPCSHEBOYGAN.COM



Spurgeon Corner

*“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”
(Ephesians 3:8)*

The apostle Paul felt it a great privilege to be allowed to preach the gospel. He did not look upon his calling as a drudgery, but he entered upon it with intense delight. Yet while Paul was thus thankful for his office, his success in it greatly humbled him. The fuller a vessel becomes, the deeper it sinks in the water. Idlers may indulge a fond conceit of their abilities, because they are untried; but the earnest worker soon learns his own weakness. If you seek humility, *try hard work*; if you would know your nothingness, attempt some great thing for Jesus. If you would feel how utterly powerless you are apart from the living God, attempt especially the great work of proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ, and you will know, as you never knew before, what a weak unworthy thing you are. Although the apostle thus knew and confessed his weakness, he was never perplexed as to the *subject* of his ministry. From his first sermon to his last, Paul preached Christ, and nothing but Christ. He lifted up the cross, and extolled the Son of God who bled thereon. Follow his example in all your personal efforts to spread the glad tidings of salvation, and let “Christ and him crucified” be your ever recurring theme. The Christian should be like those lovely spring flowers which, when the sun is shining, open their golden cups, as if saying, “Fill us with thy beams!” but when the sun is hidden behind a cloud, they close their cups and droop their heads. So should the Christian feel the sweet influence of Jesus; Jesus must be his sun, and he must be the flower which yields itself to the Sun of Righteousness. Oh! to speak of Christ alone, this is the subject which is both “seed for the sower, and bread for the eater.” This is the live coal for the lip of the speaker, and the master-key to the heart of the hearer.

Evening, March 2nd by C. H. Spurgeon

Front Page Concluded

acceptance with God.

Moreover, what people need is salvation followed by sanctification, not therapy. Sin is a positive evil, not a psychological condition. Counseling can help some things, but it is not the great cure-all.

And this God we serve – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is not aloof or distant. He is intimately involved in ordering our lives, and doing His good work in and through us.

What is most alarming about these ideas, and where they lead, is that so many young people think this way. Older folk may be more grounded in theological orthodoxy, but the younger crowd is drinking in this Christian-sounding bilge water. Let us be certain to teach our children that they are Christians, not MTD’s.

