

GENESIS, CREATION *and* EARLY MAN

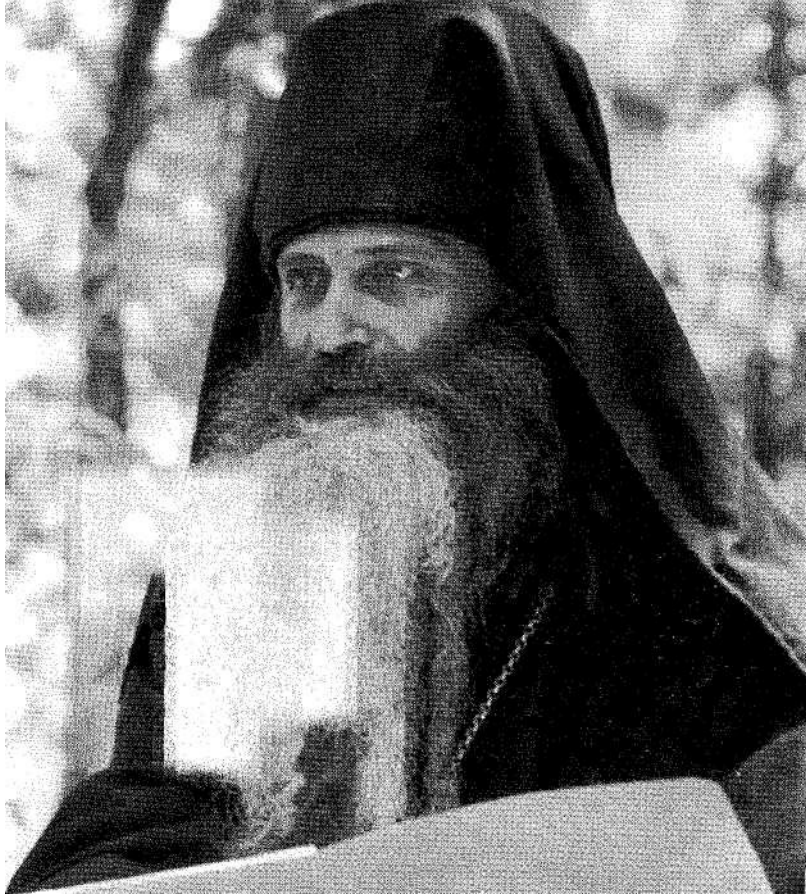


*The
Orthodox
Christian
Vision*

FR. SERAPHIM ROSE

Introduction by Phillip E. Johnson

GENESIS, CREATION AND EARLY MAN



HIEROMONK SERAPHIM
ROSE 1934-1982

GENESIS, CREATION *and* EARLY MAN

The Orthodox Christian

Vision

FR. SERAPHIM ROSE



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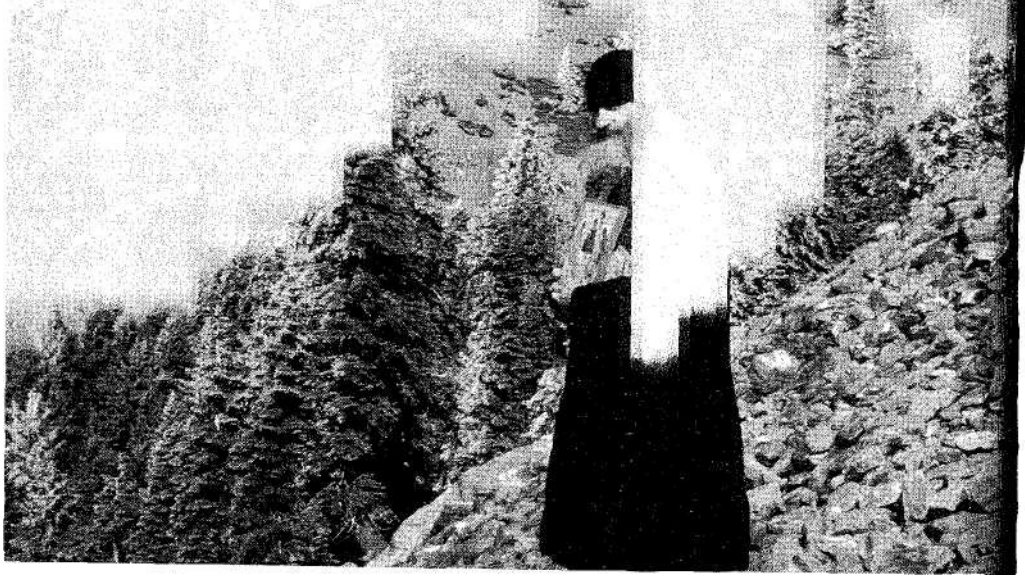
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A...



Scenes from the life of Adam and
Eve. *Russian icon of the eighteenth
century (detail).* ,



Fr. Seraphim Rose amidst one of the oldest stands of living trees on earth, atop Mount Yolla Bolly in northern California, October, 1981.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Story behind the Book

THIS BOOK, compiled and published posthumously, represents one of the *most* important achievements in the life of the great Patristic philosopher, Fr. Seraphim Rose. It is an exhaustive collection of all the relevant material—both from manuscripts and from transcriptions of tape-recorded lectures—that Fr. Seraphim produced on the subject of Genesis and creation over the course of nine years, up until his repose in 1982. As such, it can be used by the serious student of Patristic philosophy as a compendium that may be referred to over and over again. But it is more than a textbook. Behind the posthumously gathered components of this book there lies a story: a story within the whole story of Fr. Seraphim's life and work, which was always concerned with the ultimate meaning of the beginning and end of all things. It is our purpose here to tell that *story*.

1. The Intellectual Milieu of Fr. Seraphim's Formative Years

In the 1950s, when Fr. Seraphim (then Eugene) Rose was attending high school and college in California, the theory of evolution was at the height of its prestige. Its ascendancy over all competing views of the origin of life and the universe culminated in the great Darwin Centennial celebration at the University of Chicago in 1959, commemorating the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* one hundred years earlier. Scientists came from all over to share in the triumph, not only of a

scientific theory, but of a worldview. As Phillip E. Johnson writes:

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"The participants in the Darwin Centennial were understandably in a triumphal mood. The prestige of science was never higher. Polio had been conquered by a vaccine; atomic power seemed to promise abundant, cheap energy; space travel loomed in the near future. Besides these technological achievements, science had seemingly established that a purposeless process of evolution was our true creator and hence had dethroned the God of the Bible. The religious implications of this intellectual revolution were frankly emphasized by the most prominent speaker at the centennial, the British biologist, philosopher and world statesman Sir Julian Huxley.

"Julian Huxley was the grandson of Thomas Henry Huxley, who was known as 'Darwin's bulldog' because he was the most important early champion of Darwin's theory. T. H. Huxley had also invented the word *agnostic* to describe his own religious views. Julian Huxley, a zoologist, was one of the scientific founders of the neo-Darwinian synthesis, the modern version of Darwin's theory. He was also the promoter of a naturalistic religion called evolutionary humanism, and the founding secretary general of UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. In short, Julian Huxley was one of the most influential intellectuals of the mid-twentieth century, and 1959 was the high-water mark of his influence. Here are some excerpts from Huxley's remarks at the centennial:

Future historians will perhaps take this Centennial Week as epitomizing an important critical period in the history of this earth of ours—the period when the process of evolution, in the person of inquiring man, began to be truly conscious of itself.... This is one of the first public occasions on which it has been frankly faced that all aspects of reality are subject to evolution, from atoms and stars to fish and flowers, from fish and flowers to human societies and values—indeed, that all reality is a single process of evolution.

In 1859, Darwin opened the passage leading to a new psychosocial level, with a new pattern of ideological organization—an evolution-centered organization of thought and belief.

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.

Evolutionary man can no longer take refuge from his loneliness in the arms of a divinized father figure whom he has himself created, nor escape from the responsibility of making decisions by sheltering under the umbrella of Divine Authority, nor absolve himself from the hard task of meeting his present problems and planning his future by relying on the will of an omniscient, but unfortunately inscrutable, Providence.

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.

In short, the triumph of Darwinism implied the death of God and set the stage for replacing Biblical religion with a new faith based on evolutionary naturalism. That new faith would become the basis not just of science but also of government, law and morality. It would be the established religious philosophy of modernity."¹

Some of the world's most eminent scientists—from Richard Owen and Louis Agassiz in the 1860s to Richard Goldschmidt and Otto Schindewolf in the 1940s—had shown to the scientific community the embarrassing difficulties of the theory that was being heralded at the Darwin Centennial, but these scientists had been held up to ridicule and their valid objections dismissed out of hand. In addition to these vocal critics, there was a silent group of scientists who disagreed with evolutionary theory but were afraid to challenge the prevailing worldview. The existence of this group was even acknowledged at the Darwin Centennial by the paleontologist Everett Claire Olson of the University of California, who said, "It is difficult to Judge the size and composition of this silent segment, but there is no doubt that the numbers are not inconsiderable."²

Whether they were silenced or chose to remain silent, the many scientists who questioned Darwinism were not heard by the American people. Consequently, when Fr. Seraphim began studying science in high

school and college in the early 1950s, he was taught that the evo-

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lution of all life from a primeval soup was an undisputed and unassailable fact, as sure (in Julian Huxley's words) as the fact that earth goes around the sun.

2. From the Evolutionary Worldview to the Orthodox Worldview

Possessed of a brilliant mind, Fr. Seraphim from a young age exhibited a burning desire to *know*, to understand reality in the highest sense. In high school he zealously sought knowledge in science and mathematics: biology, zoology, algebra. Graduating at the top of his class, he was granted a scholarship to Pomona College in southern California, thanks to the enthusiastic endorsement of his math teacher. At Pomona he continued his study of science, which he now combined with a study of philosophy. Under the influence of the humanists of his time, he joined in the grand enterprise of thinkers like Julian Huxley: to explain the universe without God. In a freshman philosophy paper (1952), he stated:

All science points to the existence of the Universe, the totality of all things. Nothing in science points to the existence of a God removed from the Universe. For the present time, since I have not yet developed my own theory of knowledge, I assume for convenience' sake that I can gain knowledge (as certain as it *can* be obtained) through science. Therefore, I believe in the findings of science that point to the existence of the Universe; I reject the concept of an independent God for insufficient evidence.

This statement may seem naive nowadays, when the despotism of scientific naturalism is being increasingly challenged, but it must be considered in the context of the 1950s, the decade of the ascendancy of Humanism and the triumphal pronouncements of the Darwin Centennial.

"At one time I believed entirely in evolution," Fr. Seraphim was later to recall. "I believed not because I had thought very much about this question, but simply because 'everyone believes it,' because it is a

'fact,' and how can one deny 'facts'?... I still remember my freshman professor of zoology expatiating on the 'great ideas of man': for him the greatest idea man ever invented was the idea of evolution; much greater, he believed, than the 'idea of God.'"

Ultimately, Fr. Seraphim's striving to understand the meaning of reality could not be satisfied by modern science, dedicated as it was to materialism, nor by Western philosophy, which had been founded in rationalism. "I was an undergraduate," he later recalled, "looking for some kind of truth in philosophy, and not finding it. I was very bored with Western philosophy." During his sophomore year he began to seek higher wisdom in the philosophy of ancient China, for which he undertook a study of the Chinese language, both ancient and modern.

Fr. Seraphim graduated from Pomona College in 1956 and pursued his study of ancient Chinese language and philosophy at the Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco and later at the University of California in Berkeley. While at the Academy, he discovered the writings of the twentieth-century French metaphysician Rene Guenon, a traditionalist who looked to the ancient, orthodox expressions of the world's religions for answers to ultimate questions. Guenon both clarified and transformed Fr. Seraphim's intellectual outlook. Later he wrote, "It was Guenon who taught me to seek and love the truth above all else, and to be unsatisfied with anything else."

Fr. Seraphim's education had taught him to view all things in terms of historical *progress*, according to the evolutionary worldview of the modern age. Upon discovering Guenon, he began to see things in terms of historical *disintegration*.

In his book *The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times*, Guenon explained how the elimination of traditional spiritual principles has led to a drastic degeneration of humanity. He showed how twentieth-century science, with its tendency to reduce everything to an exclusively quantitative level, has corrupted man's conception of true knowledge and confined his vision to what is temporal and material.

Guenon wrote elsewhere that, "in attempting to reduce everything to the stature of man taken as an

end in himself, modern civilization has sunk stage by stage to a level of his lowest elements and aims at little more than satisfying the needs inherent in the material side of his

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nature."³ Trying to fill in the gap left by science and materialism in the modern age, "pseudo-religions" have sprung up; but in their confusion of psychic with spiritual reality, they have only further obscured the truth.

Guenon wrote that "the modern world, considered in itself is an anomaly, and even a sort of monstrosity"; and he regarded the modern scientific theory of evolution, which was developed in an attempt to explain the universe purely naturalistically, as an offspring of this monstrosity. In evolutionism, he wrote, "all reality is placed exclusively in 'becoming'; involving the final denial of all immutable principle, and consequently of all metaphysic."⁴

It is likely that Guenon caused Fr. Seraphim to question evolutionism even before the latter began his conversion to Orthodox Christianity. "I began to think more deeply on this question [of evolutionism]," Fr. Seraphim later recalled. "I began to see that very often what calls itself 'science' is not *fact* at all, but *philosophy*, and I began very carefully to distinguish between *scientific facts and. scientific philosophy*."

In his freshman year at Pomona, Fr. Seraphim had trusted the modern scientific outlook. With his study of Guenon, he was still to regard modern science as a way to knowledge, but now he saw this as "knowledge of the lowest, commonest sort."

Guenon had shown Fr. Seraphim what to leave behind and had started him on the path to Truth, but he had not shown him the final destination. He found this destination when, by a miracle, he discovered that the Truth he was seeking was a Person—Jesus Christ—Whose image was preserved undistorted in the Orthodox transmission of the very Christianity he had previously rejected.

In Orthodox Christianity, Fr. Seraphim found the true, ancient worldview to replace the modern evolutionary one; and the key to this worldview he found in the writings of the Orthodox Holy Fathers. The theology of the Holy Fathers, he understood, was based on the living, Personal revelation of God to man, and thus was of an infinitely higher order not only than science, but even than the metaphysical insights he had gained through Guenon. He never ceased to appreciate

the crucial step that Guenon had given him on his path to Truth, but now he saw that the path of metaphysics, which places the intellection

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of the human mind above Divinely revealed theology, is fraught with dangers, and thus leads to subtle errors mixed in with higher truths. While before he had relied on his mind to arrive at Truth, now he knew He had to humble his mind before the Truth as Person: Jesus Christ. Shortly after his conversion he wrote, "When I became a Christian I voluntarily crucified my mind, and all the crosses that I bear have only been a source of joy for me. I have lost nothing, and gained everything."

3. *The Roots of Evolutionism*

During the early years following his conversion, Fr. Seraphim made a thorough examination of the philosophical history of Western civilization, in order to fully understand the past causes, present state and future development of the West's apostasy from the "Old Order" of traditional Christian civilization. Out of this study was to come his philosophical magnum opus, entitled *The Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God*.

In Chapter Four of the proposed work, Fr. Seraphim was to discuss the new physics propounded at the end of the Renaissance by the rationalists Bacon and Descartes, which viewed the universe as a closed system and aimed at giving first and *natural* (i.e., not Divine) causes to all physical phenomena.* In the same chapter he was to describe the modern philosophy of *progress* which arose at the end of the Enlightenment, displacing the stable worldview that had characterized much of Enlightenment thought. These two *a priori* philosophical commitments—to naturalism and to progress—formed the seedbed out of which came the theory of evolution, which was first proposed by Charles Darwin's grandfather Erasmus in 1794. As Fr. Seraphim later observed, "This theory *developed* together with the course of modern philosophy from Descartes onward, long before there was any 'scientific proof for it.'"

The research Fr. Seraphim did for his proposed book was prodi-

* For a good discussion of the historical roots of naturalism, see Michael Den-ton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, pp. 71–73.

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gious. Thousands of pages of notes were written, but the work was never completed, save for Chapter Seven, on Nihilism.* By 1963, along with his co-laborer, the future Fr. Herman, he was heavily involved in beginning an Orthodox Christian Brotherhood in San Francisco and opening the first city storefront in America that sold exclusively Orthodox materials.

4. The Mind of the Holy Fathers

In the meantime, Fr. Seraphim's spiritual mentor, the saint and miracle-worker Archbishop John Maximovitch, had begun a series of theological courses, which Fr. Seraphim attended several times a week for three years. Although Fr. Seraphim was an American convert and all the courses were conducted in Russian, he graduated at the head of the class. Among the many subjects covered, he was taught Patristics by Bishop Nektary (a disciple of Optina Monastery, who later ordained him to the priesthood) and Old Testament by Archimandrite Spyridon (a clairvoyant elder and the closest man to Archbishop John). Here, in contrast to the rationalistic evolutionary ideas he had been taught while growing up, Fr. Seraphim learned the revelation of God Himself regarding the creation of the universe and the nature of the first-created world, as passed on through the Scriptures and the God-bearing Holy Fathers throughout the centuries. Fr. Seraphim's instructors—Archbishop John, Bishop Nektary and Fr. Spyridon—were themselves Holy Fathers of modern times, and thus Fr. Seraphim was able to receive the Patristic transmission not only from books, but from living bearers of that transmission. It was through the lips of living repositories of sanctity that the meaning of Genesis was opened to him.

In 1969 Fathers Herman and Seraphim moved to the mountains of northern California, where they became monks and continued their Orthodox missionary work through writing, translating and printing Orthodox material. There, in their forest hermitage, Fr. Seraphim con-

—*Published posthumously as a separate book: Eugene (Fr. Seraphim) Rose, *Nihilism: The Root of the Revolution of the Modern Age* (1994).

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tinued to fill himself with the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers, feeding on the true pastures of the soul. Over years of study, he acquired extensive knowledge of Patristic teaching, which had already been placed in the proper context for him through the courses he had attended in San Francisco. In addressing a particular issue in his writings, he would make use of a wide range of Patristic sources both ancient and modern, from both Eastern and Western Christendom, many of them quite obscure and never before rendered in English.

Fr. Seraphim's aim, however, was not to become a scholar whose specialty was the Holy Fathers. Such experts, he wrote, are often "total strangers to the true Patristic tradition, and only make their living at its expense." As always, he had to go deeper, to get the whole picture. He had not only to grasp the Fathers' writings intellectually, but to actually *acquire their mind*, to learn to think, feel and look at things as they did. He wanted their attitude to be his attitude. Too often in contemporary Orthodoxy the tendency is to reinterpret the Faith in order to conform it to the mind of modern man. Fr. Seraphim knew he had to do just the opposite: to conform his consciousness to the mind of the Fathers, to plug himself fully into the two-thousand-year continuity of Christian experience.

He actually suffered over this, praying fervently to God. He personally addressed the ancient Holy Fathers as fellow believers in the Body of Christ and as vehicles of Divine wisdom, so that he would be given to see *how* they apprehended reality. He felt especially close to the fourth-century Father, St. Basil the Great, who among his many other major achievements wrote the definitive Patristic commentary on the Six Days of Creation.

In introducing the Lives and writings of the Fathers to modern-day readers, Fr. Seraphim wrote of their inestimable worth:

There is no problem of our own confused times which cannot find its solution by a careful and reverent reading of the Holy Fathers: whether complex philosophical questions such as "evolution," or the straightforward moral questions of abortion, euthanasia, and "birth control—" In all these

questions the Holy Fathers, and our living Fathers who follow them, are our only sure guide.⁵

5. *Evolution and Chiliasm*

While working on *The Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God*, Fr. Seraphim had identified the faith of modern man as a secular form of *chiliasm*: the belief in the inevitability of progress and in the perfectibility of this fallen world. Evolutionism, in its belief in the gradual development from the lower to the higher, was closely bound up with chiliasm. In Fr. Seraphim's words, it was an "almost inevitable deduction from it."

Together with chiliasm, evolution was what Fr. Seraphim called "a deep-seated primordial force, which seems to capture people quite apart from their conscious attitudes and reasoning. (There's a good reason for that: it's been drilled into everyone from the cradle, and therefore is very hard to bring out and look at rationally.)" Echoing the words of Julian Huxley, who at the Darwin Centennial had called evolution a "pattern of thought," Fr. Seraphim said that it was "a *rival thought-pattern* to Orthodoxy, not just another idea." And this thought-pattern, he observed, followed a course that was "just the opposite of what Christianity teaches":

The evolutionary philosophy of "up from the beasts" certainly seems irreconcilable with the Christian view of "fall from Paradise," and our whole view of history will certainly be determined by which way we believe!

It was the chiliastic/evolutionary thought-pattern that had produced such politico-religious movements as international socialism (globalism) and ecumenism. All such movements share the same chili-astic goal: a coming "new order" in which all previous standards, seen as relative to a particular stage in a process, will be entirely changed. Just as all distinctions between organisms are blurred in the idea of biological evolution—as the organisms change into one another over millions of years—so too all distinctions between nations and religions are blurred in the chiliastic "new world order."

6. *"Traditionalists" in Favor of Evolution*

To Fr. Seraphim it was self-evident that evolutionism, with its innumerable corollaries in modern thought and life, was antithetical to the Orthodox worldview that he had embraced. He wrote:

I have always regarded evolution, in all its ramifications, as an important part of the "modern American" intellectual baggage which I left behind when I became Orthodox, and it never occurred to me that any aware Orthodox Christian would regard it as unimportant, especially now when many scientists have abandoned it (purely on scientific grounds), when the pseudo-religious presuppositions of its supporters are so evident, and when it is so much bound up with Masonry-ecumenism and the whole pseudo-religious outlook.

Just how far his fellow Orthodox Christians had gone in accepting evolutionism was first made known to Fr. Seraphim in 1973. In February of that year he helped and encouraged a public school teacher, A. Y., to write and publish an Orthodox article against evolution. This article, as Fr. Seraphim later wrote, "touched something very deep." It raised a highly volatile subject which until then most Orthodox Christians in the West had preferred not to discuss. Soon after the article appeared, articles began coming out in mainstream Orthodox journals (especially those of the Orthodox Church in America and the Greek Archdiocese) in support of evolutionism. This was not surprising to Fr. Seraphim, for he had known ever since his conversion that many of the mainstream Orthodox in America had capitulated to the spirit of this world and its intellectual fashions. However, he was genuinely surprised when his fellow "traditionalist" Orthodox, who like him were opposed to ecumenism, also came out in favor of evolutionism, and roundly censured A. Y. because of his article! "Frankly," Fr. Seraphim wrote, "we are astonished that people who are so keen on ecclesiastical matters, ecumenism, etc., should seem never to have given much thought to such an important thing as evolution; apparently it is because it seems to be outside the Church sphere."

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To one of these "traditionalist" Orthodox,

Fr. Seraphim wrote:

We fully agree with A. Y. that "evolution is one of the most dangerous concepts that faces Orthodox Christians today"—perhaps it is the very key (intellectual) to the assault upon the Church, to the very "philosophy" (and there is such a thing!) of the coming Antichrist.

With this in mind, he encouraged A. Y. to write a booklet on evolutionism. In the meantime, he made his own in-depth study, both of the scientific theory of evolution and of the teaching of the Holy Fathers regarding creation, the first-created world and the first-created man. He discovered that the ancient Fathers, although they of course did not refute evolution *per se* (since it had not been invented until recent times), provided a definite refutation of its main tenets. They spoke at length on the distinction between the "kinds" of organisms both at the time of their creation and afterwards, and were clearly against any philosophy that would confuse this distinction. Their teaching allowed for *variation* within each kind, which is observable and scientifically demonstrable, but was adamantly opposed to the idea that one kind could be transformed into another, which to this day has not been proved scientifically.

Having studied the doctrine of the Holy Fathers touching on the creation of man and the world, Fr. Seraphim found it so clear that he was "simply amazed at the power 'evolution' has over even educated Orthodox minds. Such is the power of this world and its fashionable ideas."

All the living transmitters of Patristic tradition whom Fr. Seraphim knew were aware that evolutionary theory was a faith rather than pure science. The critics of A. Y.'s article, however, kept holding up a traditionalist Orthodox writer and medical doctor, Dr. Alexander Kalomiros, as one who was pro-evolution. Not being able to read Kalomiros' article in Greek, Fr. Seraphim was frustrated at having his name repeatedly thrown at him in this way. He had appreciated the English translation

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promised to send a detailed reply in English, with quotes from the Holy Fathers. "We look forward to this with open mind and some expectation!" wrote Fr. Seraphim. "We hope to receive a confirmation of our suspicion that he is quite wrongly used as virtually a proponent of evolution."

Several months later Fathers Herman and Seraphim received a forty-page epistle from Kalomiros. "I must confess," wrote Fr. Seraphim, "that it is shocking beyond our expectations—giving the 'evolutionary' teaching quite unadorned and unqualified, complete with the 'evolved beast Adam' and 'he who denies evolution denies the Sacred Scriptures.' In a way, however, we are rather glad of this—because now *for the first time* we have found a reputable Orthodox 'evolutionist' who is willing to be quite frank about matters which others, I believe, are afraid to speak up about."

Fr. Seraphim put all his energy into composing a reply, which turned out to be as long as Dr. Kalomiros' letter. Fr. Seraphim's letter—a treatise, actually—is a masterpiece of Patristic thought, and we today can only be grateful that his correspondence with Dr. Kalomiros inspired him to write it. Up to today, it is the clearest, most complete Patristic refutation of evolution ever written.

. . .

7. The Scientific Side of the Question

By this time, the original idea of coming out with a booklet on evolutionism no longer seemed adequate to Fr. Seraphim. Now he and A. Y. began to plan writing a complete book. Fr. Seraphim was to write about the Patristic teaching on creation and early man, and also about the philosophical origins of evolution, while A. Y. was to write about evolution as scientific theory and about "Christian evolution." "Our study," wrote Fr. Seraphim, "is supposed to give a 'complete' picture, which hopefully will clarify many minds. It's certainly clarified my own mind, since previously I hadn't thought in detail on many aspects of the question."

Fr. Seraphim's correspondence with Dr. Kalomiros had underlined for him the importance of being abreast with scientific discussions on the subject of evolution. Dr. Kalomiros had prided himself on stand-

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ing superior to these discussions, since they were "Westerai" **and thus** "not Orthodox." As Fr. Seraphim pointed out, however,

The question of evolution can't be discussed at all if one doesn't have a basic grasp of the scientific side of it (the "scientific proofs" of it) as

well as the broader philosophy of evolution based on it (Teilhard de

Chardin, etc.) By this I don't mean that one has to be a scientific

specialist in order to discuss the scientific side of the question—the

scientific side is not *the* most important one, and specialists usually trip themselves up by concentrating too much on it; but if one isn't

sufficiently aware of the scientific side one won't be able to grasp the question in its full scope. One can't say with assurance, for example,

whether man has been on earth some seven or eight thousand years ("more or less," as the Fathers often say) if one is totally ignorant of the principles of radiometric dating, geologic strata, etc., which "prove" that man is "millions of years" old. And such knowledge is not esoteric at all—the basic principles of radiometric dating (enough to show its

strong and weak points) can be explained in a rather short article* _____

This is just a sample to show that to get anywhere in this question one must have a basic, layman's awareness of the scientific evidences for and against evolution. If one is reasonably objective and not out to "prove one's point" at any cost, such questions need not arouse passionate debates. As a basic principle, of course, we must assume that scientific *truth* (as opposed to various opinions and prejudices) cannot

contradict revealed *truth* if only we understand both correctly.

During the first half of the twentieth century, as we have seen, scientists were loath to question the evolutionary model. They would test every hypothesis save that one—for on it everything else, all their classification of data, rested. Those few scientists—including some very important ones—who dared to undermine this dogma were considered "heretics" and were blacklisted. When Dr. Kalomiros was going to school in the 1950s, it was not only unfashionable but positively anathema not to believe in evolution; and hence his at-

* We have provided such an article in Appendix Four, pp. 626-35.

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tempt, as a Patristic scholar, to make the ancient Fathers believe it as well.

After the 1950s, this situation began to change. One by one, the "silent dissenters" mentioned at the Darwin Centennial began to surface. Reputable scientists began raising serious doubts about evolution, and there were just too many of them to be silenced. New advances in the "hard sciences" of molecular genetics, embryology, etc., were making it very difficult for scientists to reconcile their data with the neo-Darwinian model. Scientific books came out which were critical of Darwin's theory, including *Implications of Evolution* (1961) by G. A. Kerkut, professor of Physiology and Biochemistry at the University of Southampton, England, and *L'Evolution du vivant* (1973) by Pierre P. Grasse, one of the world's greatest living biologists and ex-president of the French Academy of Sciences. Dr. Grasse ended his book by issuing this devastating indictment of Darwinian evolution:

Through use and abuse of hidden postulates, of bold, often ill-founded extrapolations, a pseudoscience has been created. It is taking root in the very heart of biology and is leading astray many biochemists and biologists, who sincerely believe that the accuracy of fundamental concepts has been demonstrated, which is not the case.⁶

In spite of such statements by mainstream scientists, the debate as to whether evolutionary theory was a pseudoscience remained for the most part within the walls of the scientific establishment; it was still not known to the public. As far as the American public was concerned, evolution was still just as much an incontrovertible fact in the 1970s as it had been in the 1950s, when both Fr. Seraphim and Dr. Kalomiros had gone to college. People wishing to learn what was really happening in the scientific community would have to familiarize themselves with specialized books and journals.

In his sincere desire to know what modern science had to say about evolution—what was actually proved and what was speculation—Fr. Seraphim studied the mainstream scientific literature, as well as popular

treatments of the "proofs" of evolution and human origins. He also

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spoke to scientists working within the prevailing establishment, who told him that many of the evolutionists themselves admitted that there was not actual *proof* for it, but that it "makes more sense," or "the alternative is unthinkable"—i.e., God's creation. For a true scientist, they maintained, the pure theory of evolution is a convenient means of classifying, and another model equally scientific would be just as acceptable.

Through his studies and personal contacts Fr. Seraphim, although he possessed no scientific degrees, became more abreast of the current status of evolutionary theory than Dr. Kalomiros. Assuring Dr. Kalomiros that he was not "against science," he wrote to him:

You seem to be unaware of the great mass of *scientific literature* in recent years which is highly critical of the evolutionary theory, which talks about relegating it to poetry and metaphors instead of scientific theory (Prof. Constance, professor of botany at the University of California, Berkeley), or even deny its validity altogether. If you wish (but it is quite pointless!), I could indeed compile a list of *hundreds* (if not *thousands*) of reputable scientists who now either disbelieve in evolution entirely or state that it is highly questionable scientific theory.

In his studies, Fr. Seraphim appreciated the work of the scientific creationists, a group of Protestant Christians who were also professional scientists. The creation science movement had been catalyzed in America with the publication of the seminal textbook *The Genesis Flood* by Dr. Henry Morris and Dr. John Whitcomb in 1960 (only a year after the Darwin Centennial),* and its growth had precisely coincided with the growing doubts about evolutionary theory within the scientific establishment. From its inception, its strategy was to emphasize not how much evolution contradicts the Bible, but how much it contradicts scientific evidence. Its early success and influence caused evolutionists to take the offensive, caricaturing the creationists and ac-

* In 1932 a similar movement had started in England, calling itself the Evolution Protest Movement. Its prime mover was biologist Douglas Dewar. Continuing its work to this day, it is now known as the Creation Science Movement.

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cusing them of religious bias while not acknowledging their own religious bias. As Dr. Henry Morris wrote:

The answer of the evolutionary establishment to the creationist arguments has not been scientific, but emotional. Intimidation is evidently the game plan. The A.C.L.U. files or threatens to file lawsuits wherever a two-model [creation/evolution] approach is considered in a school district. A veritable stream of anti-creationist tirades has poured forth from the liberal news media, as well as the journals and books of the educational/scientific establishment. Evolutionists publicly gloat over the merest suggestion of a misquotation or misrepresentation which they can discover in the copiously documented

creationist literature, while their own writings are saturated without-of-context quotes and flagrant distortions of the creationist arguments.⁷

Thus, by the time Fr. Seraphim was making an in-depth study of this subject in the early 1970s, the creationist movement had been made an object of ridicule in the public mind. Fr. Seraphim himself was at first somewhat skeptical about the movement, not because he was swayed by public opinion (in which he had absolutely no trust), but because he saw the movement as being based on the rationalistic, "common sense" Scriptural interpretation of Protestantism rather than on the Divinely revealed interpretation of the Orthodox Holy Fathers. However, when he actually studied books by leading scientific creationists—in particular *The Genesis Flood* and *Scientific Creationism*, both by Dr. Henry Morris—he was impressed by their careful research and sober, thoughtful presentation. "Their presentation of the 'Creation Model,'" he wrote, "is a promising approach to a more objective view of the whole question."

Fr. Seraphim looked to scientific creationists not to resolve questions of theology and philosophy. (For these questions, of course, he turned to the Holy Fathers, as well as to traditional Orthodox philosophers such as Ivan V. Kireyevsky, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, and Constantine Leontiev.) Rather, he

used the work of the scientific creationists exclusively
to deal with questions raised by modern sci-

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ence, in order to support the teachings he had *already found in* Patristic theology. Although these scientists indeed lacked the Patristic understanding of the nature of man and the first-created world (and in general the whole Patristic field of commentary on Genesis), their books presented facts which pointed to the fixity of the "kinds" of animals, the global Flood, and a (relatively) recent creation—all of which Fr. Seraphim had found stated unequivocally in the writings of the Holy Fathers. Hence, without intending to, these Protestant scientists were in many ways serving as active defenders of Patristic Orthodoxy.

Fr. Seraphim's respect for this courageous group of scientists only increased when he made contact with the Institute for Creation Research, located in his hometown of San Diego. He subscribed to their newsletter *Acts and Facts*, often discussing interesting new articles with the brothers at the monastery. Frequently he referred his fellow Orthodox Christians to the many books put out by the Institute, beginning with the introductory work *Scientific Creationism**

8. The "Survival Course" and the Courses on Genesis

The book that Fr. Seraphim planned was never finished. A. Y. sent rough drafts of his own sections to Fr. Seraphim, which the latter revised and augmented with his own writings, even sending it to a professor of natural sciences for review; but still the book remained in a rough and fragmentary state.

In the meantime, however, Fr. Seraphim continued to do research, write and speak on evolution and the Patristic view of creation.

In the summer of 1975, with the aim of giving pilgrims to the monastery a foundation in Orthodoxy, Fathers Herman and Seraphim held a three-week course, naming it the "New Valaam Theological Academy." Fr. Seraphim gave a series of lectures on the development of

*The esteem with which he came to regard the Institute for Creation Research can be seen in his last talk on creation/evolution, given only a few weeks before his

repose, in which he spoke at the length about the Institute and its work. See Appendix Three, pp. 615-25.

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Western thought from the Great Schism to the present. For all the talks he wrote extensive outlines, organizing the vast historical and philosophical research he had done for *The Kingdom of Man and the Kingdom of God*. This was the ripened fruit, not only of that early research, but also of his rich store of experience as an Orthodox Christian. He was now much better equipped than before to present his knowledge in a way that would have a practical application to the lives of contemporary people. He called his lecture series a "Survival Course" because of his belief that, in order for people to survive as Orthodox Christians nowadays, they had to understand the apostasy, to know *why* the modern age is the way it is. In order to protect oneself, one must have an idea of the strategy of one's enemy. Fr. Seraphim also called his classes "a course in Orthodox self-defense."

Twelve lectures were given by Fr. Seraphim, each of them several hours long. The eleventh lecture was on the subject of evolution. Here Fr. Seraphim brought to bear not only his early research, but also his more recent studies for the proposed book on the Patristic understanding of creation. In the lecture, he discussed evolution from all the different points of view—the historical, scientific, philosophical, and theological—and ended with a presentation of the various expressions of "Christian evolutionism," especially that of Teilhard de Chardin. The lecture was thus a rich summary of all his thoughts on the subject up until 1975.

In subsequent years Fr. Seraphim continued to write notes and outlines on creation and evolution. Then, in 1981, only a year before his death, he took up the subject again in earnest. During the "New Valaam Theological Academy" course in the summer of that year, he gave a series of classes on the Patristic interpretation of the first three chapters of the book of Genesis. He put much effort into these classes beforehand, writing out an extensive manuscript of a verse-by-verse commentary filled with Patristic quotations, many of which he translated himself. His eight years of contemplating, reading and praying about this subject had not been in vain. His series of classes was the product of a matured Patristic mind, of one who, perhaps more than anyone else in modern times, had searched through the whole sum of the teaching of the Fathers in order to find and elucidate the single Patristic *doctrine of*

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Creation. And how exalted was the teaching of the Fathers that he poured forth, how much more inspiring than the attempts of others to conform the Holy Fathers to modern intellectual fashions!

At the next Academy course in the summer of 1982, Fr. Seraphim continued his commentary on Genesis, this time discussing the fourth to the eleventh chapters. Within two weeks after finishing these classes he unexpectedly fell ill, and within another week he reposed in the Lord. His Patristic commentary on Genesis, therefore, was the last achievement of his life.

9. The Plan of the Book

In Fr. Seraphim's early plans for the proposed book, he thought it best to begin with a discussion of evolution first, showing that it has no coercive scientific evidence to support it, and then to present the Patristic understanding of creation. At that time, he thought that this was necessary because, before people could even take the Patristic teaching seriously, they first had to understand that what they had learned all their lives about the undisputed fact of evolution was in fact disputed.

At the end of his life, Fr. Seraphim thought differently. In his last stated plan of the proposed book, he said it should begin with his Patristic commentary on Genesis (i.e., his 1981 and 1982 lecture series), which would be followed by a discussion of evolution. "The whole outline of it now becomes clear to me," he wrote. "It should be called something positive (no evolution in the title), such as *Genesis, Creation and Early Man: An Orthodox View*, and the first and main part should be simply an Orthodox interpretation (according to St. John Chrysostom, St. Ephraim, etc.) of the first chapters of Genesis, discussing 'problems' raised by modern men in the course of the discussion. Then, as the secondary thought (less than half the book), a discussion of the whole question of evolution." In the present, posthumous compilation, we have followed this plan.

Why did Fr. Seraphim change his plan for the book? One clue may be found in the following words which Fr. Seraphim wrote in the spring of 1981:

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Thinking about my Genesis course this summer, I was rereading part of Dr. Kalomiros' letters. How discouraging! One loses all inspiration to get tangled up in this subject, seeing how he handles it.... Anyone who is really *converted* to Christianity will surely begin to rethink his whole intellectual outlook, won't he? Isn't the real problem that Dr. Kalomiros ... and others are intellectuals who haven't fully converted, or have brought their intellectual baggage with them into Orthodoxy?

Fr. Seraphim had frankly become bored with the idea of having to present the Patristic teaching on creation exclusively as it related to the modern intellectual baggage of evolutionism. He had done this in his letter to Dr. Kalomiros back in 1974, but now, as he was preparing his Patristic commentary eight years later, he had distanced himself from the controversy. He saw that the whole weight of the Patristic teaching on the creation was so powerful and compelling that the unproved assumptions and confused thinking of modern evolutionists paled in comparison. The Patristic teaching, Fr. Seraphim saw, could stand on its own Divine authority, even before modern minds raised on evolutionary teaching; and a discussion of evolution was only needed as a secondary consideration.

10. Developments in the 1980s

This was probably the main reason why Fr. Seraphim wanted to reverse the original order of the book. But there was possibly another reason: in the last two years of Fr. Seraphim's life, a change had begun to occur in the public's acceptance of evolution. We have mentioned earlier how, in the 1960s and 1970s, the growing doubts of scientists about neo-Darwinism had been mostly hidden behind the walls of the scientific community. By the end of the seventies, these walls began to crumble. The first fissure occurred when the prominent paleontologists Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould publicized their new evolutionary theory of "punctuated equilibrium" to account for the lack of transitional, evolutionary forms in the fossil record (which forms would be expected according to classical neo-Darwinism). The new theory was not of great interest to the general public, but what was re-

garded as really newsworthy was that, contrary to popular belief, the fossil record did not at all fit Darwinian expectations. Gould went so far as to call the lack of transitional forms the "trade secret of paleontology." This became international news, and it set in motion the next phase in the crumbling of the Darwinian edifice.

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Another extremely important development, beginning in 1980, was the resurgence of catastrophism in geology. Geologists began to challenge the reigning uniformitarian model that had inspired Darwin (the idea that the sedimentary layers were formed gradually, at constant rates), demonstrating that it was incapable of accounting for the rock beds of the earth's crust, especially the fossil deposits. A number of geologists, calling themselves "neo-catastrophists," have thus returned to the idea that practically all the strata were formed by floods and other such catastrophes. Although they reject Biblical catastrophism and retain the standard evolutionary/uniformitarian framework of billions of years, these non-creationist geologists have offered secular confirmation of what Flood geologists such as Henry Morris have been saying for years.

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In the years following Fr. Seraphim's repose in 1982, new developments have continued to be seen. More non-Christian, non-creationist scientists have made known the fact that the neo-Darwinian theory does not account for the new data in the fields of geology, paleontology, astronomy, genetics, physics, biochemistry and other sciences. Some are looking for a new model, though they hardly know where to turn. It is of course too much to assume they will all turn to the "Creation Model," since, as Fr. Seraphim pointed out, neither creation nor evolution can be conclusively proved: both are a matter of faith and philosophy, of a choice of presuppositions.

A number of good books have come out since Fr. Seraphim's death which have helped to bring the fallacies of neo-Darwinism into public view. In 1985 there appeared a book by Australian molecular biologist Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, which offered a systematic critique of the current evolutionary model from a variety of scientific disciplines. From his own specialty, Denton showed that the discoveries of

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11. Developments in the 1990s: Phillip E. Johnson

The most interesting and unexpected event in the evolution debate in recent years has been the rise of a professor of law, Phillip E. Johnson, as one of the world's leading critics of Darwinism. Johnson, who has taught law at the University of California at Berkeley for nearly thirty years, says that one of his specialties is "analyzing the logic of arguments and identifying the assumptions that lie behind those arguments." In 1987, in reading the arguments for evolution in Richard Dawkins' book *The Blind Watchmaker*, he noticed that they were based on rhetoric rather than hard science. "I could see," he recalls, "that Dawkins achieved his word magic by the very tools that are familiar to us lawyers—I picked up one book after another, and became increasingly

fascinated with the obvious difficulties in the Darwinist case—difficulties that were being evaded by tricky rhetoric and emphatic repeti-

tion."⁸

Johnson also noticed the way his scientific colleagues responded when he asked hard questions about Darwinism:

Instead of taking the intellectual questions seriously and responding to them, they would answer with all sorts of evasions and vague language, making it impossible to discuss the real objections to Darwinism. This is the way people talk when they're trying very hard not to understand something.

Another tip-off was the sharp contrast I noticed between the extremely dogmatic tone that Darwinists use when addressing the general public and the

occasional frank acknowledgments, in scientific circles, of serious problems with the theory....

It was an enormous shock to me getting into this to see, in fact, how bad the reasoning really is, how illogical the whole scientific held of evolution is and how resistant the scientists are to having any logic brought into it. So I felt like there was a real opportunity for somebody outside of science whose interest was in good logical thinking rather than promoting any one particular set of solutions, and that's the mission I've been on ever since

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Biologists who spend their lifetimes studying biology will be legitimate authorities, obviously, on the details of what they've learned in that investigation, and an outsider can't really challenge that, but an outsider definitely can challenge their thinking, particularly when it turns out that they believe in what they believe in not because of what they know as biologists, but *in spite of* what they know as biologists. It's a philosophical movement based on materialism_____ So,

that's a thinking issue, and it's really more within my discipline than it's within theirs.⁹

In 1991 Professor Johnson came out with the book *Darwin on Trial*. His clear-headedness in cutting through the rhetoric of Darwinism and exposing the logical foundations of the controversy quickly won him the respect of creationists and non-creationists alike, and also the ire of the die-hard evolutionists, who to this day have not succeeding in refuting a single one of his arguments.

Johnsons work has inspired more scientists to come into the open with their own hard questions about evolutionary theory. The most well-known among these is Professor of Biochemistry Michael Behe, who in his 1996 book *Darwin's Black Box* shows that the astonishing new discoveries of biochemistry cannot be accommodated by any form of Darwinism. He presents evidence from his field that interdependent biochemical machines must have been *designed*, although not being a creationist he does not positively identify the Designer.

In 1997 another thought-provoking book landed a strong blow against Darwinism: *Not by Chance!* by Dr. Lee Spetner. An Israeli bio-physicist and expert on the genetic code, Spetner has spent thirty years researching the possibility of evolution on the genetic level. He not only shows *why* random mutations will never produce the changes that evolutionists claim, but also offers new

scientific avenues for investigating *how* variation occurs within the strict genetic limits of each kind of organism.

The following year saw the publication of yet another major contribution: *The Design Inference* by William A. Dembski, a professor of mathematics and philosophy, and a recent convert to Orthodox

Christianity.* On the basis of mathematical probability, Dembski demonstrates conclusively that undirected natural causes cannot account for biological complexity.

As such contributions continue to be made, Professor Johnson uses them to advance the case for a Creator. With his background in political theory, he is a careful strategist. He sees his work and the work of others like him in terms of a "wedge" strategy. "The idea," he says,

is that you get a few people out promoting a new way of thinking and new ideas. It's very shocking, and they take a lot of abuse. The thing is that you have to have people that talk a lot about the issue and get it up front and take the punishment and take all the abuse, and then you get people used to talking about it. It becomes an issue they are used to hearing about, and you get a few more people and a few more, and then eventually you've legitimated it as a regular part of the academic discussion. And that's my goal: to legitimate the argument over evolution and particularly over the Darwinian mechanism and its supposed creative power, to legitimate that as a mainstream scientific and academic issue. As soon as we can do that and put the spotlight on it, then everybody knows that there is no evidence. So, we can't lose the argument. We're bound to win it. We just have to normalize it, and that takes patience and persistence, and that's what we are applying.¹⁰

Professor Johnson is also an admirer of Fr. Seraphim, and has sought to make Fr. Seraphim's life and work more widely known.** We are grateful for his introduction to the present book.

Another Orthodox Christian presently active in refuting evolutionism is John Mark Reynolds, Professor of Philosophy at Biola University. In a recent (1999) anthology he affirms that "The Fathers from the first century forward overwhelmingly took a young earth, global-flood view.... Simply discarding the views of the Fathers « not an option for any thoughtful Christian" (Moreland and Reynolds, ed., *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, p. 97).

* See Phillip Johnson's review of Fr. Seraphim's biography, published first in *Books & Culture*

(September/October, 1997) and later in the collection of Johnsons ^{es}says, *Objections Sustained*, pp. 173-78.

12. Changes in the Orthodox World

The "wedge" of which Professor Johnson speaks has not been without repercussions in the Orthodox world. In 1998 *The Christian Activist*—a popular Orthodox journal that reached 75,000 Orthodox Christians of all backgrounds—published an article by Dr. Kalomiros (who had recently reposed) which claimed that modern evolutionary theory was compatible with Orthodox Christianity. There was of course nothing unusual about this. As we have seen, Orthodox journals in America had shown acceptance of evolutionism many times in the past. What was unusual and surprising was the readers' reaction to Dr. Kalomiros' article. *The Christian Activist* had always received large amounts of mail, but this time they were inundated. In the following issue the publisher wrote:

We received more letters to the editor about issue #11 than any other prior issue. We also received more letters on "Eternal Will," the article on creation by Dr. Kalomiros, than any article we have ever published, all of them in disagreement with his views.

The editor wisely decided to print large portions of Fr. Seraphim's letter to Dr. Kalomiros, with a statement that Fr. Seraphim's presentation of the Church Fathers on the subject of evolution was indeed the traditional, Orthodox one.*ⁿ

The response to the 1998 *Christian Activist* article represented a major shift since the 1970s, when pro-evolution articles evoked nothing but cautious silence or open approval in mainstream Orthodox circles. At that time, Fr. Seraphim had gone against public opinion in contemporary American Orthodoxy, and was thus subjected to criti-

* Fr. Seraphim's letter to Dr. Kalomiros had previously been published in a special double-issue of the Orthodox journal *Epiphany* (Fall 1989-Winter 1990), edited and compiled by Fr. Andrew Rossi and Stephen Muratore. This ground-breaking issue, the first work of its kind to appear in the American Orthodox press, also included scientific and philosophical refutations of evolution by William A. Dembski; Wolfgang Smith, and others.

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cism by his fellow Orthodox. Now public opinion has begun to catch up with him.

13. Beyond Darwinism

Interestingly, Fr. Seraphim predicted these developments. In his writings and talks, he said that atheism/agnosticism in modern science and philosophy, which relies heavily on Darwinian theory, would inevitably wane. This will be a boon for traditional Christians and for those seeking the true God; but for others, Fr. Seraphim said, it will lead to a vague deism and various shades of pantheism that will characterize the deceptive "religion of the future."*

Phillip E. Johnson, as a Christian who is on the front lines of the creation/evolution debate, agrees with the prognosis that Fr. Seraphim made over two decades ago. "It is what all my friends and I have been discussing," he says. "Scientific materialism is waning, but unhealthy forms of religion will largely take its place." ⁿ For Orthodox Christians, this is all the more reason to cling firmly to the common teaching of the Holy Fathers, whom Fr. Seraphim called a "sure guide to true Christianity."

14. The Present Book

The present volume has been compiled from the following material, all of it by Fr. Seraphim:

1. Letter to Dr. Kalomiros, 1974;
2. Lecture 11 of the "Survival Course" in 1975, which includes both Fr. Seraphim's "Brief Critique of the Evolutionary Model" and his discussion of "Christian Evolutionism";
3. Patristic Commentary on Genesis, 1981 and 1982, taken both from Fr. Seraphim's manuscript and from his oral delivery, including the question-and-answer sessions;
- 4- Letters from 1974 to 1981;
5. Miscellaneous notes, including outlines, brief essays, and Fr. Seraphim's own additions to A. Y.'s unfinished chapters.

—*This subject is discussed at length in the Editor's Epilogue, pp. 545-90.

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Although Fr. Seraphim never lived to finalize the book he planned, the present volume, taken from his own writings and lectures, covers all the main areas that he wanted discussed.* In fact, in some ways this posthumous collection is more full than the book he envisioned. For example, some of Fr. Seraphim's most interesting theological observations are found in the tape transcriptions of his question-and-answer sessions (Part IV), and some of his most concise and penetrating thoughts about evolutionism are contained in the selections from his letters (Part V).

Fr. Seraphim's discussion of the scientific side of the creation/evolution issue does not represent as full a treatment as he had envisioned for the book, nor is it fully up to date. We have attempted to remedy this situation by including (1) Professor Johnson's introduction on the reconsideration of Darwinism today, (2) explanatory footnotes to Fr. Seraphim's discussion, with references to more recent literature, (3) an article on radiometric dating to supplement Fr. Seraphim's observations (Appendix Four), and (4) a list of suggested reading, including the most up-to-date resources (Appendix Five).

15. This Book's Primary Contribution to the World

However, it is not in its discussion of scientific issues that the uniqueness of this book lies. As we have seen, there is now plenty of excellent material, by both creationists and non-creationists, which brings to light these issues.

Rather, this book adds a unique dimension to the current creation/evolution debate by presenting, in a penetrating, detailed yet unadorned way, the otherworldly mind of the Holy Fathers as it perceives the creation, the first-created world, the natures of created things and the original nature of man.

* Since this is a compilation of separate bodies of work done at different times for different purposes, there is some repetition of Patristic passages. Had Fr. Seraphim lived to complete this book himself, these repetitions would of course not occur. We have elected to allow for them in

this posthumous collection so as not to disturb the integrity and continuity of each separate work.

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In overcoming the temptation, which had been bred in him from childhood, to feel he knew better than the ancients, Fr. Seraphim revealed how *noble*, how utterly treasurable is the Patristic mind. Clearly, from his writing one can see that this is no ordinary human mind, but something Divine.

The Prophet Moses, the author of Genesis, had received his knowledge of the creation from Divine vision—*theoria* in Greek. The Holy Fathers who commented on the Scriptures were also partakers of Divine *theoria*, and thus they are the only sure interpreters of Moses' text. Fr. Seraphim, having immersed himself in the mind of the Fathers, presented to the modern world the Patristic *vision* of the cosmos, and thus raised the discussion far above the merely rational and scientific.

All creationists, whether "Biblical" or "non-Biblical," have much to learn from Fr. Seraphim's exposition. The "non-Biblical" creationists will find in the teaching of the Fathers a mystical illumination of the book of Genesis, and thus they may look more closely at that book as a Divinely inspired "prophecy of the past." Biblical creationists will likewise find that the Patristic testimony opens up new dimensions in their understanding of the Bible: new levels of meaning that they never could have reached through normal exegetical means.*

Once one acquires the mind of the Fathers as Fr. Seraphim did,

* Some creationist writings contain mistaken ideas about the Holy Fathers, based on the idea that Christianity was corrupted from the time of St. Constantine to the Protestant Reformation. It is hoped that the present book will help encourage a reexamination of the Holy Fathers, so that Biblical creationists of all backgrounds will see that the Holy Fathers do indeed uphold the basic positions of present-day creation scientists, and can in fact take their understanding to a higher level.

It appears that such a reexamination has already begun. In 1991 *Creation Research Society Quarterly* printed an article affirming St. Basil's interpretation of Genesis ("An Early View of Genesis One," *CRS Quarterly*, vol. 27, pp. 138-39), which in

JJ4 was adapted and reprinted in another leading creationist magazine, *Creation Ex Nihilo* ("Genesis Means What It Says," *Creation Ex Nihilo*, vol. 16, no. 3, p. 23). More recently, molecular biologist Jonathan Wells has admirably defended the teach-

ing or the Holy Fathers on creation (see his article "Abusing Theology," in *Origins* *esign* vol. 19, no. 1, 1998), as has British creation scientist Malcolm Bowden (see

1998 book *True Science Agrees with the Bible*, pp. 38-40).

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one can never view the book of Genesis as merely an allegory; but more than this, one can never view the present world as before. Why? Because the Holy Fathers, like the Prophet Moses, mystically perceived the world as it was first created. They taught from experience that the world was originally incorruptible, of a higher order than the material world which came into being after man's fall. A modern-day Holy Father, St. Barsanuphius of Optina (1845-1913), put it this way:

The beautiful things of this world are only hints of that beauty with which the first-created world was filled, as Adam and Eve saw it. That beauty was destroyed by the sin of the first people.

Imagine a marvelous statue by a great master—and suddenly someone smashes it like a thunderbolt. What will remain of it? Fragments. We can pick them up; we can search out the neck, a portion of an arm, or the face. Indications of the beauty of the lines are preserved in these separate fragments, but they no longer produce for us the former harmony, the former wholeness and beauty. Thus also did the fall into sin of the first people destroy the beauty of God's world, and there remain to us only fragments of it by which we may judge concerning the primordial beauty.¹³

Once, when standing before a window at night, St. Barsanuphius pointed to the moon and said to his spiritual children:

Look—what a picture! This is left to us as a consolation. It's no wonder that the Prophet David said, "Thou has gladdened me, O Lord, by Thy works (Ps. 91:3). "Thou has gladdened me," he says, although this is only a hint of that wondrous beauty, incomprehensible to human thought, which was originally created. We don't know what kind of moon there was then, what kind of sun, what kind of light.... All of this changed after the fall.¹⁴

The Holy Fathers' vision of the first-created world was at the same time a glimpse of the future age. As St. Barsanuphius said:

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There will come a time of worldwide cataclysm, and the whole world will burst into flame. The earth and sun and moon will burn—everything will burn; everything will vanish and a new world will rise up, more beautiful than the one which the first people contemplated. Then will begin eternal, joyous life, total blessedness in Christ. And it is for this blessed life that the human soul pines even now on earth.¹⁵

Fr. Seraphim, in acquiring the Patristic mind, lived with this image ever before him. In the morning, before church services, he had a practice of circling the entire monastery grounds. As the golden glow of the morning light filtered through the broad canopy of oak leaves, Fr. Seraphim could be seen blessing and even kissing the trees.

"What's this?" Fr. Herman once asked him. "Kissing trees!"

Fr. Seraphim looked up, smiling radiantly, and continued walking.

Fr. Seraphim knew better than anyone that this old earth, weighed down by the fallenness of man, had not long to live, that it would be "obliterated in the twinkling of an eye," transfigured into a new earth. And yet, as Fr. Herman realized while he watched him make his rounds, Fr. Seraphim was kissing the very "fragments" of the lost beauty of the original creation. "He wanted to die," Fr. Herman says,

"to melt into the earth, which will be transformed. The very idea of

the tree he kissed was otherworldly, for trees were originally created incorruptible in Paradise, according to the teaching of St. Gregory of Sinai."

In his commentary on Genesis, Fr. Seraphim made a self-revelatory statement which confirmed this:

In the peaceful murmur of the forests (where so many ascetic strugglers have taken refuge) can we not see a reminder of the Paradise of vegetation originally intended for our dwelling and food, and still existing for those able to ascend, like St. Paul, to behold it?

Fr. Seraphim also had a great appreciation of the animal kingdom: both the many wild animals which freely roamed around the monastery and the monastery's many domesticated animals. Ever since he

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was a boy he had shown this appreciation, which had inspired him to spend three summer vacations studying zoology at the Junior Summer School of Science in San Diego. Now that he was an Orthodox monk living in the wilderness, he viewed animals in a more sublime light, even while realizing that they too had been affected by man's primordial fall. Fr. Herman recalls a quiet moment when some of the monastery's animals came up to them. "From your point of view," Fr. Herman asked in a reflective mood, "what are animals all about?" Fr. Seraphim replied: "They have something to do with Paradise."

16. The Nature of Man

According to Fr. Seraphim, "The most important question which is raised for Orthodox theology by the modern theory of evolution is *the nature of man*, and in particular *the nature of the first-created man Adam*." Through rationalism, and in particular through evolutionism, modern secular man has lost an awareness of what he was like before the fall, when he, like Paradise itself, was incorruptible. As Fr. Seraphim came to realize, most contemporary Christians, including Orthodox Christians, have also lost this awareness—and this is one of the biggest problems of Christianity today. Without an awareness of our original nature, we cannot know what it is we should be striving to get back to; we cannot know what we are made for. The only way to regain this awareness is, again, to acquire the mind of the Holy Fathers. That is why the present book adds a vital dimension, not only to the current creation/evolution debate, but literally to all aspects of human life.

"With the opening of their eyes through the transgression," Fr. Seraphim wrote, "Adam and Eve have already lost the life of Paradise. ... From now on their eyes will be open to the lower things of this earth, and they will see only with difficulty the higher things of God. They are no longer dispassionate, but have begun the passionate earthly life we still have today."

By becoming dispassionate through prayer and ascetic struggle, the Orthodox saints throughout the ages restored in themselves, while yet in a corruptible body, some measure of the state of pre-fall Adam-

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Like him, they were shown to be impervious to the elements; like him, they were masters and stewards of creation, and all creatures obeyed them.

"Adam was in a state of sobriety," Fr. Seraphim said elsewhere. "He looked at things and saw them the way they were. There was no 'double thought' like we have in our fallen state ... no looking at things and imagining something else."

Through Christ, the saints also returned to this pre-fall state of sobriety (*nipsis in* Greek). With pure, open awareness, they perceived not only the original nature of man, but also the distinct natures of created things—"ideas" of the creative Mind of God.

Fr. Seraphim, in reading the Lives of these saints (especially the ascetic "desert-dwellers"), was fascinated by these almost contemporary images of what man was in the beginning, and likewise of what he will be in the future age, when he will be raised up in a body incorruptible. In following in their footsteps, Fr. Seraphim prayed much, cultivated the lofty virtues of sobriety and dispassion, and ascended with the saints beyond this corruptible earth.

"I could see," recalls Fr. Herman, "that not only was his mind working but his heart was involved, and his heart caught those things you just can't get, as a rational being, from books. Things were open to him, but he couldn't tell of them because others wouldn't understand. That's why he said so few words, even when I urged him to reveal the fruits of his contemplation

"He was not at home in the world, he had no lust for life; and that's why he could go so high—into super-consciousness."

From this vantage point, Fr. Seraphim shared the experience of the saints in glimpsing the original nature of man and the natures of created things. Thus, he saw evolution as untenable not only because the Holy Fathers said so (although for him that was reason enough in itself) or because there was no true scientific

evidence for it, but also because he recognized through the light of inner sight that evolution-^{ism} abolishes man's original nature, takes away man's awareness of paradise and his fall from it, and destroys the Divinely established distinction between the natures of created things.

Through revelation from above, the Prophet Moses described the

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creation and the first-created world. Through the grace of Christ working within them, the Holy Fathers provided further illumination of Moses' words. And finally, through the same action of grace, a Holy Father of our own times, Fr. Seraphim Rose, has pierced through the delusion of evolutionism and illuminated the teachings of the Fathers for contemporary Truth-seekers.

It is our hope and prayer that more and more of these seekers will catch the message. Through the work of people like Professors Johnson, Spetner and Dembski, they can see that, at the very least, evolution has not been proved nor is it provable. Through the work of the scientific creationists, they can examine the great mass of scientific evidence that points to the veracity of Genesis as an historical account. And then, through the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, they can raise their minds and hearts above this fallen, corruptible earth. From there they will view the world and themselves as they are in truth, and as they are meant to be.

Hieromonk Damascene

St. Herman of Alaska Monastery

Commemoration of St. John Maximovitch

June 19/July 2, 1999

INTRODUCTION

Fr. Seraphim Rose and 21st-century Science

BY PHILLIP E. JOHNSON

I FIRST HEARD of Father Seraphim Rose in the summer of 1996, while lecturing in the Seattle area. A young man who had been in contact with the monks at the Monastery of St. Herman in Platina, California, brought me a stack of books, saying that the monks would like me to write an essay to accompany a collection of Fr. Seraphim's writings on Genesis and evolution. I had most of the books mailed to my office but selected the slimmest one (*Nihilisrri*) to read on the trip. I was fascinated by the insight displayed in this early work, and needed no urging to read later all the other materials I received, including Fr. Damascene Christensen's biography and the previously unpublished writings collected in this volume. Fr. Seraphim Rose believed in and lived by the teachings of the early Christian Church, but (or should I say "and therefore"?) he also thoroughly understood the problems of modernity. I am honored to have been invited to assist in bringing his teaching to the attention of a broader section of the public.

My task is to review the state of the scientific
questions today, to

give the reader a sense of how well Fr. Seraphim's
critique of evolution-

ary naturalism stands up now that a major
reconsideration of Darwin-

ism beginning to occur in the secular world. I should
explain first that

my involvement with the subject of evolution has been
quite different

from his. Fr. Seraphim's primary objective was to explain
the teaching of

the Church Fathers, especially with respect to their understanding of

the Scriptures, so that Orthodox believers would not be misled by mis-

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guided efforts to reinterpret those teachings in the light of modernist evolutionary science. He dealt with scientific questions mainly in the context of defending the Patristic writings, and he directed his teaching towards fellow Orthodox believers. Although he understood the philosophical roots of evolutionary theory very profoundly, he was not extensively involved with the scientific community. He seems to have debated the subject only with Dr. Kalomiros, who was apparently esteemed within part of the Orthodox community but whose scientific views were confused and laden with misinformation.

My own writings are addressed to the world at large, including secular intellectuals and religious believers from a variety of traditions. My writing and speaking brings me into constant debate with a variety of scientific authorities of greater and lesser renown. Most of my critics would not consider the Church Fathers to be reliable authorities, or even recognize their names. Many of them are also strongly prejudiced against anything that smacks of "fundamentalism," or even "religion," and hence are repelled rather than persuaded by any reference to the Bible or its interpreters. To avoid endless confusion and distraction, and to keep attention focused on the most important point, I have firmly put aside all questions of Biblical interpretation and religious authority, in order to concentrate my energies on one theme. My theme is that, in Fr. Seraphim's words, "evolution is *not* 'scientific fact' at all, but philosophy." The philosophy in question is naturalism (the doctrine that nature is "all there is"), which for this purpose is identical to materialism (the doctrine that reality consists of nothing but the particles that physicists study). If materialism is true then nature had to be capable of doing its own creating, and the existence of a materialistic evolutionary process follows as a matter of inevitable logic. Hence, I have argued, scientific materialists believe in naturalistic evolution not because of the evidence, but regardless of it.

Although my own project has led me to avoid the questions or Patristic authority that most concerned Fr. Seraphim, some of my debating opponents have (like Dr. Kalomiros) invoked the Fathers in highly distorted form for their own purposes. I am therefore gratified to

see that Fr. Seraphim has thoroughly demolished one of the favorite canards of accommodationists not only in Orthodoxy, but also in

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Roman Catholic and Protestant circles. Desperately seeking anything that will support their program of melding Christianity with evolutionary naturalism, these theologians and scientists have claimed that such esteemed Fathers as Basil and Augustine taught a doctrine which is more or less like a primitive version of modern evolutionary theory. I need say no more on this subject, because no one who understands Fr. Seraphim's lectures on Genesis and creation, which are contained in this volume, is in danger of being misled by such perverse misinterpretations.*

With those introductory comments out of the way, I will explain certain common misunderstandings of the scientific issues with which Fr. Seraphim had to deal, and in the course of doing this I will attempt to bring his discussion up to date. Fr. Seraphim's thought was thoroughly at odds with twentieth-century science, shaped as that science has been by its *a priori* commitment to metaphysical materialism. It may well be, however, that the science of the next century will be more modest and hence more realistic, in which case he may seem like a man who was far ahead of his time.

What is "evolution"?

A succinct and accurate definition of "evolution," as the term is understood by today's mainstream scientists and science educators, is given in the official (USA, 1995) policy statement of the National Association of Biology Teachers** (NABT):

See the article by Jonathan Wells, "Abusing Theology: Howard Van Tills 'Forgotten Doctrine of Creation's Functional Integrity,'" in the journal *Origins & Design*, vol. 19, no. 1.

** The complete text of the NABT Statement on the teaching of evolution was published in *The American Biology Teacher* (January, 1996), pp. 61-62, and in the collection *Voices for Evolution* (Berkeley, Calif.: National Center for Science Education, 1995) pp. 140-44. Following public criticism by myself and others, the NABT amended the Statement to omit the words "unsupervised" and "impersonal." This amendment was in no way a change in the substance of the NABT's position; it merely deleted in cautious words too obvious and undeniable. The Darwinian establishment prefers to make its main point—that God had nothing to do with evolution—by persistent insinuation rather than the kind of plain language that invites opposition. That evolution was never

guided by an intelligent agent (until scientific an developed
genetic engineering) remains the standard Darwinian
teaching.

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The diversity of life on earth is the outcome of evolution: an unsupervised, impersonal, unpredictable and natural process of temporal descent with genetic modification that is affected by natural selection, chance, historical contingencies and changing environments.

This definition contains three elements:

1. Evolution is an unsupervised and impersonal process—i.e., it is not directed or guided by God;
2. Evolution is a natural process of descent with modification by which all of today's living organisms descended by a natural process from a single primordial ancestor which itself evolved (without supernatural assistance) from non-living chemicals; and
3. The mechanism of evolution is a combination of random genetic changes (chance) and natural selection, operating in the context of historical contingencies and changing environments.

I will discuss these three elements below, in reverse order. As a preliminary matter, however, I should firmly correct one of Dr. Kalomir's many misunderstandings. Not every instance of change in nature constitutes "evolution," as that term is used today. The growth of a giant oak tree from an acorn is not evolution, nor is the development of a human baby from an embryo in the womb of its mother. These processes of what biologists call "development" are fundamentally different from biological evolution, because they are programmed by the information inherited from the parents and hence are highly predictable. A human embryo never grows into some animal other than a human being, and an acorn never turns aside from its programmed path to become a pine tree or a rose bush.

There is a persistent legend among evolutionists that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny;" that is, that the development of the human infant in the womb is a kind of rerun of evolutionary history, as the embryo goes from a fish stage to a reptile stage and so on. This nonexistent phenomenon is often called "Haeckel's

Law," after Darwins most prominent German disciple. In another form, the "Law" states that the embryo goes through not the adult stages but the embryonic

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forms of earlier, "ancestral" forms. In either form, the "Law" does not exist, and is not defended by qualified embryologists in the professional literature. One can, however, find stages evident here and there of characteristics that, with imagination, can be made to fit the pattern of Haeckel's Law, and these are continually cited to the public in popular treatments as proof of "evolution." The most famous example is the supposed "gill slits" possessed by human embryos at one stage of development, although these slits are not gills and never develop into gills.

Although Haeckel's Law was discredited many decades ago, it has such an irresistible appeal to the Darwinian imagination that it is still taught in many schools around the world. Even reputable museums and universities continue to propagate a version of it, in a vague and unfalsifiable form. For example, the on-line Paleontology Museum at the University of California at Berkeley has this to say about Haeckel's Law:

The "law of recapitulation" has been discredited since the beginning of the twentieth century. Experimental morphologists and biologists have shown that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between phylogeny and ontogeny. Although a strong form of recapitulation is not correct, phylogeny and ontogeny are intertwined, and many biologists are beginning to both explore and understand the basis for this connection.* ¹

In fact, research into embryology has shown that it is a tightly directed process which does not fit the Darwinian paradigm at all. Efforts to alter the process by inducing mutations can produce deformities of various sorts, but they do not succeed in changing the path of development so that the embryo develops into a viable creature of a different type.

- For an example of the continuing promotion of the recapitulation concept in presentation to the public, see the discussion of an American Public Television program on human embryology in my internet debate with Professor Kenneth Miller of Brown University: - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/nova/odyssey/debate/index.html>

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1. The Mechanism of Evolution: Mutation and Selection

At bottom, biological evolution is a theory of change, which undertakes to explain how it is possible for one kind of organism to change into something completely different. It also seeks to explain how extremely complex biological organs and organisms can come into existence without the need for a supernatural Creator. As the eminent Darwinist Richard Dawkins has explained, "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose."² Nonetheless, Dawkins says that Darwin "made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist" by explaining how a mindless material mechanism could perform the apparent miracle of biological creation. The mechanism is therefore the heart of the theory, as Darwin himself explained:

In considering the Origin of Species, it is quite conceivable that a naturalist, reflecting on the mutual affinities of organic beings, on their embryologies! relations, their geographical distribution, geological succession, and such other facts, might come to the conclusion that each species had not been independently created, but had descended, like varieties, from other species. Nevertheless, such a conclusion, even if well founded, would be unsatisfactory, until it could be shown how the innumerable species inhabiting this world have been modified, so as to acquire that perfection of structure and coadaptation which most justly excites our admiration.³

In other words, simply postulating that change has occurred, or that primitive species are "ancestors" of modern species, is not much of an improvement over special creation unless a mechanism of change is specified. Our experience is that "like begets like." An ape never gives birth to a human (or vice versa), and it is still more unthinkable that a bacterium would give birth to a butterfly. So how does one kind of organism change into something completely different? Above all,

how does this process of change build new complex organs (like eyes,

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wings, kidneys and brains) which did not exist before? The origin of the human mind is of course the ultimate problem, and Dawkins acknowledges the scope of the problem:

Physics books may be complicated, but... the objects and phenomena that a physics book describes are simpler than a single cell in the body of its author. And the author consists of trillions of those cells, many of them different from each other, organized with intricate architecture and precision-engineering into a working machine capable of writing a book... Each nucleus ... contains a digitally coded.

database larger, in information content, than all 30 volumes of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* put together. And this figure is for *each* cell, not all the cells of the body put together.⁴

How does an unsupervised material process create such an intricate marvel, which is far more complex than a computer or a space ship?

The Darwinian answer is that tiny changes—the sort of variations that appear in each generation and differentiate a juvenile organism from its parents—accumulate gradually over many generations until they produce an entirely new kind of creature with new organs and adaptive features. This mechanism has never been shown to be capable of generating anything other than minor variations (such as back-and-forth variations in the size of finch beaks, or variations in the relative frequency of light and dark varieties in a moth population).^{*} Because it is the only naturalistic possibility that has any plausibility whatever, Darwinists extrapolate wildly from these trivial examples to postulate a mechanism capable of creating countless adaptive wonders, including even the human brain. Such claims are poorly supported, to put it mildly, and in recent years they have come up against

Although the peppered moth experiment never proved anything of importance, readers should know that the

experiment itself was the result of Darwinian enthusiasm. For details of how science has discredited the experiment, see the article by Jonathan Wells, "Second Thoughts about Peppered Moths," at http://www.the-scientist.library.upenn.edu/yr1999/may/opin_990524.html

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insuperable negative evidence. The details are given in my book *Darwin on Trial*, and in various articles which are collected at my Web site (<http://www.arn.org>).^{*} Very briefly, two independent lines of evidence are decisive:

1. *Fossil stasis*. The fossil record is pervasively characterized by a pattern of *sudden appearance* followed by *stasis*. New types of organisms appear suddenly and fully formed, and they remain basically unchanged thereafter. This pattern can be used to support the proposition that creation occurred not just at the beginning but throughout earth's history (assuming the dating of the rocks is accurate),^{**} but it consistently refuses to support the key Darwinian claim that one kind of creature changes step-by-step into something completely different. This pattern of evidence cannot be attributed to any incompleteness in the fossil record, because the pattern is most obvious and undeniable in just those areas (especially marine invertebrates) where the record is most complete.

The very anti-Darwinian state of the fossil record was known to insiders all along as the "trade secret of paleontology," but it first came to the attention of the general public in the 1980s, due to the publicity given to the theory of evolution by "punctuated equilibria." This theory attempted to reconcile Darwinism with the pattern of sudden appearance and stasis by supposing that significant evolution occurs in small groups, which go away from the (unchanging) main population, accumulate mutations, and then reappear as a new species without leaving a trace of the transformation in the fossil record. By this means the absence of evidence for evolution became transformed into evidence for invisible evolution. In the memorable (1995) words of Niles Eldredge, one of the founders of the punctuated equilibria theory, "Evolution cannot forever be going on somewhere else. Yet that's how

—^{*} Many of Phillip E. Johnson's articles can also be found in his book *Objections Sustained* (1998).—Ed.

^{**} The currently accepted radiometric dating procedures, however, are themselves based on unproven uniformitarian and evolutionist assumptions. See Fr. Seraaphim's discussion of this subject on pp. 309-14, 459-60, as well as Appendix Four, "The Faith of Radiometric Dating," pp. 626-35.—Ed.

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the fossil record has struck many a forlorn paleontologist looking to learn something about evolution."⁵ ;

As Eldredge's remark implies, this spectacular pattern of fossil dis-confirmation persists even after more than a century of determined efforts by Darwinist paleontologists to find evidence that will support their cherished theory. Any doubtful fossil that could conceivably be interpreted as an intermediate form in a Darwinian transition has been cited as proof that Darwinism is true, and yet even after these heroic efforts the bulk of the fossil record is as thoroughly inconsistent with Darwinian expectations as it was when Darwin proposed the theory in

1859.

2. *Irreducible complexity*. A 1996 book by molecular biologist Michael Behe** has brought to public attention the fact that biological systems at the molecular level are irreducibly complex. This means that they are made up of many complicated parts and subsystems, all of which have to be in place in order for the system as a whole to perform a useful function. In other words, these intricate systems cannot be built up step-by-step as the Darwinian theory requires, and molecular biologists do not even attempt to present detailed scenarios of how evolution might have produced them. As with the pervasive stasis in the fossil record, irreducible complexity at the molecular level has long been known to specialists, but has been kept from public attention because biologists did not know how to explain it within a Darwinian framework. This illustrates the phenomenon famously described by Thomas Kuhn: facts which do not fit the dominant scientific paradigm tend to be systematically ignored, because they are a distraction from the prevailing research agenda.

When they are faced with the devastating evidence against the Darwinian mechanism, and reminded of the lack of positive evidence in its favor, Darwinists tend to retreat to what they think is a more defensible line. They distinguish between "Darwin's specific theory,"

*For a general discussion of the punctuated equilibrium controversy, see chapter 4 of my book *Darwin on Trial* (2nd ed., 1993). (19

** Michael Behe, Darwin's Block Box: *The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*

which they admit to be vulnerable, and something they call the "fact of evolution," which they claim to be undeniably true.* That takes me to the second subject.

2. The Common Ancestry Thesis

The difference between the supposedly undeniable "fact of evolution" and "Darwin's theory" is obscure, for the very good reason that the mere existence of a pattern of relationship has no great significance unless there is a theory that explains how the pattern came into existence. The "fact" is usually described as "common ancestry," which is the proposition that humans (and other animals) share a common ancestor with plants, and fungi, and bacteria. The supposed proof of the fact is that living things exist in groups, and the groups are related by a pattern of greater and lesser similarity. Humans are similar in many ways to apes, somewhat less similar to rabbits, less similar still to snakes, still less similar to trees, and so on. All of the disparate groups of the taxonomic order (bacteria, plants, animals, etc.) have a common biochemical basis, indicating that they come from a common source. The Darwinian explanation of this pattern is that it results from common ancestry, with those groups having the greatest degree of similarity being the ones with relatively recent common ancestors. In reality the common ancestors are postulates in a theory, which aims to explain the fact of classification or relationship.

"Ancestry" implies a very gradual process of change, since offspring differ only slightly in each generation from their parents. Hence the common ancestry thesis implies not only that the common ancestors existed on the earth, but also that very long lines of gradual descent linked these ancient ancestors to their putative modern descendants. None of this can be confirmed from fossil studies, but Darwinists believe that the process must have occurred nonetheless because they think it is the only scientific (i.e., naturalistic) explanation for the pattern of life.

—*For a general discussion of the elusive distinction between the "fact" and 'the' theory" of evolution, see chapter 5 of my book *Darwin on Trial*.

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On the contrary, a pattern of greater and lesser similarities, or of variations within a basic type, is more likely to be evidence of a common design plan rather than of a natural evolutionary process. This was inadvertently demonstrated in a (1990) book by a Darwinist zoologist, who illustrated the "fact of evolution" by citing the example of a line of automobiles:

Everything evolves, in the sense of descent with modification, whether it be government policy, religion, sports cars, or organisms. The revolutionary fiberglass Corvette evolved from more mundane automotive ancestors in 1953. Other high points in the Corvette's evolutionary refinement included the 1962 model, in which the original 102-inch was shortened to 98 inches and the new closed-coupe Stingray model was introduced; the 1968 model, the forerunner of today's Corvette morphology, which emerged with removable roof panels; and the 1978 silver anniversary model, with fastback styling. Today's version continues the stepwise refinements that have been accumulating since 1953. The point is that the Corvette evolved through a selection process acting on variations that resulted in a series of transitional forms and an endpoint rather distinct from the starting point. A similar process shapes the evolution of organ-

isms.⁶

Of course the Corvettes, like the organisms, have common features because they were conceived in the mind of a designer, and not because some mindless process made either one. In other words, the fact of relationship is not evidence of the existence of a purely naturalistic or mindless mechanism of creation. Beethoven's symphonies follow the pattern of common design with variations, but this pattern has no tendency whatever to support a theory that the symphonies composed themselves without any help from Beethoven.

Evolutionary theory today is in a state of confusion, in which major figures like Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Dawkins disagree violently over how evolution is supposed to have occurred. (See Chapter four of my

book *Reason in the Balance* for a review of these major disagreements.) These warring ideologues do have a common program of

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sorts, but it is a philosophical program rather than a scientific program. What they agree on is that, at all costs, God must be kept out of the picture. That brings us to the third and most important part of the definition of evolution.

3. Evolution (in the Scientific Sense) Is Inherently Godless

We saw that the NABT definition states that evolution is by definition "unsupervised." This requirement is not a conclusion that Darwinists reach from empirical evidence, but a philosophical assumption that reflects their starting point in metaphysical naturalism or materialism. If nature is all there is, then nature had to be able to do its own creating. That implies the existence of a naturalistic evolutionary process capable of making very complex things from simple beginnings. The process must be unguided at first, because a mind capable of guiding evolution would itself have to evolve from non-living matter. Once human beings have evolved, of course, evolution can become a guided process, through practice of eugenics and genetic engineering.

Given these assumptions, something at least roughly like Darwinism simply has to be true, regardless of the evidence. Evolution has to start with chance or random changes, and it has to have some mindless guiding force capable of producing the wonders of complex engineering that we call organisms. That is why Richard Dawkins has argued in lectures that, if complex life exists on other planets, Darwinian evolution would have to be responsible for it. There is no need for evidence or observations, because the Darwinian mechanism is the only plausible candidate for the job, given the starting point in naturalism. This logic explains why Darwinists are unperturbed by all the evidentiary problems that critics such as myself have identified. The theory has to be true regardless, because otherwise we would be without a materialistic explanation for life's complexity and we would have to turn to God-This logic has been succinctly encapsulated in a paragraph from a 1997 essay by the leading geneticist Richard Lewontin:

We take the side of science *in spite* of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite of* its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant

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promises of health and life, *in spite of* the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.⁷

There is no need to say more. We can see the profound truth of Fr. Seraphim's comment that "EVOLUTION WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN THOUGHT OF BY MEN WHO BELIEVE IN THE GOD WHOM ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS WORSHIP" (emphasis in the original). Once the Divine Foot is in the door, there is no reason to postulate either legions of unobservable fossil ancestors, or a mindless material process that performs wonders of creation.

4. Conclusion:

Can Science Tell Us a True Story about Origins?

Criticisms of evolutionary theory, however valid, cannot answer the most important question. If we wish to know the truth about origins, should we rely primarily upon Divine revelation or scientific investigation? Fr. Seraphim, like many creationists, believed that science was impotent when it comes to the subject of ultimate origins, and that true knowledge on this subject can only come from revelation, reason was that the events of the Genesis creation week took place under a unique set of laws, laws which were entirely different from those which have operated since the Fall.

If true, that conclusion implies that the entire subject of origins is going outside of scientific investigation. Science can only observe what is go-

ing in the world today, and can draw inferences about
the remote

only by assuming a uniformity over time of physical
processes and

physical laws. That is why evolutionary scientists, for
example, assume

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that the process that created plants and animals in the first place is fundamentally the same process of small-scale variation we can observe today in the living world. There may be little evidence to support that assumption, but without it a science of origins would be helpless. Conceivably, there may have been some very unDarwinian creative evolutionary process operating in the distant past, which employed mechanisms which are no longer in operation today. Such a process would be nearly as unacceptable to scientific materialists as outright creationism, because a mechanism which is in principle unobservable is as inaccessible to scientific study as a miracle.

Science could discard the Darwinian theory without serious loss if there were at hand another materialistic theory, one likewise based on uniformitarian and naturalistic assumptions. But what if there is no alternative theory, or at least no theory with enough factual support to command widespread acceptance? Scientists who want to explain everything will always insist on making assumptions that permit them to achieve their grand objective, and they will always be extremely reluctant to admit that their methods may be inadequate to explain the mysteries of creation. Science does not like to tolerate rival ways of understanding, and hence ambitious scientists will bitterly denounce those religious thinkers who raise the possibility that physical laws and processes have profoundly changed since the time

of creation. Fr. Seraphim was not intimidated by that sort of denunciation, nor should others be. Uniformitarianism, like naturalism, is a philosophical assumption, not a fact. It is perfectly rational to make other assumptions, including assumptions that point to the conclusion that we can only have knowledge about origins if God has chosen to reveal it to us. :

PART I

An Orthodox Patristic Commentary On Genesis



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Icon of the Prophet Moses, author of the book of Genesis,
painted on the walls of the Christian catacombs in
Rome, second century A.D.

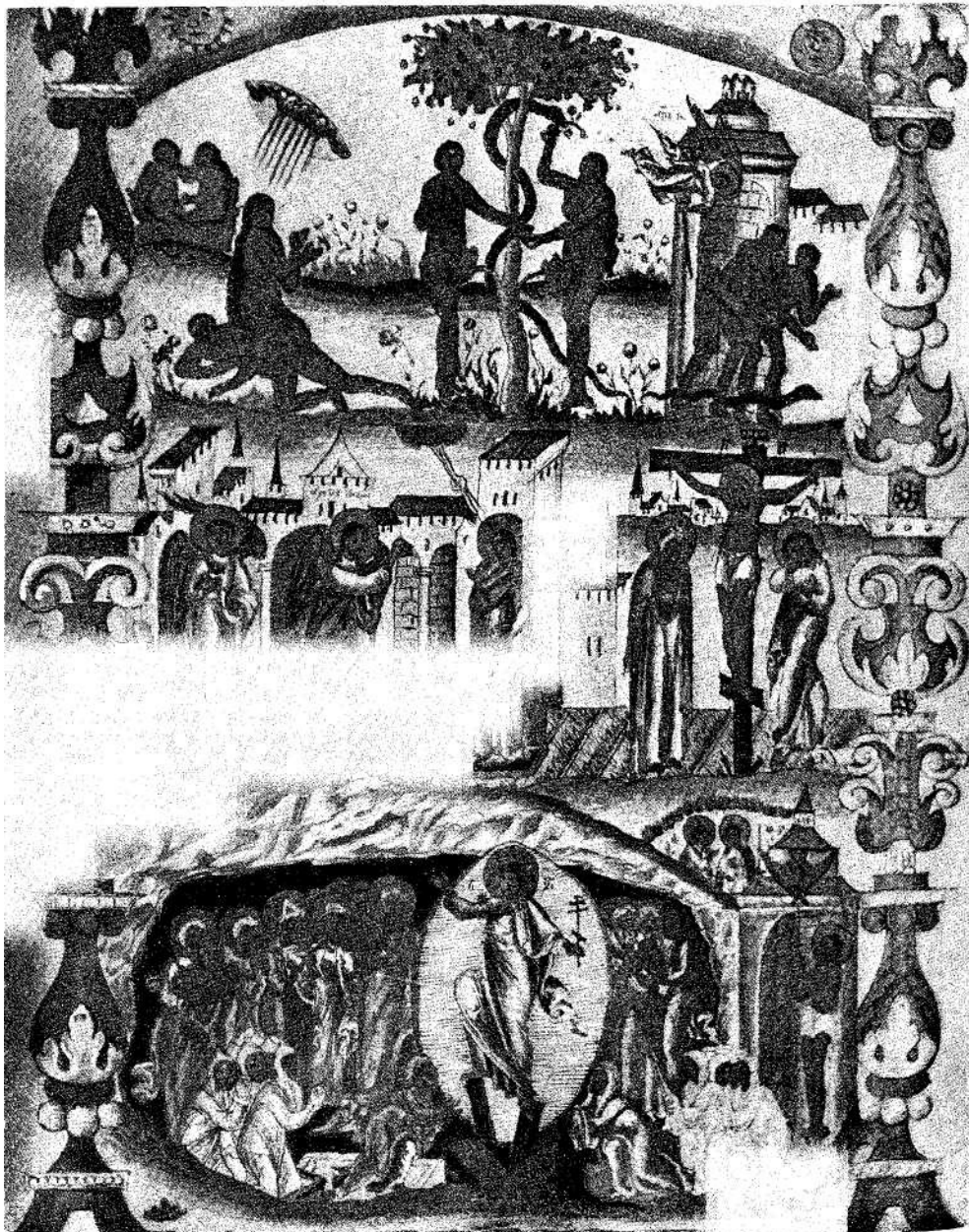
EDITOR'S NOTE

This Commentary has been taken primarily from Fr. Seraphim's original manuscript, which he wrote in preparation for his course on Genesis at the New Valaam Theological Academy summer sessions in 1981 and 1982. During the oral delivery of his course, which was tape-recorded, he extemporaneously added valuable insights which were not in the manuscript. Not wanting to deprive the reader of this extra material, we have included much of it in the Commentary, both in the main text and in the footnotes. That is why the text may at times change from a polished to a more colloquial tone.

We have also included Fr. Seraphim's question-and-answer sessions with his students during the Genesis course. These are found in Part IV.

The footnotes in this Commentary, as well as in the subsequent Parts of this book, are the words of Fr. Seraphim himself, unless they are indicated as editor's footnotes.

All the Psalm references follow the numbering of the Septuagint (Greek) version of the Old Testament.



Icon of the Creation and Redemption, showing the creation of Eve, the fall, the expulsion from Paradise, the Annunciation, the Crucifixion of Christ, the Resurrection and descent into hell, and the entry of man into the Kingdom of Heaven. Icon from the Monastery of St. Anthony of Siya, Russia, printed in *Russky Palomnik* no. 10, 1895.

FOREWORD

Why Study the Book of Genesis?

WHY SHOULD WE study such a book as Genesis? Why shouldn't we just be concerned to save our souls, instead of thinking about these things, like what is the world going to be like at the end, or what was it like at the beginning? We might get into trouble—Carl Sagan might come and fight with us.* Isn't it safer to just occupy ourselves with saying our prayers, and not think about these great subjects? Why think about these remote things when we have to think about our salvation?

I've heard phrases like these. In answer to them, we can say, first of all, that *there is a direct relation between how you behave and how you believe about man origin*. Fr. George Calciu, in his public addresses to young people living under communism in Romania, said: "You have been told that you descend from the apes, that you are a beast which must be trained."** That can be a very powerful thing:

* In a letter of 1981, Fr. Seraphim speaks of Carl Sagan's *Cosmos* television series and book: "One of our subscribers just sent us a clipping about this, which seems to be much in the air now, and it seems typical of the way evolution is preached today as dogma and almost religion."—Ed.

** At the time Fr. Seraphim gave this lecture, Fr. George Calciu (1927-) was in prison for delivering his homilies to the youth. Inspired by Fr. Georges heroism and moved by his words, Fr. Seraphim later published the homilies in *The Orthodox Word*. In 1997 they were published in book form by the St. Herman Brotherhood under the title *Christ Is Calling You!* The above quotation is found on p. 27 of that book; other perceptive comments about evolution are found on pp. 33-34, 152, 154.—Ed.

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"Science proves we're just animals, and therefore, let's go out and blow up a church." *

Secondly, *the book of Genesis is apart of the Scriptures, and God gave us the Scriptures for our salvation.* We're supposed to know the meaning of the Scriptures through all the commentaries of the Holy Fathers. The Fathers talked about the book of Genesis in church; all their commentaries were actually sermons given in church, because the book of Genesis is read in church on all weekdays during Great Lent. The great Fathers who did this were St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, and St. Ambrose of Milan. Their sermons were taken down in shorthand by people who were in church listening to them, so that others could read them. Thus, the reading of these texts was considered a part of the everyday life of people who went to church. We have somewhat lost this idea nowadays. Therefore, the account of Genesis or the Apocalypse has become a very mysterious realm somehow. We are so scared of these subjects—but the Fathers were talking about them.

Finally (this is the big point): *our Christianity is a religion which tells us about what we are going to be doing in eternal life.* It is to prepare us for something eternal, *not this world.* If we think only about *this* world, our horizon is very limited, and we don't know what is after death, where we came from, where we're going, what is the purpose of life. When we talk about the *beginning* of things, or the *end* of things, we find out what our whole life is about.

* St. Barsanuphius of Optina (1845-1913) made a similar observation in one of his spiritual talks: "The English philosopher Darwin created an entire system according to which life is a struggle for existence, a struggle of the strong against the weak, where those that are conquered are doomed to destruction.... This is already the beginning of a bestial philosophy, and those who come to believe in it wouldn't think twice about killing a man, assaulting a woman, or robbing their closest friend—and they would do all this calmly, with a full recognition of their right to commit these crimes." (From the forthcoming book of the St. Herman Brotherhood, *Elder Barsanuphius of Optina.*)—ED.

CHAPTER ONE

How to Read Genesis

1. Approach

IN A SENSE, none of us knows how to approach this book. Modern science and philosophy have filled our minds with so many theories and supposed facts about the beginnings of the universe and man that we inevitably come to this book with preconceived notions. Some want it to agree with their particular scientific theories; others look for it to disagree. Both of these look to it as having something scientific to say; but others look on it as sheer poetry, a product of religious imagination having nothing to do with science.

The central question that causes our difficulties in understanding this book is: how "literally" are we to read it?

Some Protestant fundamentalists tell us it is all (or virtually all) "literal." But such a view places us in some impossible difficulties: quite apart from our literal or non-literal interpretation of various passages, the very nature of the reality which is described in the first chapters of Genesis (the very creation of all things) makes it quite impossible for *everything* to be understood "literally"; we don't even have words, for example, to describe "literally" how something can come out of nothing. How does God "speak"?—does He make a noise which resounds in an atmosphere that doesn't yet exist? This explanation is obviously a little too simple—the reality is more complex.

Then there is the opposite extreme. Some people would like to interpret this book (at least the earliest chapters which give the most difficulty) as being an allegory, a poetic way of describing something that is really much closer to our experience. Roman Catholic thinkers in recent years, for example, have come up with some ingenious ways of

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"explaining away" Paradise and the fall of man; but in reading these interpretations one has the impression that they have so little respect for the text of Genesis that they treat it as a primitive commentary on some recent scientific theories. This is also an extreme. St. John Damascene, the eighth-century Father whose views generally sum up the Patristic opinion of the first Christian centuries, specifically states that the allegorical interpretation of Paradise is part of an early heresy and does not belong to the Church.¹

One encounters often today a common way out between these two views. The statement of a Roman Catholic nun (who is also a teacher) was recently publicized widely under the title: "God helped create evolution." She says: "The biblical story of creation has a religious purpose. It contains, but does not teach, errors. The evolutionary theory of creation, in contrast, has a scientific purpose, and the search for truth is the province of astronomers, geologists, biologists, and the like. Those two purposes are distinct, and both offer truth to the human mind and heart." She states that Genesis comes from oral traditions which were limited by the scientific views of that time.

According to this view, Genesis belongs in one category, and scientific truth or reality in another; Genesis has little if anything to do with any kind of truth, whether literal or allegorical. Therefore, one doesn't really need to think about the question: you read Genesis for spiritual uplift or poetry, and the scientists will tell you what you need to know about the facts of the world's and man's beginning.

In one form or another this is a very common view today—but what it actually amounts to is a failure to look at the question at all; it does not take Genesis seriously. But our very purpose in studying Genesis is to take it seriously, to see what it actually says. None of these approaches we have mentioned can do this. We must look elsewhere for the "key" to understanding Genesis.

In approaching Genesis we must try to avoid pitfalls such as we have mentioned above by a certain degree of self-awareness: what kind of prejudices or predispositions might we have in approaching the text?

We have already mentioned that some of us may be too anxious to have the meaning of Genesis agree (or disagree) with some particular scientific theory. Let us state a more general principle as to how we, with

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our twentieth-century mentality, tend to do this. In reaction to the extreme literalness of our scientific outlook (a literalness which is required by the very nature of science), when we turn to non-scientific texts of literature or theology we are very much predisposed to find non-literal or "universal" meanings. And this is natural: we want to save these texts from appearing ridiculous in the eyes of scientifically trained men. But we must realize that with this predisposition we often leap to conclusions which we have not really thought over very seriously.

To take an obvious example: When we hear of the "Six Days" of creation, most of us automatically adjust these days to accord with what contemporary science teaches of the gradual growth and development of creatures. "These must be some indefinitely long periods of time—millions or billions of years," our twentieth-century mind tells us; "all those geological strata, all those fossils—they couldn't have been formed in a literal 'day.'" And if we hear that a fundamentalist in Texas or southern California is once more loudly insisting that these days are positively twenty-four hours long and no longer, we can even become indignant and wonder how people can be so dense and anti-scientific.

In this course I don't intend to tell you how long those days were. But I think we should be aware that our natural, almost subconscious tendency to regard them as indefinitely long periods, thereby thinking that we have solved the "problem" they present, is not really a thought-out answer to this problem, but more of a predisposition or prejudice which we have picked up out of the intellectual air in which we live.* When we look at these days more closely, however, we will see that the whole question is not so simple and that our natural predisposition in this as in many other cases tends more to cloud than to clarify the real question.

We will look at this specific question later. For now I would urge us to be not too certain of our accustomed ways of looking at Genesis,

* This common error was even made by a traditional Orthodox thinker whom Fr. Seraphim greatly respected: I. M. Andreyev (1894-1976), in his book *Orthodox Apologetic Theology* (1955). In a letter of July 3/16, 1977, Fr. Seraphim

wrote: "I Would say that his [Andreyev's] simple equation of 'days' with 'periods' is too loose."—Ed.

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and to open ourselves to the wisdom of the God-bearing men of the past who have devoted so much intellectual effort to understanding the text of Genesis as it was meant to be understood. These Holy Fathers are our key to understanding Genesis.

2. The Holy Fathers: Our Key to the Understanding of Genesis

In the Holy Fathers we find the "mind of the Church"—the living understanding of God's revelation. They are our link between the ancient texts which contain God's revelation and today's reality. Without such a link it is every man for himself—and the result is a myriad of interpretations and sects.

There are many Patristic commentaries on Genesis. This already is an indication to us that this text is considered extremely important by the Fathers of the Church. Let us look now at which Fathers talked about this text and what books they wrote.

In this course I will make use primarily of four commentaries of the early Fathers:

1. St. John Chrysostom wrote a larger and smaller commentary on the whole book of Genesis. The larger, called *Homilies on Genesis*, was actually a course of lectures delivered during Great Lent, since during Lent the book of Genesis is read in church. This book contains sixty-seven homilies and is some seven hundred pages long.* Another year, St. John delivered eight other homilies, comprising several hundred more pages. He also wrote a treatise called *On the Creation of the World*, over a hundred pages long. Thus, in St. John Chrysostom we have a thousand pages or more of interpretation of Genesis. He is one of the main interpreters of this book.

2. St. Ephraim the Syrian, from about the same time as St. John Chrysostom, also has a commentary on the whole book. In his work,

called simply *Interpretation of the Books of the Bible*, several hundred

* For the present work, Fr. Seraphim translated passages from the Russian edition of St. John Chrysostom's *Homilies on Genesis* and St. Ephraim the Syrians *Commentary on Genesis* (see below). Since Fr. Seraphim's repose, both these works have been published in English, in *The Fathers of the Church*, vols. 74, 82, 87, 91.—ED.

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pages are devoted to Genesis. St. Ephraim is valued as an Old Testament interpreter because he knew Hebrew, was an "Eastern" (i.e., of an Eastern mentality), and knew sciences.

3. St. Basil the Great gave homilies* on the Six Days of Creation, called the *Hexaemeron*—meaning "Six Days." There are other *Hexaemera* in the literature of the early Church, some going back to the second century. St. Basil's, one might say, is the most authoritative.** It does not cover the whole of Genesis, but only the first chapter. Another book by him which we will quote is called *On the Origin of Man*, which is like a continuation of the *Hexaemeron*.

4. In the West, St. Ambrose of Milan read St. Basil's homilies and wrote homilies on the Six Days himself.*** His *Hexaemeron* is quite a bit longer, about three hundred pages.**** St. Ambrose also wrote a whole book on Paradise, a continuation of the *Hexaemeron*, as well as a book on Cain and Abel.

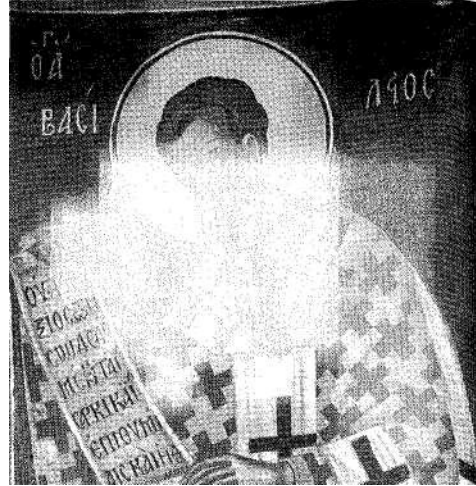
In addition to these basic commentaries, we will look at a number of books which do not go into the whole book of Genesis or into the whole of the Six Days. For example, the brother of St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, has a book *On the Making of Man*, which goes into detail about the end of the first chapter and the beginning of the second chapter of Genesis.

*—"Homilies" usually means they were delivered in church, where the people stood and listened.

** St. Basil's *Hexaemeron* was held in high esteem in the ancient Church. St. Gregory the Theologian wrote of it: "When I take his [Basil's] *Hexaemeron* in my hand and read it aloud, I am with my Creator, I understand the reasons for creation, and I admire my Creator more than I formerly did when I used sight alone as my teacher (St. Gregory the Theologian, Homily 43:67, "Panegyric on St. Basil").—Ed.

*** St. Ambrose's homilies were delivered about seventeen years after St. Basil's.—Ed.

**** Here we can see how, when one Father speaks specifically on one passage, another Father will perhaps say something in detail about a different passage. If you keep it all together, you get a very good overview of how the mind of the Church, how the Fathers in general look at these passages. You might find a disagreement over ^some little interpretation, some small point, but concerning the big points you will see they all say the same thing in different ways, that they are quite in harmony over how to interpret the book of Genesis.



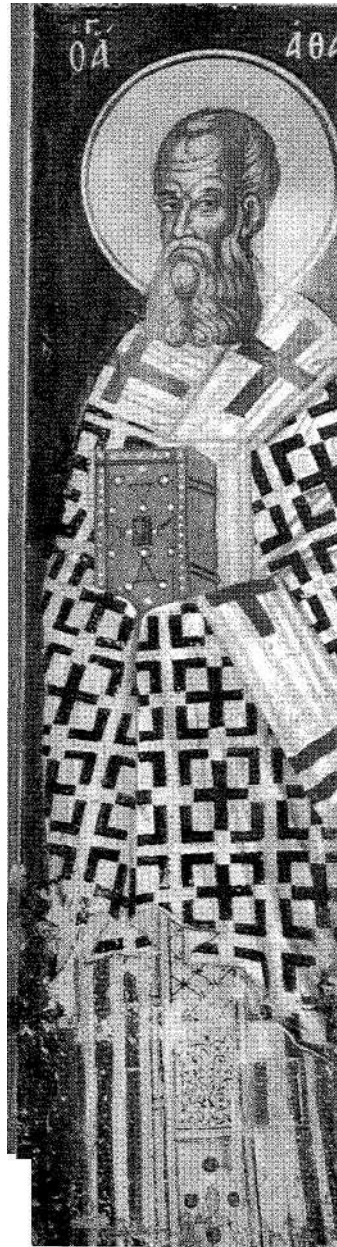
St. John Chrysostom ("Golden-mouth"), archbishop of Constantinople

(344-407).

St. Basil the Great, archbishop
of Caesarea in Cappadocia
(329-379).

*Icons on this and facing page by Monk Theophanes the Cretan,
Catholicon of St. Nicholas, Stavronikita Monastery,
Mount Athos, ca. 1546.*

* -



St. Gregory the
Theologian
(Nazianzen),
archbishop of
Constantinople
(325-390).

St. Athanasius
the Great,
bishop of
Alexandria
(298-373).



St. Ephraim the Syrian
(306-372).

*A contemporary icon
from Greece.*

St. Gregory,
bishop of
Nyssa (330-395).

*Icon by Monk
Theophanes*

*the Cretan,
Stavronikita*

*Monastery, Mount
Athos,*

ca. 1546.



St. Ambrose, bishop
of Milan (339-397). _"

*Fifth-century mosaic
from the
Chapel of St. Victor "of
the*

*Golden Sky, "Milan,
Italy.*

Blessed Augustine,
bishop of Hippo (354-
430). *Fresco by Monk
Theophanes the
Cretan, from the
 Meteora Monastery
 ofVarlaam, Greece,
 sixteenth century.*



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St. Macarius the Great of Egypt
(ca. 300-390). *Icon by Archimandrite
Cyprian, Holy Trinity Monastery.*

St. Isaac the Syrian (seventh century).

Icon by Fr. Pachomios,

Mount Athos.

I have also made use of outlines of Orthodox dogma. The book of St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, contains many chapters on questions about the Six Days, the creation of man, the fall, Paradise, and so forth. The catechisms of the early Church—the *Great Catechism* of St. Gregory of Nyssa and the *Catechetical Lectures* of St. Cyril of Jerusalem—also have a few details on these questions.

On one specific question of the Patristic worldview I have used the treatises on the Resurrection by Sts. Athanasius the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Ambrose of Milan.

St. Symeon the New Theologian has written homilies on Adam, the fall and the early world, which we have in English in the book *The Sin of Adam**

—Later published under the title *The First-Created Man*.—
Ed.

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Then there are various writings of St. Gregory the Theologian about the creation of man, about man's nature and his soul. St. Macarius the Great, St. Abba Dorotheus, St. Isaac the Syrian and other writers of the ascetic life often talk about Adam and the fall. Since the basic aim of the ascetic *Me* is to return to the state of Adam before the fall, they write about what the fall means, what Paradise was, and what it is we are trying to get back to.

Blessed Augustine touches on the subject of Genesis in *The City of God*;^{*} St. Gregory Palamas writes on various aspects in his apologetic works; and St. Gregory of Sinai writes on Paradise as well.

(There are also some later commentaries which I have *not* seen, unfortunately. One is by St. John of Kronstadt on the *Hexaemeron*, and another is by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow *on* Genesis.)

These Fathers don't give us all the answers to questions we may have about Genesis; we read them rather *to* get our *attitude* toward Genesis. Sometimes Fathers may seem to contradict each other or to speak in a way we might *not* consider very useful for the questions we

^{*} Blessed Augustine also wrote a lengthy work on the subject, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, which contains ideas that are at variance with Patristic teaching (see below, p. 102 n). Fr. Seraphim was aware of the existence of this work, but he said he had not seen it (see pp. 217). In 1982, shortly after his repose, it appeared in English as vols. 41 and 42 in the Ancient Christian Writers series (New York: Paulist Press).

Other of Blessed Augustine's teachings had deficiencies as well, due to his tendency to over-rationalize. Fr. Seraphim wrote that "some of his writings, such as his anti-Pelagian treatises *On the Trinity*, are read only with caution." It should be added, however, that Blessed Augustine's errors have never caused him to be regarded as a heretic by the Orthodox Church, which has always honored him as a *Father of piety* (especially on the basis of his non-dogmatic works like *The Confessions*), while not accepting his theological exaggerations. Fr. Seraphim wrote a whole book on this subject, *The Place of Blessed Augustine in the Orthodox Church*.

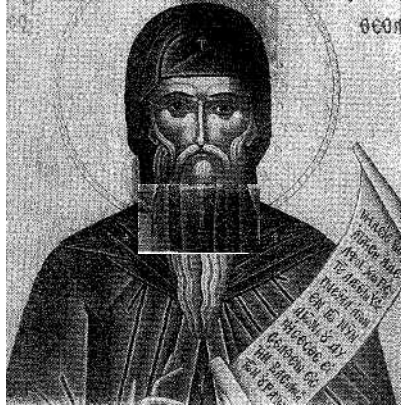
It should also be noted that, even where Blessed Augustine's interpretation of Genesis is questionable, it is in no sense compatible with evolutionism or an "old-earth" view, as some twentieth-century scholars have claimed. Augustine maintained that the transformation from one kind of creature into another was impossible, and that the world was created in about 5500 B.C. See

Jonathan "Wells' defense of Augustine in his article "Abusing Theology: Howard Van Tills 'Forgotten Doctrine of Creation's Functional Integrity.'"—ED.



St. Abba Dorotheos of Gaza, Palestine (sixth century).

St. John Damascene (of Damascus, Syria) (674-750).



St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1021 >■.



St. Gregory of Sinai (1265-1346).

St. Gregory Palamas (1296-1359).

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have today. Therefore we must have some basic principles which govern our understanding *both* of Genesis and the Holy Fathers.

3- Basic Principles of Our Approach to Understanding Genesis

1. We are seeking *truth*. We must respect the text of Genesis enough to recognize that it contains truth, even though that truth may seem unusual or surprising to us. If it seems to conflict with what we think we know from science, let us remember that God is the Author of all truth, and anything genuinely true in Scripture cannot contradict anything that is genuinely true in science.

2. The Scripture is *Divine* in inspiration. We will look more closely below at what this means; but for a beginning, it means that we must look in it for truths of a high order, and if we find difficulty in understanding anything we should suspect first our own lack of knowledge rather than a deficiency in the inspired text.

3. We should not hasten to offer our own explanations of "difficult" passages, but should first try to familiarize ourselves with what the Holy Fathers have said about these passages, recognizing that they have spiritual wisdom that we lack.

4. We should also beware of the temptation to seize on isolated, out-of-context quotes from the Holy Fathers to "prove" a point one would like to make. For example, I have seen an Orthodox person, wishing to prove that there was nothing "special" about the creation of Adam, quote the following statement from St. Athanasius the Great: "The first-created man was made of dust like everyone, and the hand

which created Adam then is creating also and always those who come after him."² This is a general statement about God's continuous creative activity which no one would think of contradicting.* But the point this person wanted to make was that there was no real distinction between the creation of every living man and the creation of the

* Without God's continuous creative effort, nothing would exist or come into being. We think it is "natural" that plants grow from a seed, that everything, in fact, comes from a small seed and grows into a full individual. But without God, this process cannot continue. So of course God is still creating today, "from the dust."

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first man—and specifically, that the body of Adam could have been formed by natural generation in the womb of some not-quite-human creature. Can such a statement legitimately be used as a "proof" on this question?

It so happens that we can find a passage in the works of St. Athanasius that specifically refutes this idea. In another place he says: "Though Adam only was formed out of earth, yet in him was involved the succession of the whole race."³ Here he quite specifically states that Adam was created in a way different from all other men, which indeed, as we shall see, is the teaching of the Holy Fathers in general. Therefore, it is illegitimate to take one quote of his and think that it proves or opens the way to some favorite idea of our own. St. Athanasius' *general* statement about the nature of man says nothing whatever about the *specific* nature of Adam's creation.

Such a misuse of quotations from the Holy Fathers is a very common pitfall in our days when polemics on such subjects are often very passionate. In this course we will try our best to avoid such pitfalls by not forcing any of our own interpretations on the Holy Fathers, but simply trying to see what they say themselves.

5. We do not need to accept every word the Fathers wrote on Genesis; sometimes they made use of the science of their time for illustrative material, and this science was mistaken in some points. But we should carefully distinguish their science from their theological statements, and we should respect their whole approach and general conclusions and theological insights.

6. If we ourselves think we can add something to the understanding of the text for our days (perhaps based on the findings of modern science), let it be done cautiously and with full respect for the integrity of the text of Genesis and the opinions of the Holy Fathers. And we should always be *humble* in this attempt—the science of our own days

^so has its failings and mistakes, and if we rely too much on it we may find ourselves with wrong understandings.*

It is a very common view among people who do not go too deeply into the question that "ancient science is wrong, modern science is right, and therefore we can trust everything the modern scientists tell us." But it so happens that one generation

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7. Specifically in this course we will be trying first to understand the Fathers, and only *then* to offer our own answers to some questions, if we have them.

8. Finally, if it is true that modern science is capable of throwing some light on the understanding of at least a few passages of Genesis—for we do not need to deny that in some areas the truths of these two spheres overlap—I think that it is no less true that the Patristic understanding of Genesis is also capable of throwing light on modern science and gives some hints on how to understand the facts of geology, paleontology, and other sciences concerned with the early history of the earth and of mankind. This study can therefore be a fruitful one in both directions.

9. The aim of this course, however, is not to answer ^//questions about Genesis and creation, but rather, first of all, to inspire Orthodox Christians to think about this subject in a broader way than it is usually approached, without being satisfied with the simplistic answers that are so often heard.

4. Literal vs. Symbolical Interpretations

This question is a great stumbling block for us modern men, who have been brought up with a "scientific" education and worldview, which has left us impoverished in our understanding of symbolical meanings in literature. Too often, as a result of this, we jump to conclusions: if there is a symbolical meaning to some image in Scripture (for example, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) we are very inclined to say "it's *only* a symbol"; the slightest indication of a figurative or metaphorical meaning often leads us to dismiss the *literal* meaning. Sometimes this attitude can even

lead to sweeping judgments of whole portions or books of Scripture: If there are symbolical

overthrows the so-called scientific facts of the preceding generation. We have to realize what is fact and what is theory. Contemporary science has many views which, fifty years from now (if they even last that long), will be overturned, and there will be new theories.

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or figurative elements, for example, in the Genesis narrative of the Garden of Eden, we easily jump to the conclusion that the whole narrative is a "symbol" or an "allegory."

Our key to understanding Genesis is: how did the Holy Fathers understand this question, specifically with regard to separate passages, and generally with regard to the book as a whole?

Let us take some examples:

1. St. Macarius the Great of Egypt, a Saint of the most exalted mystical life and whom one certainly cannot suspect of overly literal views of Scripture, writes on Genesis 3:24: "That Paradise was closed and that a Cherubim was commanded to prevent man from entering it by a flaming sword: of this we believe that in visible fashion it was in deed just as it is written, and at the same time we find that this occurs mystically in every soul."⁴ This is a passage which many of us might have expected to have *only* a mystical meaning, but this great seer of Divine things assures us that it is also true "just as it is written"—for those capable of seeing it.

2. St. Gregory the Theologian, noted for his profound mystical interpretations of Scripture, says of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: "This tree was, according to my view, Contemplation, upon which it is only safe for those who have reached maturity of habit to enter."⁵ Does this mean that he regarded this tree as *only* a symbol, and not also a literal tree? In his own writings he apparently does not give an answer to this question, but another great Holy Father does (for when they are teaching Orthodox doctrine and not just giving private opinions, all the great Fathers agree with each

other and even help to interpret each other). *St. Gregory Palamas*, the fourteenth-century hesychast Father, comments on this passage:

Gregory the Theologian has called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil "contemplation" ... but it does not follow that what is involved is an illusion or a symbol without existence of its own. For the divine Maximus (the Confessor) also makes Moses the symbol of judgment, and Elijah the symbol of foresight! Are they too then supposed not to have really existed, but to have been invented "symbolically"?⁶

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3. These are specific interpretations. As for general approaches to the "literal" or "symbolical" nature of the text of Genesis, let us look at the words of several other Holy Fathers who have written commentaries on Genesis. *St. Basil the Great* in his *Hexaemeron* writes:

Those who do not admit the common meaning of the Scriptures say that water is not water, but some other nature, and they explain

a plant and a fish according to their opinion (But) when I hear

"grass," I think of grass, and in the same manner I understand everything as it is said,* a plant, a fish, a wild animal, and an ox. Indeed, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel (Rom. 1:16)."... (Some) have attempted by false arguments and allegorical interpretations to bestow on the Scripture a dignity of their own imagining. But theirs is the attitude of one who considers himself wiser than the revelations of the Spirit and introduces his own ideas in pretense of an explanation. Therefore, let it be understood as it has been written.⁷

4. *St. Ephraim the Syrian* tells us similarly in the *Commentary on Genesis*:

No one should think that the Creation of Six Days is an allegory; it is likewise impermissible to say that what seems, according to the account, to have been created in six days, was created in a single instant, and likewise that certain names presented in this account either signify nothing, or signify something else. On the contrary, we must know that just as the heaven and the earth which were created in the beginning are actually the heaven and the earth and not something else understood under the names of heaven and earth, so also everything else that is spoken of as being created and brought into order after the creation of heaven and earth is not empty names, but the very essence of the created natures corresponds to the force of these names.⁸

—*The Eerdmans translation of this same passage reads: "I take all in the literal sense" (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, vol. 8, p. 101).—ED.

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5. St. John Chrysostom, speaking specifically of the rivers of Paradise, writes:

Perhaps one who loves to speak from his own wisdom here also will not allow that the rivers are actually rivers, nor that the waters are precisely waters, but will instill, in those who allow themselves to listen to them, the idea that they (under the names of rivers and waters) represented something else. But I entreat you, let us not pay heed to these people, let us stop up our hearing against them, and let us believe the Divine Scripture, and following what is written in it, let us strive to preserve in our souls sound dogmas.⁹

This shows that the Holy Fathers were facing this question in their day, in the fourth century. There were many people who were interpreting the text of Genesis as an allegory, running wild with symbolical interpretations, and denying that it has any literal meaning at all—especially the first three chapters we will be studying. Therefore, the Holy Fathers made a specific point of saying it *has* a literal meaning, and we must understand exactly what that meaning is.

This should be enough to show us that the Holy Fathers who wrote on Genesis were in general quite "literal" in their interpretation of the text, even while, in many cases, allowing *also* a symbolic or mystical meaning. There are, of course, in Scripture, as in every kind of literature, obvious metaphors which no one in his right mind would think of taking "literally." For example, in Psalm 103 it says "the sun knoweth his going down." With full respect for the text, we do not need to believe that the sun has a consciousness and literally "knows" when it is to set; this is simply a normal device of poetic language and should cause trouble to no one.

There is, further, one important kind of statement in Scripture—and there are many examples of it in Genesis—which the Holy Fathers tell us specifically *not to* understand in a literal way. These are anthropomorphic statements made of God *as though* He were a man ^ho walks, talks, gets angry, etc. All such statements we are to understand in a "God-befitting" manner—that is, based on our knowledge

hom Orthodox teaching that God is purely spiritual,
has no physical

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organs, and that His acts are described in Scripture *as they seem to us*. The Fathers are very careful over the text of Genesis in this regard. Thus, St. John Chrysostom states:

When you hear that "God planted Paradise in Eden in the East," understand the word "planted" befittingly of God: that is, that He commanded; but concerning the words that follow, believe precisely that Paradise was created and in that very place where the Scripture has assigned it.¹⁰

As for the "scientific" information given in the book of Genesis—and since it talks about the formation of the world we know, there cannot but be some scientific information there—contrary to popular belief, there is nothing "out-of-date" about it. Its observations, it is true, are all made *as seen from earth and as affecting mankind*; but they do not put forth any particular teaching, for example, on the nature of the heavenly bodies or their relative motions, and so the book can be read by each generation and understood in the light of its own scientific knowledge. The discovery in recent centuries of the vastness of space and the immensity of many of its heavenly bodies does nothing but add grandeur in our minds to the simple account of Genesis.

When the Holy Fathers talk about Genesis, of course, they try to illustrate it with examples taken from the natural science of their time; we do the same thing today. All this illustrative material is open to scientific criticism, and some of it, in fact, has become out-of-date. But the text of Genesis itself is unaffected by such criticism, and we can only wonder at how fresh and timely it is to each new generation. And the *theological* commentary of the Holy Fathers on the text partakes of this same quality.

5. *The Nature of the Text*

A final important point to consider before approaching the text of Genesis itself: *what kind of text is it?*

We all know of the anti-religious arguments about the Scripture, and in particular about Genesis: that it is a creation of backward people

How sly compare Genesis with any of the creation myths of
TO other peoples without being struck by the sobriety and
READ simplicity of the Genesis account. Creation myths are
GENESI indeed full of fabulous events and fairy-tale beings
S which are not even intended to be taken as the text is
written. There is no competition between these texts
and Genesis; they are not in the least comparable.

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Nonetheless, there is a widespread popular view—
without foundation either in Scripture or in Church
tradition—that Moses wrote Genesis after consulting
other early accounts of the creation, or that he simply
recorded the oral traditions that came down to him;
that he compiled and simplified the tales that had
come down to his time. This, of course, would make
Genesis a work of human wisdom and speculation,
and it would be pointless to study such a work as a
statement of truth about the beginning of the world.

There are different kinds of knowledge, and the
my- knowledge that comes directly from God is quite
tholo distinct from that which proceeds from man's natural
gy powers. St. Isaac the Syrian distinguishes these kinds
about of knowledge in the following way:
"creat

or- Knowledge which is concerned with the visible, or
gods" which receives through the senses what comes
and from the visible, is called natural. Knowledge which
super is concerned with the power of the immaterial and
natur the nature of incorporeal entities within a man is
al called spiritual, because perceptions are received
being by the spirit and not by the senses. Because of
s, these two origins (perceptions of the visible and of
that it the spiritual) each kind of knowledge alike comes
has to the soul from without. But the knowledge
all bestowed by Divine power is called supra-natural; it
been is more unfathomable and is higher than knowl-
taken edge. Contemplation of this knowledge comes to
from the soul not from matter, which is outside it.... It
Babyl manifests and reveals itself in the innermost depths
onian of the soul itself, immaterially, suddenly, spontane-
myth ously, and unexpectedly, since, according to the
ology, words of Christ, 'the Kingdom of God is within you'
etc. (Luke 17:21).ⁿ

But
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one
can
seriou



Holy Prophet and God-seer Moses (†1531 B.C.).
Icon by Monk Theophanes the Cretan.

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St. Isaac in another place describes how, in men of the highest spiritual life, the soul can rise to a vision of the beginning of things. Describing how such a soul is enraptured at the thought of the future age of incorruption, St. Isaac writes:

And from this one is already exalted in his mind to that which preceded the composition (making) of the world, when there was no creature, nor heaven, nor earth, nor angels, nothing of that which was brought into being, and to how God, solely by His good will, suddenly brought everything from non-being into being, and everything stood before Him in perfection.¹²

Thus, one can believe that Moses and later chroniclers made use of written records and oral tradition when it came to recording the acts and chronology of historical Patriarchs and kings; but an account of the beginning of the world's existence, when there were no witnesses to God's mighty acts, can come only from God's revelation; it is a supra-natural knowledge revealed in direct contact with God.* And this is exactly what the Fathers and Church tradition tell us the book of Genesis is.

St. Ambrose writes:

Moses "spoke to God the Most High, not in a vision nor in dreams, but mouth to mouth" (Numbers 12:6—8). Plainly and clearly, not by figures nor by riddles, there was bestowed on him the gift of the Divine presence. And so Moses opened his mouth and uttered what the Lord spoke within him, according to the promise He made to him when He directed him to go to King Pharaoh: "Go therefore and I will open thy mouth and instruct thee what thou shouldest speak" (Ex. 4:12). For, if he had already accepted from God what he

should say concerning the liberation of the people, how much more should you accept what He should say concerning heaven? Therefore, "not in the persuasive words of wisdom," not in philosophical fallacies, 'but in the demonstration of the Spirit and power" (1 Cor. 2:4), he

*The book of Exodus recounts two occasions on which God Himself says to Moses: "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth" (Ex. 20:11, 31:17).—Ed.

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Prophet Moses writing in Eden.
*Frontispiece to the book of Genesis in the Bible of Leo Sakellarios,
Constantinople, A.D. 940.*



Prophet Moses receiving his first revelation of God, at Mount Horeb
(Ex. 3:1-5). At top, the vision of Paradise.
Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.

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High to utter what had been done by the Lord before his own birth. It is for this reason that he begins to speak thus: "In the beginning God : , created the heaven and the earth," as if calling out to us all with a loud voice: it is not by the instruction of men that I say this; He Who called them (heaven and earth) out of non-being into being—it is He Who has roused my tongue to relate of them. And therefore I entreat you, let us pay heed to these words as if we heard not Moses but the . very Lord of the universe Who speaks through the tongue of Moses, and let us take leave for good of our own opinions.¹⁶

Thus, we should approach the early chapters of Genesis as we would a book of prophecy, knowing that it is actual events being described, but knowing also that—because of their remoteness to us and because of their very nature as the very first events in the history of the world—we will be able to understand them only imperfectly, even as we have a very imperfect understanding of the events at the very end of the world as set forth in the Apocalypse and other New Testament Scriptures. St. John Chrysostom himself warns us not to think we understand too much about the creation:

With great gratitude let us accept what is related (by Moses), not stepping out of our own limitations, and not testing what is above us as the enemies of the truth did when, wishing to comprehend everything with their minds, they did not realize that human nature cannot comprehend the creation of God.¹⁷

Let us then try to enter the world of the Holy Fathers and their understanding of the Divinely inspired text of Genesis. Let us love and respect their writings, which in our confused times are a beacon of clarity which shines most clearly on the inspired text itself. Let us not ^oe quick to think we "know better" than they, and if we think we have some understanding they did not see, let us be humble and hesitant about offering it, knowing the poverty and fallibility of our own ^inds. Let them open our minds to understand God's revelation.

We should add here a final note about the study of Genesis in our ^own. times. The Holy Fathers of the early Christians who wrote about

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the Six Days of Creation found it necessary at various points to take note of the non-Christian scientific or philosophical speculations of their days—such views, for example, as that the world is eternal, that it produced itself, that it was created out of pre-existing matter by a limited fashioner-god (demiurge), and the like.

In our own times, too, there are non-Christian speculations about the beginnings of the universe, of life on earth, and the like, and we cannot help but touch on them at various points of our commentary. The most widespread such ideas today are those bound up with the so-called theory of "evolution." We will have to discuss some of these ideas briefly, but in order to avoid misunderstandings let us state what we mean by this word.

The concept of "evolution" has many levels of application in both scientific and popular language: sometimes it is no more than a synonym for "development"; at other times it is used to describe the "variations" that occur within a species; and again, it describes real or hypothesized changes in nature of a somewhat larger kind. In this course we will not have to be concerned with these kinds of "evolution," which belong pretty much to the realm of scientific fact and its interpretation.

The only kind of "evolution" we will have to deal with is evolution as a "cosmogony"—that is, a theory about the origin of the world. This kind of theory of evolution occupies the same place for contemporary students of the book of Genesis as the ancient speculations on the origins of the world did for the early Church Fathers. There are those, of course, who will insist that even this kind of evolution is perfectly scientific; in fact, some of them are quite "dogmatic" about it. But any reasonably objective view will have to admit that the evolutionary cosmogony, unless it claims to be Divinely revealed, is just as speculative as any other theory of origins and can be discussed on the same level with them. Although it may claim to have its foundation in scientific facts, it itself belongs to the realm of philosophy and even touches on theology, inasmuch as it cannot avoid the question of God as Creator of the world, whether it accepts or denies Him.

In this course, therefore, we will touch on "evolution" only as a universal theory that attempts to explain the origin of the world and of life-

CHAPTER TWO

The Six Days of Creation

(GENERAL OBSERVATIONS)

1. Introduction

Now LET us study the Patristic model of the Six Days of Creation. We will not occupy ourselves with trying to guess "how long" these days were, although by the time we come to the end we will have a pretty good idea of how the Fathers viewed their length. Many fundamentalists think their literal interpretation of Genesis is lost if these days are not accepted as precisely twenty-four hours long; and many others who want to reconcile Genesis with the modern theory of evolution think their hopes rest upon accepting these days as millions or billions of years long so they will accord with the supposed findings of geology. I think we can safely say that both of these views miss the mark.

It is not that these days could not have been twenty-four hours long, if God so willed; one or two Fathers (St. Ephraim the Syrian, for example) even state precisely that they were twenty-four hours long. But most Fathers do not say anything at all on the subject: it was not a subject of debate in their times, and it seems not to have occurred to them to insist on projecting the time scale of our fallen world back to the stupendous and miraculous events of those Six Days.

But if we do not need to define the Six Days of Creation as ^{twenty}ty-four hours long, it is quite impossible for us to regard them as millions or billions of years long—that is, to force them into an evolutionary time scale. The events of the Six Days simply do not fit into the evolutionary picture at all. In Genesis the first living things are grasses ^d trees upon the dry land; life did not first appear in the sea, as the

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evolutionary theory would have it; these land plants exist for a whole day (billions of years?) before the sun was created, while in any evolutionary conception the sun precedes the earth itself.* Any reasonably objective observer would have to conclude that the Six Days of Creation, if they are a true account and not a product of arbitrary fancy or speculation, simply do not fit into the evolutionary framework, and therefore there is no need to make them billions of years long. We will see below also how the description of these Days by the Holy Fathers makes this interpretation quite impossible. Evolutionary theory is obviously talking about something other than the Six Days of Creation. And in actual fact, *no* scientific theory can tell us about those Six Days. Science tries to explain (sometimes with more and sometimes with less success) the changes of this world, based on projections of natural processes which can be observed today. But the Six Days of Creation are *not* a natural process; they are what came *before* all the world's natural processes began to work. They are God's work; by very definition they are miraculous and do not fit into the natural laws which govern the world we see now.** If we can know what happened in those Six Days at all, it is not by scientific projections or speculations, but only by God's revelation. In this respect, modern scientists are no better off than the ancient creators of cosmic speculations and myths. The writers of commentaries on Genesis emphasize this point. St. John Chrysostom writes:

What does it mean that first there is heaven, and then earth, first the roof and then the foundation?
God is not subject to natural neces-

—* Not only "Christian evolutionists" but also "old-earth/progressive creationists" attempt to force the Six Days into the evolutionary time scale of billions of years, and thus they too must distort the Genesis account in order to deal with the contradictions outlined above.—Ed.

** In his notes, Fr. Seraphim says further: "The fossil record is *nota* record of the 'Six Days,' but of the history of the corrupt world *after* its creation. The Six Days are *beyond scientific observation and measurement*, and are different in kind from what science measures. (Cf. St. Symeon the New Theologian on the new law of nature after the fall of Adam.) *Their time lapse is not measurable by science* and does not fit in with any scientific theories."—Ed.

THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION

sity; He is not subject to the laws of art. The will of God is the creator and artificer of nature and of art and of everything existing.¹

Speaking of the Fifth Day of Creation, the same Father says:

Today God goes over to the waters and shows us that from them, by His word and command, there proceeded animate creatures.... What mind, tell me, can understand this miracle?"

St. Basil teaches in the *Hexaemeron* that in the Third Day there was no natural necessity for waters to flow downward; this is a law of our own world, but then there was as yet no law, until God's command came:

Someone may, perhaps, ask this: Why does the Scripture reduce to a command of the Creator that tendency to flow downward which belongs naturally to water?... If water has this tendency by nature, the command ordering the waters to be gathered together into one place would be superfluous. To this inquiry we say this, that you recognized very well the movements of the water after the command of the Lord, both that it is unsteady and unstable and that it is borne naturally down slopes and into hollows; but how it had any power previous to that, before the motion was engendered in it from this command, you yourself neither know nor have you heard it from one who knew. Reflect that the voice of God makes nature, and the command given at that time to creation provided the future course of action for the creatures.³

Undoubtedly, here is one of the chief sources of the conflict between scientific theory and religious revelation. During the Six Days *nature itself was being made*; our present knowledge of natural laws cannot

possibly tell us how these laws themselves were made.
The very subject of ultimate origins, of beginnings,
of the Genesis of all things—is outside the sphere of
science. When a scientist enters this realm, he guesses
and speculates like any ancient cosmologist; and this not
only distracts him from his serious work of studying
the natural

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processes of this world—it also makes him a competitor of religious revelation, which is the only possible source of our real knowledge of the beginning of things, just as it is our only source of knowledge of the final end of all things. St. Basil writes:

We are proposing to examine the structure of the world and to contemplate the whole universe, not from the wisdom of the world, but from what God taught His servant when He spoke to him in person and without riddles.⁴

If we can humble ourselves enough to know that we can actually know rather little about the details of the Creation of the Six Days, we will have a better chance of understanding what we can about Genesis. The Holy Fathers, and not scientific or cosmological speculations, are our key to understanding the text.

2. General Remarks about the Six Days

What, then, can we say of these Six Days?

First: One Orthodox person reflecting on the Six Days very nicely expressed our aim in studying them: we should measure them, not quantitatively, but theologically. The important thing about them is not how long they were, but what happened in them. They are the statement of *six immense creative acts* of God which produced the universe as we know it. In a moment we will look at these six acts in detail.

Second: As we have seen, by their very nature the events of these days are miraculous, are not subject to the laws of nature that now govern the world, and we cannot understand them by projections from our present experience.

Third: a point very much emphasized by the Holy Fathers who have written on Genesis: The creative acts of God in the Six Days are sudden, instantaneous.

St. Ephraim the Syrian, who understands the days of Creation to be twenty-four hours long, emphasizes that the creative acts of God in these days do *not* require twenty-four hours, but only an instant. Thus, concerning the First Day he writes:

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Although both the light and the clouds were created in the twinkling of an eye, still both the day and the night of the First Day continued ' for twelve hours each.⁵

St. Basil the Great likewise emphasizes at various points of his commentary on the Six Days the instantaneous nature of God's creation. On the Third Day of Creation, he writes,

At this saying all the dense woods appeared; all the trees shot up _____

Likewise, all the shrubs were immediately thick with leaf and bushy; and the so-called garland plants ... all came into existence in a moment of time, although they were not previously upon the earth.⁶ "Let the earth bring forth." This brief command was immediately a mighty nature and an elaborate system which brought to perfection more swiftly than our thought the countless properties of plants.⁷

St. Ambrose writes that when Moses says so abruptly "In the beginning God created," he intends to "express the incomprehensible speed of the work." And, having the cosmological speculations of the Greeks in mind, he writes words that apply equally well to the speculations of our own times:

He (Moses) did not look forward to a late and leisurely creation of the world out of a concourse of atoms.⁸

St. Ambrose says further:

And fittingly (Moses) added: "He created," lest it be thought there was a delay in creation. Furthermore, men would see also how incomparable the Creator was Who completed such a great work in the briefest moment of His creative act, so much so that the effect of His will anticipated the perception of time.⁹

St. Athanasius the Great—in arguing against the Arian teaching that Christ is the "beginning" of all things and thus like the crea-

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tion—sets forth as his understanding of the Six Days of Creation that all things in each of these days were created *simultaneously*:

As to the separate stars or the great lights, not this appeared first, and that second, but in one day and by the same command, they were all called into being. And such was the original formation of the quadrupeds, and of birds, and fishes, and cattle, and plants_____ No one

creature was made before another, but all things originate subsisted at once together upon one and the same command.¹⁰

3. Why Six Days?

We have already quoted St. Ephraim the Syrian, who states that "it is likewise impermissible to say that what seems, according to the account (of Genesis), to have been created in the course of six days, was created in a single instant." The Holy Fathers are quite insistent in their faithfulness to the text of Genesis: when the text says "day," they find it impermissible to understand some indefinitely long epoch, since God's creative acts are instantaneous; but they also find it impermissible to interpret these Six Days as merely some literary device to express a totally instantaneous creation.* Although each creative act is instantaneous, the whole creation consists of an orderly sequence of these creative acts.

St. Gregory the Theologian writes:

To the days (of creation) is added a certain firstness, secondness, thirdness, and so on to the seventh day of rest from works, and by these days is divided all that is created, being brought into order by unutterable laws, but not produced in an instant, by the Almighty Word, for Whom to think or to speak means already to perform the deed. If man appeared in the world last, honored by the handiwork

—* This is, in fact, what Blessed Augustine erroneously taught. In his book *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, he

suggested (but did not insist) that the days of creation | were not periods of time but a literary device to describe the angels contemplating all the works of creation, which in reality occurred totally in one instant.—Ed.

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and image of God, this is not in the least surprising; since for him, as for a king, the royal dwelling had to be prepared and only then was the king to be led in, accompanied by all creatures.¹¹

In the same vein St. John Chrysostom writes:

The Almighty right hand of God and His limitless wisdom would have had no difficulty in creating everything in a single day. And what do I say, in a single day?—in an instant. But since He created everything that exists not for His own benefit, because He needs nothing, being All-sufficient unto Himself, on the contrary He created everything in His love of mankind and goodness, and so He creates in parts and offers us by the mouth of the blessed Prophet a clear teaching of what is created so that we, having found out about this in detail, would not fall under the influence of those who are drawn away by human reasonings.... And why, you will say, was man created afterwards, if he surpassed all these creatures? For a good reason. When a king intends to enter a city, his armsbearers and others must go ahead, so that the king might enter chambers already prepared for him. Precisely thus did God now, intending to place as it were a king and master over everything earthly, at first arrange all this adornment, and only then did He create the master (man).¹²

St. Gregory of Nyssa repeats this same teaching that man, as king, appeared only after his dominion had been prepared for him; but he also has another, more mystical interpretation of the sequence of the Six Days which some have tried to interpret as an expression of the theory of evolution. Let us therefore look closely at this teaching. He Writes:

Scripture informs us that the Deity proceeded by a sort of graduated and ordered advance to the creation of man. After the foundations of the universe were laid, as the history records, man did not appear on the earth at once; but the creation of the brutes preceded him, ; and the plants preceded them. Thereby Scripture shows that the vi-

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tal forces blended with the world of matter according to a gradation; first, it infused itself into insensate nature; and in continuation of this advanced into the sentient world; and then ascended to intelligent and rational beings. The creation of man is related as coming

last, as of one who took up into himself every single form of life, both that of plants and that which is seen in brutes. His nourishment and growth he derives from vegetable life; for even in vegetables such processes are to be seen when aliment is being drawn in by their roots and given off in fruit and leaves. His sentient organization he derives from the brute creation. But his faculty of thought

and reason is incommunicable, and is a peculiar gift in our nature_____

It is not possible for this reasoning faculty to exist in the life of the body without existing by means of sensations, and since sensation is already found subsisting in the brute creation, necessarily, as it were, by reason of this one condition, our soul has touch with the other things which are knit up with it; and these are all those phenomena within us that we call "passions."¹³

At the end of another description in a different book, St. Gregory concludes:

If, therefore, Scripture tells us that man was made last, after every animate thing, the lawgiver (Moses) is doing nothing else than declaring to us the doctrine of the soul, considering that what is perfect comes last, according to a certain necessary sequence in the order of

things. Thus we may suppose that nature makes an ascent as it

were by steps—I mean the various properties of life—from the lower to the perfect form.¹⁴

This is one of the very few passages in the writings of the Holy Fathers which believers in the evolutionary

cosmogony find sympathetic to their views. It speaks of an "ascent by steps ... from the lower to the perfect form," and states that man somehow "partakes" in the life ^{of} the lower creation. But the evolutionary theory of origins requires much more than these general views, which no one will dispute. The theory of evolution requires that man be shown to be a *descendant of*

that indicates he believed such a view, but other of his own views contradict it. Thus, he agrees with the rest of the Fathers who have written on Genesis that THE God's creation is instantaneous; in this same treatise SIX he says that "every hillside and slope and hollow DAYS were crowned with young grass, and with the varied OF produce of the trees, just risen from the ground, yet CREAT shot up at once into their perfect beauty,"¹⁵ and that ION "the creation is, so to say, made offhand by the Divine power, existing at once on His command."

the Further, St. Gregory states specifically that the one lower reason human nature has contact with the lower creati creation is because it shares the same sentient on, to nature; it comes, indeed, from the same earth the have lower creatures also sprang from. It is a totally "evolv arbitrary addition to the Saint's meaning to insist that ed" this means man "descended" from the brute creation; out of in this case, indeed, it would be required also that he it. In a (and the brutes) descended from the vegetable later creation, since he has something of their nature also lectur within himself. But evolutionary theory teaches, not e we that animals "evolved" from plants, but that the two will kingdoms are separate and parallel branches from a look common primitive ancestor. closel

y at St. Gregory's "ascent by steps," therefore, does what not at all show the chronological descent of man from the plants and animals, but only shows his kinship with Fathe the lower creation through sharing the nutritive and rs saysentient nature which all earthborn creatures have, of to the degree God has given it to them. He is man's describing, not the *history* of man, but his *nature*. origin.

Here We will see more specifically below what St. Gregory actually thought about the "mixing of we natures" which is implied in the evolutionary theory. will

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CHAPTER THREE

The Six Days

(DAY BY DAY) (Genesis 1:1-25; 2:1-3)

LET us turn now to the text of Genesis and see briefly what God brought into being during the Six Days of Creation:

1. The First Day (Genesis 1:1—5)

1:1 *In the beginning...*

This book is about the very first things in the world. But there can also be a mystical significance to the words, as St. Ambrose teaches:

A beginning in a mystical sense is denoted by the statement: *I am the*

first and the last, the beginning and the end (Apoc. 1:8)

In truth,

He Who is the beginning of all things by virtue of His Divinity is also the end.... Therefore, in this beginning, that is, in Christ, God created heaven and earth, because *all things were made through Him and without Him was made nothing that was made* (John 1:3).¹

The succeeding acts of creation begin with the words: "And God said." St. Basil asks the meaning of this, and answers it for us:

Let us inquire how God speaks. Is it in our manner?... Does He manifest His hidden thought by striking the air with the articulate movement of the voice? Surely, it is fantastic to say that God needs such a roundabout way for the manifestation of His thoughts. Or, is it not more in conformity with true religion to say that the Di-

THE SIX DAYS (DAY BY DAY)

vine will joined with the first impulse of His intelligence is the Word of God? [*i.e.*, Christ]. The Scripture delineates Him in detail in order that it may show that God wished the creation not only to be accomplished, but also to be brought to this birth through some co-worker. It could have related everything fully as it began, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," then "He created light," next, "He created the firmament." But now, introducing God as commanding and speaking, it indicates silently Him to

Whom He gives the command and to Whom He speaks

This

way of speaking has been wisely and skillfully employed so as to . . . rouse our mind to an inquiry of the Person to Whom the words are directed.²

And so we see *Christ* is the Creator, as is also stated by St. John the Evangelist: "In the beginning was the Word ... all things were made through Him and without Him was made nothing that was made" (John 1:1, 3). St. Paul teaches the same thing: "God ... created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. 3:9); "by Him (Christ) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him" (Col. 1:16).

Thus, in traditional Orthodox iconography of the creation we see not Michelangelo's old man (the Father) creating Adam (as in the fresco in the Sistine Chapel), but Christ. Of course, it is the Trinity as a whole that creates: the Father commands, the Son creates, and in a moment we will see the Spirit participating in this work, as he "moves" or "hovers" over the waters. Of this St. Ephraim the Syrian writes:

It was fitting for the Holy Spirit to hover as a proof that in creative power He is equal to the Father and the Son. For the Father uttered, the Son created, and it was fitting for the Spirit also to offer His work. And this He did by *hovering*, thereby clearly showing that all was brought into being and accomplished by the Trinity.³

1:1—2 *God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void (Septuagint: invisible and unfinished).*

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St. Basil asks:

How is it, if both the heavens and the earth were of equal honor, that the heavens were brought to perfection and the earth is still imperfect and unfinished? Or, in short, what was the lack of preparation of the earth? And for what reason was it invisible? Surely, the perfect condition of the earth consists in its state of abundance: the budding of all sorts of plants, the putting forth of the lofty trees both fruitful and barren, the freshness and fragrance of flowers, and whatever tilings appeared on earth a little later by the command of God to adorn their mother. Since as yet there was nothing of this, the Scripture reasonably spoke of it as incomplete. "We might say the same also about the heavens; that they were not yet brought to perfection themselves, nor had they received their proper adornment, since they were not yet lighted around by the moon nor the sun, nor crowned by the choirs of the stars. For, these things had not yet been made. Therefore, you will not err from the truth if you say that the heavens also were incomplete."⁴

St. Ambrose speaks of this work of the First Day as the "foundation" of the world:

The good architect lays the foundation first, and afterwards, when the foundation has been laid, plots the various parts of the building,

one after the other, and then adds thereto the ornamentation_____Why

did not God ... grant to the elements at the same time as they arose their appropriate adornments, as if He, at the moment of creation, were unable to cause the heavens immediately to gleam with studded stars and the earth to be clothed with flowers and fruit? That could very well have happened. Yet Scripture points out that things were first created and afterwards put in order, lest it be supposed that they were not actually created and that they had no beginning, just as if the nature of things had been, as it were, generated from the beginning and did not appear to be something added afterwards.⁵

St. Ephraim
says:

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He said this desiring to show that emptiness preceded the natures (of things) ... There was then only the earth, and there was nothing beside it.⁶

1:2 And darkness was upon the face of the deep.

The waters of the "deep" were created together with the earth and completely submerged the earth. This is the cause of its unfinished appearance. The Fathers assume there was a certain light created with the heavens, since the heavens are the region of light; but if so the clouds covering the earth prevented its reaching the earth. St. Ephraim writes:

If everything created (whether its creation is mentioned or not) was created in six days, then the clouds were created on the first day.... For everything had to be created in six days.⁷

(This is another indication, incidentally, that the work of the Six Days is distinct from the continuous creative work of God after that, and that we cannot understand it by projecting back from our present experience.)

St. Ambrose specifically rejects the opinion that the "darkness" here refers allegorically to powers of evil.⁸

1:2 And the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. Here we see the activity of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity in the creation. St. Ambrose writes:

There was still to come the plenitude of the operation in the Spirit, as it is written: "By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established and all the power of them by the Spirit of His mouth" (Ps. 32:6).... The Spirit fittingly moved over the earth, destined to bear fruit, because by the aid of the Spirit it held the seeds of new birth which were to germinate according to the words of the Prophet: 'Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth' (Ps. 103:32).⁹

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St. Ephraim gives us a homey image of the activity of the Spirit on the First Day:

[The Holy Spirit] warmed the waters and made them fertile and capable of birth, like a bird when it sits with its outstretched wings on its eggs and by its warmth gives them warmth and produces fertility in them. This same Holy Spirit represented for us then an image of Holy Baptism, in which by His moving over the waters He gives birth to the children of God.¹⁰

The Holy Spirit also participated in the other days of Creation, for Job speaks of "the Divine Spirit which made me" (Job 33:4).

1:3 And God said, Let there be light; and there was light. St. Ambrose writes:

God is the author of light, and the place and cause of darkness is the world. But the good Author uttered the word "light" so that He might reveal the world by infusing brightness therein and thus make its aspect beautiful. Suddenly, then, the air became bright and darkness shrank in terror from the brilliance of the novel brightness. The brilliance of the light which suddenly permeated the whole universe overwhelmed the darkness and, as it were, plunged it into the abyss.¹¹

St. Ephraim, in harmony with the other Fathers, tells us clearly that this light had nothing to do with the sun, which was created only on the Fourth Day:

The light which appeared on earth was like either a bright cloud, or a rising sun, or the pillar that illumined the Hebrew people in the desert. In any case, the light could not disperse the darkness that embraced everything if it had not extended everywhere either its substance or its rays, like the rising sun. The original light was shed everywhere and was not enclosed in a single definite place; it dispersed the darkness without having any movement; its whole move-

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ment consisted in its appearance and disappearance; after its sudden disappearance there came the dominion of night, and with its appearance this dominion ended. Thus the light produced also the

three following days It aided the conception and bringing forth

of everything that the earth was to produce on the third day; as for the sun, when it was established in the firmament, it was to bring to maturity what had already been produced with the aid of the original light.¹²

1:4 And God saw that the light was good.

God calls each stage of His work "good," seeing its perfect and unspoiled nature and, as St. Ambrose teaches, looking forward to the perfection of the whole work:

God, as judge of the whole work, foreseeing what is going to happen as something completed, commends that part of His work which is

still in its initial stages, being already cognizant of its termination_____

He praises each individual part as befitting what is to come.¹³

1:4-5 And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. St. Basil comments on this passage:

"God separated the light from the darkness." That is, God made their natures incapable of mixing and in opposition, one to the other. For, He divided and separated them with a very great distinction between them. "And God called the light Day and the darkness Night." Now, henceforth, after the creation of the sun, it is day when the air is illuminated by the sun shining on the hemisphere above the earth, and night is the darkness of the earth when the sun is hidden. Yet, it was not at that time according to solar motion, but it was when that first created light was diffused and again drawn in according to the

measure ordained by God, that day came and night succeeded.¹⁴

1:5 *And there was evening and there was morning,
one day.*

III

GENESIS, CREATION AND EARLY MAN

St. Basil continues:

Evening, then, is a common boundary line of day and night; and similarly, morning is the part of night bordering on day. In order, therefore, to give the prerogative of prior generation to the day, Moses mentioned first the limit of the day and then that of the night, as night followed the day. The condition in the world before the creation of light was not night, but darkness; that which was opposed to the day was named night; wherefore it received its name

later than the day did

Why did he say "one" and not "first"? It is more consistent for him who intends to introduce a second and a third and a fourth day, to call the one which begins the series "first." But he said "one" because he was defining the measure of day and night.¹⁵

This First Day of creation (no matter how "long" one may guess it to be) is the beginning of the cycle of seven days (each with its "day" and "night") which continues up to our own days. Those rationalist commentators who see in the "seven days" and the fact that "evening" precedes "morning" merely a projection backwards of later Jewish customs show themselves totally out of harmony with the Patristic way of viewing these things, and they are therefore unable to answer the question: where and why did the Jews derive these customs? In the Patristic view, the revealed text can and does give the literal *origins* of the world and the reasons for the Jewish customs (which are now Christian—for our church day also begins with Vespers, the evening service).

Thus we have come to the end of "Day One," the First Day or creation. It has established the measure of time for all succeeding ages (because "before" it there was no time; time begins with it). And in another sense also it is a day unlike those that follow it, as St. Ephraim explains:

Thus, according to the testimony of Scripture, heaven, earth, fire, air, and the waters were

created out of nothing; while the light which
was created on the First Day and everything
else that was

THE SIX DAYS (DAY BY DAY)

created after it were created out of what existed before. For when Moses speaks of what was created out of nothing he uses the word "created" (Hebrew: *bard*): *God created the heavens and the earth*. And although it is not written that fire, the waters and the air were created, it is likewise not said that they were produced from what existed earlier. And therefore they also are out of nothing, just as heaven and earth are out of nothing. But when God begins to create out of what already existed, the Scripture uses an expression like this: *God said, let there be light*, and the rest. And if it is said: *God created the great sea monsters*, before this the following is said: *Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures*. Therefore, only the above-named five kinds of creations were created out of nothing, while everything else was created out of what had already been created out of nothing.¹⁶

The "five creations" that St. Ephraim mentions are the "four elements" out of which, according to the definition of ancient science, everything on earth consists, in addition to "heaven." One does not have to accept this particular way of analyzing the creation to see that there is indeed something "fundamental" about the First Day of Creation: it contains the beginnings of everything that is to come after. One might speculate as to where the actual *matter* came from for the living creatures, the heavenly bodies, and other creations of the next five days: was it newly created out of nothing, or was it really only a transformation of pre-existing matter? But this would be a profitless exercise that would not, in any case, contradict the truth that the basic structure and matter of creation was made on the First Day; the work of the next five days is less "radical" than that of the First Day—it is rather a "shaping" than a "creation" in the strict sense.

The very idea of "creation out of nothing" or "from non-being" sharply distinguishes the Genesis account from that of all pagan myths and speculations about creation. In the latter it is some kind of

demiurge" or "fashioner-god" who forms the world out of already existing matter—which, as the Holy Fathers say, thus is a kind of

god" also. Genesis describes the *absolute* beginning of the whole world, not its development from something already existing; even the

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creations of the following five days, as we shall see, although they come out of the matter which has already been created, are something radically new which cannot be understood as a mere development of the first-created matter. The speculations of modern thinkers who try to trace the world back to some ultimately simple matter which develops by itself can be seen to be akin to the ancient pagan speculations; the radicalness of the Genesis explanation is beyond them both—precisely because it comes from God's revelation and not the guesses and* projections of men.

The Christian who understands the absoluteness of God's creative work in the Six Days views the present creation with different eyes than does someone who views it as a gradual development or "evolution" from primordial matter (whether the latter is understood as created by God or as self-existing). In the latter view, the world is seen to be "naturally" what it is, and one can trace it back to ever simpler forms, each of which can be understood "naturally"; but in the former view, the view of Genesis, one is placed before the two radical poles of existence: that which now is, and the absolute nothingness from which it came, suddenly and by God's will alone.

There is only one more question for us to ask concerning the First Day: where does the creation of the world of angels fit into it? Moses describes the creation only of the visible world; when was the invisible world of spiritual beings created? Some Fathers think they are included in the creation of "heaven"; others are not so specific, but know that they were also created "in the beginning." St. Basil teaches:

In fact there did exist something, as it seems, even before this world, which our mind can attain by contemplation, but which has been left uninvestigated because it is not adapted to those who are beginners and as yet infants in understanding. This was a certain condition older than the birth of the world and proper to the supramundane powers, one beyond time, everlasting, without beginning or end. In it the Creator and Producer of all things perfected the works of His art, a spiritual light befitting the blessedness of those who love the Lord, rational and

invisible natures, and the whole orderly
arrangement of spiritual creatures which surpass our

understanding and of which it is impossible even to discover the names. These fill completely the essence of the invisible world.¹⁷

Similarly, St. Ambrose writes:

The Angels, Dominations, and Powers, although they began to exist at some time, were already in existence when the world was created. For all things "were created, things visible and things invisible, whether Thrones or Dominations or Principalities or Powers. All things," we are told, "have been created through and unto Him" (Col. 1:16).¹⁸

Indeed, God said to Job: "When the stars were made, all My angels praised Me with a loud voice" (Job 38:7, Septuagint). We will see on the Sixth Day how Adam was tempted by satan, and therefore we know that the battle of the proud angels in heaven, as described in the Apocalypse (12:7—8) has already been fought before then, and satan has already "fallen like lightning" (Luke 10:18).*

2. The Second Day (Genesis 1:6--8)

1:6-8 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. And it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morn-^{ing}, a second day.

Some have tried to find in this passage an "unscientific" view of the heavens, as though Moses believed in a kind of hard crystal dome in which the stars are embedded and above which there is a fictitious store of water. But there is nothing so fantastic to be found in this text.

*For a summary of the Orthodox teaching on the creation and nature of the angels, see St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 2:3.—ED.

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The word "firmament" seems to have two shades of meaning in Genesis, one quite specific and "scientific," the other general. In its general meaning the firmament is more or less synonymous with "heaven" or "sky": the stars are called "lights in the firmament of the heavens" (Gen. 1:14), and the birds fly "across the firmament of the heavens" (Gen. 1:20). We who have lost the specific meaning of "firmament" would omit it in such descriptions and say that stars and birds are both to be seen in the "heavens." The idea that the stars are embedded in crystal spheres is a speculation of ancient pagan thought and does not have to be projected into the inspired text of Genesis.

What, then, is the specific "scientific" meaning of the "firmament" in this text? St. Basil teaches that, even though it is also called "heaven," it is not synonymous with the "heaven" mentioned at the beginning of Genesis.

Since both a second name and a function peculiar to the second heaven was recorded, this is a different one from that recorded in the beginning, one of a more solid nature and furnishing a special service for the universe. We believe that this word has been assigned as a sign for a certain firm nature which is capable of supporting the fluid and unstable water. And, surely, we need not believe, because it seems to have had its origin, according to the general understanding, from water, that it is like either frozen water or some translucent stone ... almost like the air in transparency. Now, we compare the firmament to none of these things. Truly, it is peculiar to a childish and simple intellect to hold such notions about the

heavens. We have been taught by the Scripture to permit our

mind to invent no fantasy beyond the knowledge that has been

granted it_

Not a firm and solid nature, which has weight and resistance, it is not this that the word "firmament" means. In that case the earth would more legitimately be considered deserving of such a name. But, because the nature of the substances lying above is light and rare and imperceptible, He called this (a) *firmament*, in comparison with those very light substances which are incapable of perception by the senses. Now, imagine some place which tends to separate the

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moisture, and lets the rare and filtered part pass through into the higher regions, but lets the coarse and earthly part drop below, so that, by the gradual reduction of the liquids, from the beginning to the end the same mild temperature may be preserved.¹⁹

The "firmament" in Genesis, therefore, is some kind of natural barrier or filter that separates two levels of atmospheric moisture. We do not observe today such a definite phenomenon that we could call a "firmament." Was it perhaps different in the first-formed earth?

St. Basil believes that the function of the "firmament" was to preserve a mild temperature over the whole earth. Now, it so happens that we know of a certain "greenhouse" effect on the earth in prehistoric times: tropical plants and animals have been found in the ice of the far north, indicating that the northern regions were indeed once temperate. Further, in the second chapter of Genesis we are told that before the creation of man, "the Lord had not caused it to rain upon the earth ... but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground" (Gen. 2:5—6).

The early earth, then, seems to have been a place rather different from the one we know: a place universally temperate, plentiful in moisture which constantly watered an abundant vegetation, which, as we shall see, was all that God intended not only for the food of man, but even of the beasts (Gen. 1:30).

When did this happy situation come to an end? We will soon look at the consequences of the fall of man; but there are indications that the earth even after the fall of man preserved some of the characteristics of the earliest earth. Let us look briefly at what the Scripture says in the light of our scientific knowledge of the atmosphere. The Holy Fathers themselves often applied the scientific knowledge of their times in understanding the Scripture, and we are also permitted to do so—prodded only that we do no violence to the text of Scripture and are humble and moderate in our own supposed understanding. The following explanation, therefore, is offered not as dogma but as speculation.

The very phenomenon of rain is not mentioned in the text of Genesis until the time of Noah; and then it is not an ordinary rain but

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a kind of cosmic catastrophe: "All the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights" (Gen. 7:11-12). Immense—to us, nearly unimaginable—amounts of water were loosed on the earth, reducing it virtually to its state on the First Day of creation, when the "deep" covered the earth. The rains we know today could not cause this to happen; but the text describes something even worse: an immense underground supply of water was loosed, and the "firmament"—the atmospheric condition that preserved a permanent reservoir of water in the air, evidently in the form of clouds such as the planet Venus has even now—was literally "broken" and emptied its contents upon the earth.

In this light we can also understand why God gave the *rainbow* as the sign of His covenant with Noah and all creatures that there would never again be such a flood upon earth. How could the rainbow have been a sign, when supposedly it had existed throughout the centuries before that? Evidently the rainbow then appeared for the first time. The rainbow is formed by the direct rays of the sun upon moisture in the air. If the permanent cloud cover of the earth was dissipated by the breaking of the "firmament," then literally the direct rays of the sun struck the earth for the first time after the Flood. The rainbow had been unknown to man before that—which is why it can now be a sign to man that literally the supply of moisture in the air is limited and cannot cause a universal flood any more.

Some scientists recently have speculated—on different evidence—that the amount of cosmic radiation striking the earth for some reason manifested a striking increase about five thousand years ago. This of course would be true if the waters above the firmament had served as a filter and kept out harmful radiation.*

In view of all this, it would seem that the time after the Flood is a whole new epoch in human history. The comparatively "paradisaical conditions of the earth up to the time of Noah, when a universal temperateness prevailed over the earth and abundant vegetation supplied the needs of man without the need to eat meat (Noah is the first to re-

*See pp. 493 n.—Ed.

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ceive God's permission to eat flesh; Gen. 9:3), gives way to the harsher post-Flood earth we know, when there is "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter" (Gen. 8:22), and men no longer live nine hundred years as did Adam and the early Patriarchs, but very quickly are reduced to the seventy or eighty years which is the general limit of our life even up to now.*

3. The Third Day (Genesis 1:9—13)

1:9-10 And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear. And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together He called Seas. And God saw that it was good.

On each Day of creation a command is given that becomes the law of nature for all time thereafter. From the First Day, the succession of day and night begins; and from the Third Day, the waters begin their ceaseless movement. Thus, "the element of water was ordered to flow, and it never grows weary when urged on unceasingly by this command."²⁰

It is tempting for us, in the pride of our scientific knowledge, to speculate about the *how* of this event: Did the waters flow into under-

* During his oral delivery of this section, Fr. Seraphim explained this last point more fully: "We know that, with the race of mankind up until the time of Noah, a very extraordinary thing happened. All the Patriarchs of the Old Testament up to then are said to have lived tremendous numbers of years: Adam lived 930 years, Methuselah lived 969 years, others lived 900, 800 years.

Nowadays people might say: 'That's an exaggeration, that's a mistake, that's

silly. But almost every single Patriarch lived that long.... Only after Noah (who lived

950 years, 600 of which were before the Flood), the age of man begins to decrease....

Why? The world even before Noah was quite a different place; the world before Ad-

Am's fall, even more so. Before the time of Noah, man was not allowed to eat meat;

Man was living on vegetables, and in fact the animals of the earth
were blessed to eat

vegetables until the time of Noah. Of course, today it's
inconceivable that man could

live 900 years, but under those totally different conditions, who
knows what might have happened? God created the world in the
beginning totally new and fresh, and according to a totally
different way of life than what we know now."—Ed.

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ground reservoirs? Did the land rise up? The Scripture does not say, and for this reason the Holy Fathers say little on this subject. St. Ambrose writes:

What He actually has done, which I have not learned from the clear testimony of Scripture, I pass over as a mystery, lest, perchance, that stir up other questions starting even from this point. Nevertheless, I maintain in accordance with the Scriptures, that God can extend the low-lying regions and the open plains, as He has said: "I will go before thee and make level the mountains" (Is. 45:2).²¹

On this same question of the "how" of creation St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches:

As for the question, how any single thing came into existence, we ?" must banish it altogether from our discussion. Even in the case of things which are quite within the grasp of our understanding and of which we have sensible perception, it would be impossible for the speculative reason to grasp the "how" of the production of the phenomenon; so much so, that even inspired and saintly men have deemed such questions insoluble. For instance, the Apostle says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen are not made of things

which do appear" (Heb. 11:3) While the Apostle affirms that it is

an object of his faith that it was by the will of God that the world itself and all which is therein was framed,... he has on the other hand left out of the investigation the "how" of this framing.... Let us, following the example of the Apostle, leave the question of the "how" in each created thing, without meddling with it at all, but merely observing incidentally that the movement of God's will becomes at any moment that He pleases a fact, and the intention becomes at once realized in nature.²²

In all that has to do with the Six Days of Creation, therefore, the Holy Fathers offer few guesses (and they are always tentative) regarding *how* God created; and we likewise should refrain from projecting our

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knowledge of the "how" of the present creation (to the small extent that we know it) back to the first-created world.

The dry land appeared at the command of God, and not by some natural process. St. Ambrose writes:

It was provided that the earth would, to all appearance, have been dry by the hand of God rather than by the sun, for the earth actually became dry before the sun was created. Wherefore, David, too, distinguished the sea from the land, referring to the Lord God: "For the sea is His and He made it, and His hands made the dry land" (Ps. 94:5).²³

1:11—13 And God said, Let the earth put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth. And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning a third day.

The Holy Fathers are unanimous in emphasizing the miraculous nature of the creation of the Third Day. St. Basil teaches:

"Let the earth bring forth herbs." And in the briefest moment of time the earth, beginning with germination in order that it might keep the laws of the Creator, passing through every form of increase, immediately brought the shoots to perfection. The meadows were deep with the abundant grass; the fertile plains, rippling with standing crops, presented the picture of a swelling sea with its moving heads of grain. And every herb and every kind of vegetable and whatever shrubs and legumes there were, rose from the earth at that time in all profusion.... "And the fruit tree," He said, "that bears fruit containing seed of its own kind and of its own likeness on the earth." At this saying all the dense woods appeared; all the trees shot up, those which are wont to rise to the greatest height, the firs, cedars, cypresses, and pines; likewise, all the shrubs were immediately thick with leaf and bushy; and the so-called garland plants—the rose

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bushes, myrtles, and laurels—all came into existence in a moment of time, although they were not previously upon the earth, each one with its own peculiar nature.²⁴

St. Ephraim the Syrian states precisely:

The herbs, at the time of their creation, were the productions of a single instant, but in appearance they appeared the productions of months. Likewise the trees, at the time of their creation, were the productions of a single day, but in their perfection and fruits, which weighed down the branches, they appeared the productions of years.²⁵

St. Gregory of Nyssa also emphasizes that what was created by God was not merely seeds or a potentiality for growth, but the actual creations we know; seeds come from those first-created plants:

We learn from Scripture in the account of the first creation, that first the earth brought forth "the green herb," and that then from this plant seed was yielded, from which, when it was shed on the ground, the same form of the original plant again sprang up. In the beginning, we see, it was not an ear rising from a grain, but a grain coming from an ear, and, after that, the ear grows round the grain.²⁶

Plants and trees appeared on earth, as the Fathers repeat again and again, before the very existence of the sun. St. John Chrysostom writes:

(Moses) shows you that everything was accomplished before the creation of the sun, so that you might ascribe the ripening of the fruits not to it, but to the Creator of the universe.²⁷

St. Basil states:

The adorning of the earth is older than the sun,
that those who have been misled may cease
worshipping the sun as the origin of

life.²⁸

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St. Ambrose waxes eloquent on this

subject:

Before the light of the sun shall appear, let the green herb be born, let its light be prior to that of the sun. Let the earth germinate before it receives the fostering care of the sun, lest there be an occasion for human error to grow. Let everyone be informed that the sun is not the author of vegetation.... How can the sun give the faculty of life to growing plants, when these have already been brought forth by the life-giving creative power of God before the sun entered into such a life as this? The sun is younger than the green shoot, younger than the green plant.²⁹

The vegetation and trees brought forth seeds, "each according to its kind." This expression of Scripture is a key one in Patristic thought; we will devote a lengthy discussion to it under the Fifth Day of creation, when living creatures were brought forth likewise "each according to its kind."

4. The Fourth Day (Genesis 1:14-19)

1:14—19 *And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth. And it was so. And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.*

The Fourth Day of creation is a source of great embarrassment for those who would like to fit the Six Days into an evolutionary framework. There is absolutely no way this can be done if the sun was actually created on the Fourth Day.

For this reason, such apologists for the evolutionary interpretation

have to believe that the sun was really created on the
First Day with the



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The creation of the sun, moon and stars ("lights in the firmament of the heavens')
on the Fourth Day of Creation. (It will be noticed that, in this icon and in the
one on the front cover, the plants are shown to have already been

created on the Third Day.) *Icon from
Sucevitsa Monastery, Moldavia, Romania, sixteenth
century.*

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heavens, but only *appeared* on the Fourth Day—apparently after the cloud covering of the earth during the first three days had lifted.*

But we should remind ourselves once more that the first chapters of Genesis are not an account of the natural development of the earth according to the laws now governing this development, but an account of the miraculous beginnings of all things. We are not free to rearrange the Days of Genesis to fit our theories; we must rather humble our understanding so as to comprehend what the sacred text actually says. And here as always the Holy Fathers are our key to this comprehension. How did they understand the Fourth Day?

The Holy Fathers are unanimous in affirming that the sun and the heavenly luminaries were *created* on the Fourth Day; they did not merely *appear then*. There is no reason why, if the text of Genesis permitted it, the Fathers could not have accepted the seemingly more "natural explanation" that the light *of* the sun illuminated the first three days of creation, but that the orb of the sun only became visible from earth on the Fourth Day. That they universally reject this explanation can only mean that the text of Genesis does not allow it.

St. John Chrysostom writes: "He created the sun on the Fourth Day so that you might not think that it produces the day."³⁰

St. Basil teaches:

The heavens and the earth had come first; after them, light had been created, day and night separated, and in turn, the firmament and dry land revealed. Water had been collected into a fixed and definite gathering. The earth had been filled with its proper fruits; for, it had brought forth countless kinds of herbs, and had been adorned with varied species of plants. However, the sun did not yet exist, nor the moon, lest men might call the sun the first cause and father of light, and lest they who are ignorant of God might deem it the producer of what grows from the earth.... If the creation of light had preceded, why, now, is the sun in turn said to have been

made to give light?.... At the time (the First Day)
the actual nature

* This is the explanation offered by many "old-earth/progressive creationists" as well as by "Christian evolutionists."—ED.

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of light was introduced, but now this solar body has been made

ready to be a vehicle for that first-created light And do not tell

me that it is impossible for these to be separated. I certainly do not say that the separation of light from the solar body is possible for you and me, but that that which we are able to separate in thought

can also be separated in actuality by the Creator of its nature_____

"Let them serve," He says, "for the fixing of days," not for making days, but for ruling the days. For, day and night are earlier than the generation of the luminaries.³¹

St. Ambrose makes a special emphasis on this point:

Look first upon the firmament of heaven which was made before the sun; look first upon the earth which began to be visible and was already formed before the sun put in its appearance; look at the plants of the earth which preceded in time the light of the sun. The bramble preceded the sun; the blade of grass is older than the moon. Therefore, do not believe that object to be a god to which the gifts of God are seen to be preferred. Three days have passed. No one, meanwhile, has looked for the sun, yet the brilliance of light has been in evidence everywhere. For the day, too, has its light which is itself the precursor of the sun.³²

The idea that life on earth from the beginning was dependent on the sun, and even that the earth itself comes from the sun—is a recent idea that is nothing but the sheerest guess; it even has no direct connection with the truth or falsity of the so-called evolution of life on earth. Because men in recent centuries have been looking for a "new and "natural" explanation of the world's origin, having rejected the explanation that comes from Divine revelation, it has seemed a matter of course that the sun—so much larger and astronomically more significant than the earth, and the center of the earth's orbit—should precede the earth, rather than the other way around.

But Divine revelation, as interpreted by the Holy Fathers, tells us the contrary: that the earth comes first, both in time and in significance; and the sun comes second. If our minds were not so chained to the in-

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tellectual fashions of the times, if we were not so fearful of being thought "behind the times," we would not have such difficulty in opening our minds to this alternative explanation of the world's beginnings.

In the Scriptural-Patristic view the earth, as the home of man, the pinnacle of God's creation, is the center of the universe. Everything else—no matter what the scientific explanation of its present state and movement, or the physical immensity of it in comparison to the earth—is secondary, and was made for the sake of the earth, that is, for man. Our God is of such power and majesty that we need not doubt that in a single momentary exercise of His creative might He brought into being this whole earth—large to us, but only a speck in the whole universe—and that in another moment of His power He made the whole immensity of the stars of heaven. He could do vastly more than that if He willed; in the inspired text of Genesis He has left us the barest outline of what He did do, and this account is not required to accord with our human speculations and guesses.

In our days it has become fashionable and easy to believe that everything "evolved," by absolutely uniform laws which we can now observe, from a primordial blob of energy or matter; if one needs "God" to explain anything, it is only to be the "creator" of this blob, or the initiator of the "big bang" that supposedly has produced everything there is. Today it requires a broader mind, less chained to "public opinion," to begin to see the enormity of the creative acts of God as described in Genesis. The Holy Fathers—the most "sophisticated" and "scientific" minds of their time—can be the unchainers of our fettered minds.

But surely, it might be asked, the creations of God must make sense from the "natural" point of view also. Why, therefore, did God create such an enormous body as the sun to serve such a small body as the earth? Couldn't He have conserved this energy and made a sun more in accordance with the scale of the earth?

One could, of course, conceive of a sun much smaller than the one we know and much closer to the earth, while preserving its apparent size as seen from the earth. But such a sun would expend its energy many times more rapidly than our present sun does. Evidently

God made the sun the size and the distance from earth it needs to have if it is to give to earth the amount of light and heat it requires to

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Support life to the end of this age, when *the sun shall be darkened** (Matt. 24:29).

We may also see another, a mystical reason, for the fact that the light precedes the sun in the days of creation. Here, admittedly, we have no Fathers to quote, and we offer this interpretation as our own opinion.

We will see below that the separation of man into male and female was not part of the original "image" in which God created him; and we know that it will not be part of man's nature in the eternal kingdom of heaven, for *in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven* (Matt. 22:30). Rather, God made the division into male and female foreseeing the fall of man and that the increase of mankind would require a passionate mode of generation.

Might it not be, then, that the sun and moon are also not part of God's original "image" of His creation, but were only created to mark the days and months and years of man's fallen estate? The original light, created on the First Day, had no need of a body to contain it. At the end of the world *shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven* (Matt. 24:29); and in the kingdom of heaven, as on the First Day of Creation, there will be once more light without the sun and moon—for *the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of the Lord did lighten it* (Apoc. 21:23).

But these are mysteries at which we can do no more than guess.

5. The Fifth Day (Genesis 1:20-23)

1:20—23 *And God said, Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens. So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good—And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.*



The creation of the creatures of sea and air on the Fifth Day of Creation.
Icon from Suchevisia Monastery, Moldavia, Romania, ca. 1584.

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In his commentary on the Fifth Day of Creation, St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the preciseness and accurateness of the order in which the creation is described.

The blessed Moses, instructed by the Spirit of God, teaches us with such detail ... so that we might clearly know both the order and the way of the creation of each thing. If God had not been concerned for our salvation and had not guided the tongue of the Prophet, it would have been sufficient to say that God

created the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and living creatures, without indicating either

the order of the days or what was created earlier and what later _____

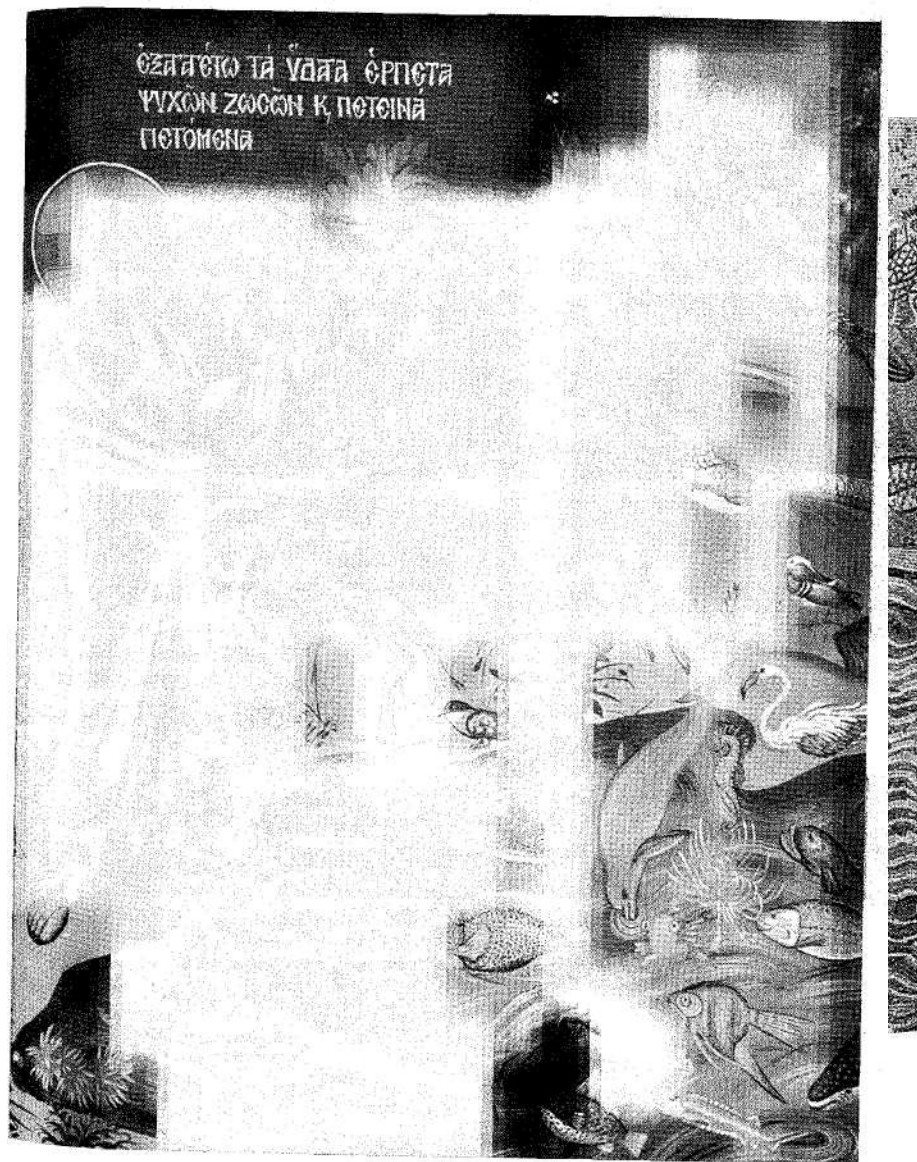
But he distinguishes so clearly both the order of creation and the number of days, and instructs us about everything with great condescension, in order that we, coming to know the whole truth, would no longer heed the false teachings of those who speak of everything according to their own reasonings, but might comprehend the unutterable power of our Creator.³³

Thus, on the Fifth Day, he writes:

Just as He said of the earth only: "Let it bring forth," and there appeared a great variety of flowers, herbs, and seeds, and all occurred by His word alone, so here also He said: "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens"—and instantly there were so many kinds of crawling things, such a variety of birds, that one cannot number them in words.³⁴

St. Basil writes:

All water was in eager haste to fulfill the command of its Creator, and the great and ineffable power of God immediately produced an efficacious and active life in creatures of which one would not even be able to enumerate the species, as soon as the capacity for propagating living creatures came to the waters through His command.



The creation of the creatures of sea and air on the Fifth Day of Creation.
Wall painting from the Far Monastery of St. John the Forerunner, Greece.

The creation of the creatures of sea and air
 on the Fifth Day. *Byzantine mosaic from Monreale
 Cathedral, Sicily, twelfth century.*

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And St. Ambrose:

At this *command* the waters immediately poured forth their off spring. The rivers were in labor. The lakes produced their quota of life. The sea itself began to bear all manner of reptiles.... We are unable to record the multiplicity of the names of all those species which by Divine command were brought to life in a moment of time. At the same instant substantial form and the principle of life were brought into existence.... The whale, as well as the frog, came into existence at the same time by the same creative power.³⁶

Here, as in the creation of all living things, God creates the first of each kind:

God orders the firstlings of each kind to be brought forth, seeds, as it were, for nature; and their numbers are controlled by successive progeny, whenever they must increase and become numerous (St. Basil).³⁷

Here, therefore, let us examine the meaning of the expression, repeated on each of the three days in which life is created, "each according to its kind."

There can be *no* doubt whatever that the Holy Fathers understood, clearly and unanimously, that on these three days God created all the *kinds* of creatures that we know today. This can be seen in their often-repeated assertions that God creates immediately and instantly, that it is His word alone that brings the creatures into being, that it is *not* a natural property of the waters or earth to bring forth life. On the latter point St. Basil writes (speaking of the Sixth Day):

when He said: "Let it bring forth," (the earth) did not produce what was stored up in it, but He Who gave the command also bestowed upon it the power to bring forth. Neither did the earth, when it heard, "Let it bring forth vegetation and the fruit trees,"

produce plants which it had hidden in it; nor did it send up to the surface the palm or the oak or the cypress which had been hidden somewhere

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down below in its womb. On the contrary, it is the Divine Word that is the origin of all things made. "Let the earth bring forth"; not, let it put forth what it has, but, let it acquire what it does not have, since God is enduing it with the power of active force.³⁸

The Holy Fathers have a very definite teaching on the "kinds" of creation. Let us only bear in mind here that we need not define precisely the limits of these "kinds." The "species" of modern taxonomy (the science of classification) are sometimes arbitrary and do not necessarily correspond to the "kinds" of Genesis; but in general one might say that the Fathers understand as included in a "kind" those creatures capable of producing a fertile offspring, as will be seen in what follows.*

St. Basil teaches that the "kinds" of Genesis (except, of course, for those that may have become extinct) maintain their nature to the end of time:

There is nothing truer than this, that each plant either
has seed or
there exists in it some generative power. And this
accounts for the ex-
pression "of its own kind." For the shoot of the reed is
not productive

—*The definition of "species" has been the subject of much debate in the modern scientific community. In the first half of the twentieth century, a species was generally defined as a group of plants or animals that are able to interbreed and produce fertile offspring. By 1942, biologist Ernst Mayr suggested a definition that was much less limiting: a species is a group that is "reproductively isolated" from other such groups (i.e., does not generally mate with another group, although it may be capable of doing so). This new definition of species is today accepted by many biologists. Because it is so loose, it makes it easier to show that one "species" (actually a breeding population) can "evolve" into another. Thus, for example, the polar bear and the grizzly bear are classified in modern taxonomy as separate species, although they are capable of mating with each other and producing fertile offspring. In view of the Patristic teaching on the "kinds" described in Genesis, however, it would seem that these two "species" of bear

are but different varieties within one of the original created "kinds."

For further discussion of the changing definition of species in modern science see Richard Milton, *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism*, pp. 143-53. For sources on the question of variation within each created "kind," see p. 646 below.—Ed.

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of an olive tree, but from the reed comes another reed; and from seeds spring plants related to the seeds sown. Thus, what was put forth by the earth in its first generation has been preserved until the present time, since the kinds persisted through constant reproduction.³⁹

And further:

The nature of existing objects, set in motion by one command, passes through creation without change, by generation and destruction, preserving the succession of the kinds through resemblance, until it reaches the very end. It begets a horse as the successor of a horse, a lion of a lion, and an eagle of an eagle; and it continues to preserve each of the animals by uninterrupted successions until the consummation of the universe. No length of time causes the specific characteristics of the animals to be corrupted or extinct, but, as if established just recently, nature, ever fresh, moves along with time. °

Similarly, St. Ambrose teaches:

In the pine cone nature seems to express an image of itself; it preserves its peculiar properties which it received from that Divine and celestial command, and it repeats in the succession and order of the years its generation until the end of time is fulfilled.⁴¹

And the same Father says even more decisively:

The Word of God permeates every creature in the constitution of the world. Hence, as God had ordained, all kinds of living creatures were quickly produced from the earth. In compliance with a fixed law they all succeed each other from age to age according to their aspect and kind. The lion generates a lion; the tiger, a tiger; the ox, an ox; the swan, a swan; and the eagle, an eagle. What was once enjoined became in nature a habit for all time. Hence the earth has not ceased to

offer the homage of her service. The original species of living creatures is reproduced for future ages by successive generations of its kind.⁴²

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The attempts of breeders, both of animals and plants, in all ages to make a new species by mating individuals of different species produces[^] (when it succeeds) a result that only proves the Patristic maxim of the constancy of species: these "hybrids" are sterile and cannot reproduce themselves. St. Ambrose uses this example to warn men against "unnatural unions" which go against the laws which God established in the Days of Creation:

What pure and untarnished generations follow without intermingling one after another, so that a thymallus produces a thymallus; a sea-wolf, a sea-wolf. The sea-scorpion, too, preserves unstained its

marriage bed Fish know nothing of union with alien species.

They do not have unnatural betrothals such as are designedly brought about between animals of two different species as, for instance, the donkey and the mare, or again the female donkey and the horse, both being examples of unnatural union. Certainly there are cases in which nature suffers more in the nature of defilement rather than that of injury to the individual. Man as an abettor of hybrid barrenness is responsible for this. He considers a mongrel animal more valuable than one of a genuine species. You mix together alien species and you mingle diverse seeds.⁴³

The distinctness and integrity of the "seeds" of each of the "kinds" of creation is so much a part of Scriptural and Patristic thought that it serves in the Gospel as the basis for the Parable of our Lord regarding the distinctness of good and evil, virtue and sin. St. Ambrose uses this parable (Matt. 13:24-30) to illustrate the integrity of the seeds of each "kind":

There is no danger that the precept of God, to which nature has accustomed itself, may become void in future time by a failure of propagation, since today the integrity of the stock is still preserved in the seeds. We know that cockle and the other alien seeds which often are interspersed among fruits of the earth are called "weeds" in the Gospel. These, however, belong to a special species and have not *de-generated* into another species by a process of mutation from the

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seed of the wheat plant. The Lord told us that this is so when He said: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while men were asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat." We gather from this that weeds and wheat certainly seem to be distinct both in name and in kind. Hence, the servants, too, said to the householder, "Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? How then does it have weeds?" He said to them, "An enemy hath done this." One is the seed of the devil; the other, that of Christ which is sown in accordance with justice. Therefore, the Son of Man sowed one and the devil sowed the other. For that reason the nature of each is distinct, since the sowers are opposed. Christ sows the kingdom of God, whereas the devil sows sin. How, therefore, can this kingdom be of one and the same race as sin? "This is the kingdom of God," He says, "as though a man should cast seed into the earth."⁴⁴

Just as the distinction of species is related to the distinction between good and evil, so is the confusion of species related to moral relativity. It is certainly well known how believers in the relativity of good and evil, of virtue and vice, make use of the cosmological theory of universal evolution to defend their belief as "scientific" and "factual": if man was "once" a lower animal and is "evolving" into something else, then how can his inconstant nature be compelled to obey commandments given at only one stage of his "development"?* Marxist atheism bound itself to this theory of evolution from the very beginning and to this day preaches it as one of the cardinal doctrines of its relativistic philosophy.

* Aldous Huxley [brother of Julian Huxley] has left a memoir telling how the theory of universal evolution "liberated" him from the shackles of the "old morality": I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently assumed that it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons of this assumption.... For myself, as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom" (Aldous Huxley, "Confession of a Professed Atheist," *Report*, June 1966, p. 19).

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The idea of the consistency of nature and the integrity and distinctness of its "kinds" runs throughout Patristic literature. It serves a model, for example, of the resurrection of the human body. St. Ambrose writes, in his treatise on the resurrection:

Nature in all its produce remains consistent with itself.... Seeds of one kind cannot be changed into another kind of plant, nor bring forth produce differing from its own seeds, so that men should spring from serpents and flesh from teeth; how much more, indeed, is it to be believed that whatever has been sown rises again in its own nature, and that crops do not differ from their seed, that soft things do not spring from hard, nor hard from soft, nor is poison changed into blood; but that flesh is restored from flesh, bone from bone, blood from blood, the humors of the body from humors. Can ye then, ye heathen, who are able to assert a change, deny a restoration of the nature?⁴⁵

In a similar view, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

Whereas we learn from Scripture in the account of the first Creation, that first the earth brought forth "the green herb" (as the narrative says), and that then from this plant seed was yielded, from which, when it was shed on the ground, the same form of the original plant again sprang up, the Apostle, it is to be observed, declares that this very same thing happens in the Resurrection also; and so we learn from him the fact, not only that our humanity will be then changed into something nobler, but also that what we have therein to expect is nothing else than that which was at the begin-ning.⁴⁶

A strange parallel to the modern theory of universal evolution may be seen in the ancient pagan teaching of the transmigration of souls (reincarnation). The reaction of the Holy Fathers to this idea, which they universally condemned, shows how concerned they were to p^{re}serve the orderliness of creation and the distinctness of its kinds o creatures. St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

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Those who would have it that the soul migrates into natures divergent from each other seems to me to obliterate all natural distinctions; to blend and confuse together, in every possible respect, the rational, the irrational, the sentient, and the insensate; if, that is, all these are to pass into each other, with no distinct natural order secluding them from mutual transition. To say that one and the same soul, on account of a particular environment of body, is at one time a rational and intellectual soul, and that then it is cavered along with the reptiles, or herds with the birds, or is a beast of burden, or a carnivorous one, or swims in the deep; or even drops down to an insensate thing, so as to strike out roots or become a complete tree, producing buds on branches, and from those buds a flower, or a thorn, or a fruit edible or noxious—to say this, is nothing short of making all things the same and believing that one single nature runs through all beings; that there is a connection between them which blends and confuses hopelessly all the marks by which one could be distinguished from another.⁴⁷

The idea that "one single nature runs through all beings," of course, lies at the heart of the theory of universal evolution. Erasmus Darwin (the grandfather of Charles) had already pointed scientific speculation in this direction at the end of the eighteenth century. Such an idea is profoundly alien to Scriptural and Patristic thought.

6. The Sixth Day (Genesis 1:24—31)

1:24-25 And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds. And it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the cattle according to their kinds, and everything that creeps upon the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good.

The teaching of the Holy Fathers on the creation of the land animals on the Sixth Day does little more than repeat what has already been said about the other living creatures. Thus, St. Ephraim writes:

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The earth at God's command immediately brought forth creeping things, beasts of the field, creatures of prey, and domestic animals, as many as were necessary for the service of him who, on that very day, transgressed the commandment of his Lord.⁴⁸

St. Basil teaches:

The soul of brute beasts did not emerge after having been hidden in the earth, but it was called into existence at the time of the command.⁴⁹

With this act of creation, all is ready for the appearance of man, who is to be lord over it all. But this magnificent creation is not merely for the practical use of man. There is something mystical in it; being the good creation of the All-good God, it can raise our minds to Him. St. John Chrysostom writes:

God created everything not only for our use, but also that we, seeing the great wealth of his creations, might be astonished at the might of the Creator and might understand that all this was created with wisdom and unutterable goodness for the honor of man, who was to appear.⁵⁰

St. Basil, marvelling at the grandeur of God's creation, says:

Let us glorify the Master Craftsman for all that has been done wisely and skillfully; and from the beauty of the visible things let us form an idea of Him Who is more than beautiful; and from the greatness of these perceptible and circumscribed bodies let us conceive of Him Who is infinite and immense and Who surpasses all understanding in the plenitude of His power. For even if we are ignorant of things made, yet, at least, that which in general comes under our observation is so wonderful that even the most acute mind is shown to be at a loss as regards the least of the things in the world, either in the ability to explain it worthily or to render due praise to the Creator, to Whom be all glory, honor, and power forever.⁵¹

THE SIX DAYS (DAY BY DAY)

God made the world, as St. John Damascene teaches, because, "not content to contemplate Himself, by a superabundance of goodness He saw fit that there should be some things to benefit by and participate in this goodness."⁵²

Perhaps no part of Scripture expresses so well the awe-inspiring majesty of God in His creation, and man's nothingness in comparison, as does the passage in which God speaks to Job out of the whirlwind:

Where wast thou when I founded the earth? Tell me now, if thou hast knowledge, who set the measures of it, if thou knowest? Or who stretched a line upon it? On what are its rings fastened? And who is he that laid the cornerstone upon it? When the stars were made, all My angels praised Me with a loud voice. And I shut up the sea with gates, when it rushed out, coming forth out of its mother's womb. And I made a cloud its clothing, and swathed it in mist. And I set bounds to it, surrounding it with bars and gates. And I said to it, Hitherto shalt thou come, but thou shalt not go beyond, but thy ' waves shall be confined within thee. Or did I order the morning light in thy time; and did the morning star then first see his appointed place; to lay hold of the extremities of the earth, to cast out the ungodly out of it? Or didst thou take clay of the ground, and form a living creature, and set it with the power of speech upon the earth? (Job 38:4-14, Septuagint).

The Genesis account of the creation of man is given in two accounts, those of chapter one and chapter two; these we shall examine in the next chapter.

2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host °f them. And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God 'ested from all His work which He had done in creation.

Of this, God's "sabbath" rest from creation, St. John Chrysostom Writes:

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The Divine Scripture indicates here that God rested from His works; but in the Gospel Christ says: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). In comparing these utterances, is there not a contradiction to be found in them? May it not be so; in the words of the Divine Scripture there is no contradiction whatever. When the Scripture here says: "God rested from all His works," it thereby instructs us that on the Seventh Day He ceased to create and to bring out of nonexistence into existence; but when Christ says: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," it thereby indicates to us His uninterrupted Providence, and it calls "work" the preservation of what exists, the giving to it of continuance (of existence) and the governance of it at all times. Otherwise, how could the universe exist, if a higher hand did not govern and order everything visible and the human race?⁵³

Viewing the marvel of what happens every day in what we have become accustomed to call "nature"—the development, for example, of a fully mature plant, animal, or even human being from a tiny seed—we cannot help but see the continuous creative activity of God. But this is not all the same as the Creation of the Six Days, the original bringing into being of everything there is. The first chapter of Genesis describes this unique and unrepeatable creation.

Being accustomed to the "working" of God in our present world, we can scarcely conceive of that other kind of "work" which He did in the Six Days. The world, then, while perfect and fully formed, was still "new." St. Gregory the Theologian emphasizes that when God wished to create Adam of the dust, "the Word, having taken a part of the newly created earth, with His immortal hands formed my image." St. Ephraim the Syrian teaches:

Just as the trees, the grasses, the animals, birds and man were at the same time both old and young: old in the appearance of their members and structures, young in the time of their creation; so also the moon was at the same time both old and young: young because it was just created, old because it was full as on the fifteenth day.⁵⁵

THE SIX DAYS (DAY BY DAY)

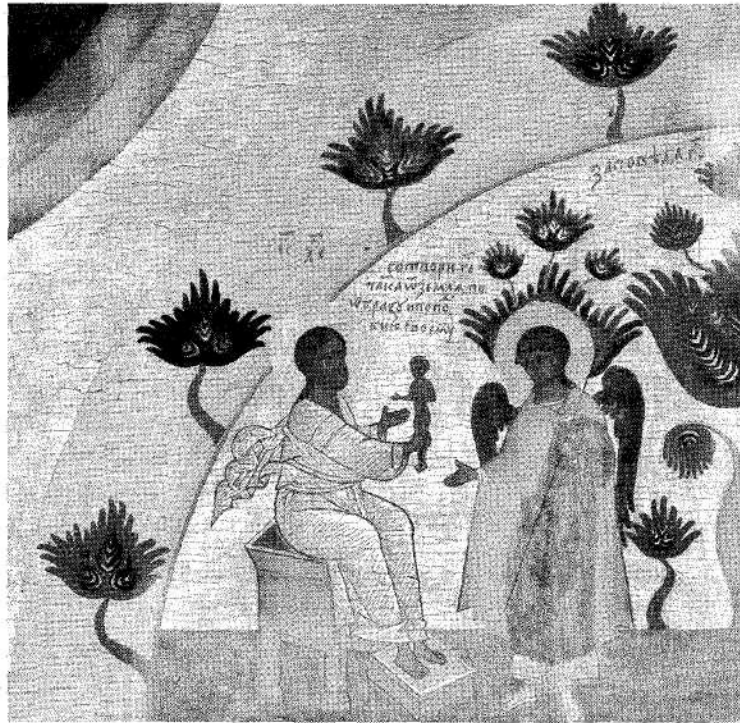
St. Ephraim⁵⁶ and other Fathers emphasize this newness by stating their belief that the world was created in the spring. St. Ambrose ties this together with the fact that among the Hebrews the year began in the spring:

He created heaven and earth at the time when the months began, from which time it is fitting that the world took its rise. Then there was the mild temperature of spring, a season suitable for all things. Consequently, the year, too, has the stamp of a world coming to

birth_ In order to show that the creation of the world took place in

the spring, Scripture says: "This month shall be to you the beginning of months, it is for you the first in the months of the year" (Ex. 12:2), calling the first month the springtime. It was fitting that the beginning of the year be the beginning of generation.⁵⁷

Now, after this look at the Holy Fathers' very realistic understanding of the Six Days of Creation, let us turn to the more complex question of the making of the crown of God's creation, man.



The creation of man.

Detail of a Russian icon of about the year 1570, now located at the Solvychevodsk Museum of History and Art.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Creation of Man

(Genesis 1:26-31; 2:4-7)

1:26-27 Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

"We have seen that the Creation of the Six Days is the work of the Holy Trinity, and in particular that the Father commands: "Let there be!" and the Son creates.

In the creation of man, however, a special consultation, as it were, is made between the Persons of the Trinity. Of this St. Basil says:

"Let us make man" ... This word was not yet used for any of the organized beings; there was light, and the commandment was simple: "God said, Let there be light." The heaven was made, and there was

no deliberation for the heaven Here, man is *not yet*, and there is a

deliberation over man. God did not say, as for the other beings: "Let man be!" Recognize the dignity that belongs *to you*. He did not cause your origin by a commandment, but there was a consultation in God in order *to* know how to introduce into life this living being worthy of honor....

Why did God not say, "Make," but "Let us make man"? It is so that you might recognize the sovereignty. He desires that in bringing your attention on the Father, you would not deny the Son; He desires you to know that the Father has created by the Son and that the



The Holy Trinity appearing to Abraham in the form of three visitors.
*Fresco by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration,
Novgorod, Russia, 1378.*

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Son has created by the will of the Father, and that you should glorify the Father in the Son, and the Son in the Holy Spirit....

(But) He did not say: "And they created," so that you might not draw from this a pretext for polytheism.¹

Similarly, St. John Chrysostom says:

Why, when the heaven was created, was it not said: "Let us make,"
but rather: Let there be heaven, let there be light, and so concerning
each part of creation; but here only is there added: "Let us make," by
which is expressed counsel, deliberation, and communication with
someone equal in honor? Who is it that is to be created that he
is granted such honor? It is man—a great and wondrous living being,
and for God more precious than all the creation There was coun
sel, deliberation, and communication, not because God has need
of counsel—may this not be!—but in order by the very means of ex
pression to show us the dignity of what is created

And Who is it to Whom God says: "Let us make man"? It is the *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Father of the age to come* (Is. 9:6 KJV QV), the Only-begotten Son of God Himself. To Him He says: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." He did not say: "In mine and thine," or "in mine and yours," but "in our image," indicating a single image and a single likeness.²

St. Gregory the Theologian speaks very poetically about the creation of man as a mixture of the higher and lower worlds that God had already created. First:

He gave being to the world of thought [i.e., the world of intellectual beings, angels], as far as I can reason on these matters, and estimate great things in my own poor language. Then, when this first Creation was in good order, He conceives a second world, material and visible; and this a system of earth and sky and all that is in the midst of them; an admirable creation indeed when we look at the fair form of every part, but yet more worthy of admiration when we consider the harmony and unison of the whole, and how each part fits in with

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every other in fair order.... This was to show that He could call into being not only a nature akin to Himself [i.e., the angelic, invisible world], but also one altogether alien to Him. For akin to Deity are those natures which are intellectual, and only to be comprehended by mind; but all of which sense can take cognizance are utterly alien to It; and of these the furthest removed from It are all those which are entirely destitute of soul and power of motion.

Mind, then, and sense, thus distinguished from each other, had remained within their own boundaries, and bore in themselves the magnificence of the Creator-Word, silent praisers and thrilling heralds of His mighty work. Not yet was there any mingling of both, nor any mixture of these opposites, tokens of a greater wisdom and generosity in the creation of natures; nor as yet were the whole riches of goodness made known. Now the Creator-Word, determining to exhibit this, and to produce a single living being out of both (the invisible and the visible creation, I mean) fashions Man; and taking a body from already existing matter, and placing in it a Breath taken from Himself (which the Word knew to be an intelligent soul, and the image of God), as a sort of second world, great in littleness, He placed him on the earth, a new Angel, a mingled worshipper, fully initiated into the visible creation, but only partially into the intellectual; king of all upon earth, but subject to the King above; earthly and heavenly; temporal and yet immortal; visible and yet intellectual; half-way between greatness and lowliness; in one person combining spirit and flesh; spirit because of the favor bestowed on him, flesh on account of the height to which he had been raised; the one that he might continue to live and glorify his benefactor, the other that he might suffer, and by suffering be put in remembrance, and be corrected if he became proud in his greatness; a living creature, trained here and then moved elsewhere; and to complete the mystery, deified by its inclination to God.³

What is this image of God? Different Holy Fathers have emphasized different aspects of the image of God in man: some have mentioned man's dominion over the lower creation (which is mentioned specifically in the text of Genesis); others, his reason; still others, his

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freedom. St. Gregory of Nyssa sums up the meaning of the image of God most concisely:

He creates man for no other reason than that He is good; and being such, and having this as His reason for entering upon the creation of our nature, He would not exhibit the power of this goodness in an imperfect form, giving our nature some one of the things at His disposal, and grudging it a share in another: but the perfect form of goodness is here to be seen by His both bringing man into being from nothing, and fully supplying him with all good gifts. But since the list of individual good gifts is a long one, it is out of the question to apprehend it numerically. The language of Scripture therefore expresses it concisely by a comprehensive phrase, in saying that man was made "in the image of God": for this is the same as to say that He made human nature participant in all good; for if the Deity is the fullness of good, and this is His image, then the image finds its resemblance to the Archetype in being filled with all good.

What is the difference between the "image" and the "likeness" of God in man? The Holy Fathers explain that the image is given to us in full and cannot be lost; the likeness, however, was given in the beginning only potentially, and man himself was to work on attaining its perfection. St. Basil the Great teaches:

"Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness."
We possess the one by creation, we acquire the other by free will. In the first structure it is given us to be born in the image of God; by free will there is

formed in us the being in the likeness of God "Let us make man in

Our image": Let him possess by creation what is in the image, but let him also become according to the likeness. God has given the power for this; if He had created you also in the likeness, where would your privilege be? Why have you been crowned? And if the Creator had given you everything, how would the kingdom of heaven have opened for you? But it is proper that one part is given you, while the other has been left incomplete: this is so that you might

complete it yourself and might be worthy of the reward which comes from God.⁵

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In the very passage of Genesis which describes the creation of man, it is said that he was created "male and female."* Is this distinction, then, part of the image of God? St. Gregory of Nyssa explains that Scripture refers here to a *twofold* creation of man:

That which was made "in the image" is one thing, and that which is now manifested in wretchedness is another. "God created man," it says; "in the image of God created He him." There is an end of the creation of that which was made "in the image": then it makes a resumption of the account of creation, and says, "male and female created He them." I presume that everyone knows that this is a departure from the Prototype: for "in Christ Jesus," as the Apostle says, "there is neither male nor female." Yet the phrase declares that man is thus divided.

Thus the creation of our nature is in a sense twofold: one made like to God, one divided according to this distinction: for something like this the passage darkly conveys by its arrangement, where it first says, "God created man, in the image of God created He him," and then, adding to what has been said, "male and female created He them,"—a thing which is alien from our conception of God.

I think that by these words Holy Scripture conveys to us a great and lofty doctrine; and the doctrine is this. While two natures—the Divine and incorporeal nature, and the irrational life of brutes—are separated from each other as extremes, human nature is the mean between them [this is similar to the idea of St. Gregory the Theologian we have already quoted]: for in the compound nature of man we may behold a part of each of the natures I have mentioned—of the Divine, the rational and intelligent element, which does not admit the distinction of male and female; of the irrational, our bodily form and structure, divided into male and female: for each of these

* Christ Himself quoted this passage from Genesis. In Mark 10:6 He says: But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." His words "from the beginning of the creation" clearly contradict the

evolutionist and old- earth/progressive creationist idea that there were billions of years of earth history before the appearance of human beings. (See also p. 228 n.)—ED.

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elements is certainly to be found in all that partakes
of human life.
That the intellectual element, however, precedes the
other, we learn
as from one who gives in order an account of the
making of man;
and we learn also that his community and kindred
with the irrational is for man a provision for reproduction

He Who brought all things into being and
fashioned man as a whole by His own will to the
Divine image ... saw beforehand by His all-seeing
power the failure of their will to keep a direct course to
what is good, and its consequent declension from the
angelic life, in order that the multitude of human
souls might not be cut short by

its fall_ He formed for our nature that contrivance for
increase

which befits those who had fallen into sin, implanting
in mankind, instead of the angelic majesty of nature,
that animal and irrational mode by which they now
succeed one another.*⁶

Thus the image of God, which, as all the Holy Fathers
teach, is to be found in the soul and not the body of
man, has nothing to do with the division into male and
female. In God's *idea* of man, one might say—man as
he will be in the Kingdom of Heaven—there is neither
male nor female; but God, foreknowing man's fall, made
this division which is an inseparable part of man's
earthly existence.

However, the reality of sexual life did not come
about before the fall of man. St. John Chrysostom,
commenting on the passage, "Now Adam knew Eve his
wife, and she conceived" (Gen. 4:1)—which occurred
after the fall—says:

After the disobedience, after the banishment from
Paradise, then it was that married life began. Before
the disobedience, the first people lived like angels,
and there was no talk of cohabitation. And how could
this be, when they were free of bodily needs? Thus, in
the beginning life was virginal; but when, because of
the carelessness (of the first people) disobedience

appeared and sin entered the world, virginity fled away from them, since they had become unworthy of

—That is, the whole sexual function [in man] is seen to be taken from the animal creation. It was not meant to be that way in the beginning.

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such a great good, and in its place there entered into effect the law of married life.⁷

And St. John Damascene writes:

Virginity was practiced in Paradise After the fall,... to keep the

race from dwindling and being destroyed by death, marriage was devised, so that by the begetting of children the race of men might be preserved.

But they may ask: What, then, does "male and female" mean, and "increase and multiply"? To which we shall reply that the "increase and multiply" does not mean increasing by the marriage union exclusively, because if they had kept the commandment unbroken forever, God could have increased the race by some other means. But, since God, Who knows all things before they come to be, saw by His foreknowledge how they were to fall and be condemned to death, He made provision beforehand by creating them male and female and commanding them to increase and multiply.⁸

In this as in other respects, as we shall see later, man—like the rest of the creation—before the fall was in a state different from that after the fall, even though there is a continuity between these two states provided by God's foreknowledge of the fall.

It should not be thought, however, that any of the Holy Fathers looked upon marriage as a "necessary evil" or denied that it is a state blessed by God. They regard it as a good thing in our present state or sin, but it is a good thing that is second to the higher state of virginity in which Adam and Eve lived before their fall, and which is shared even now by those who have followed the counsel of the Apostle Paul "to be even as I am" (1 Cor. 7:7-8). St. Gregory of Nyssa, the very Father who teaches so clearly the origin of marriage in our kinship with the beasts, also defends the institution of marriage in the clearest fashion. Thus, in his treatise "On Virginity," he writes:

Let no one think that we depreciate marriage as an institution. We

are well aware that it is not a stranger to God's blessing... But our

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view of marriage is this: that, while the pursuit of heavenly things should be a man's first care, yet if he can use the advantages of marriage with sobriety and moderation, he need not despise this way of serving the state.... Marriage is the last stage of our separation from the life that was led in Paradise; marriage is the first thing to be left; it is the first station, as it were, for our departure to Christ.⁹

1:28 And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

"Be fruitful and multiply" are the very words already addressed by God to the creatures of the water (Gen. 1:22) and indicate man's kinship with the lower creation and, through his fall, with their mode of sexual generation. But there is also a deeper meaning to these words. St. Basil writes:

There are two kinds of increase: that of the body, and that of the soul. The increase of the soul is the development of knowledge with the aim of perfection; the increase of the body is the development from smallness to normal stature.

To the animals deprived of reason He therefore said "increase" according to bodily development, in the sense of completing nature; but to us He said "increase" according to the interior Man, in the line of progress that leads to God. This is what Paul did, stretching out towards that which is ahead, forgetting that which he leaves behind (Phil. 3:13). Such is the increase in spiritual things_____

"Multiply": This blessing concerns the Church. Let the Divine word not be limited to a single individual, but let the Gospel of salvation be preached throughout the earth. "Multiply": to whom is this order addressed?—To those who give birth

according to the
Gospel...

Thus, these words apply equally well to the animals deprived of reason, but they acquire a particular meaning when we have to do with the being who is in the image with which we have been honored.¹⁰

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Man is to "have dominion," also, not only over the external creation, but also over the beast-like passions that lurk within him. St. Basil writes:

You have dominion over every kind of savage beast. But, you will say, do I have savage beasts within me? Yes, many of them. It is even an immense crowd of savage beasts that you carry within yourself. Do not take this as an insult. Is not anger a small wild beast when it barks in your heart? Is it not more savage than the first dog that comes? And is not the trickery that crouches in a treacherous soul more ferocious than the bear of the caverns?... What kind of savage beast do we not have within us?... You were created to have dominion; you are the master of the passions, the master of savage beasts,

the master of serpents, the master of birds Be
master of the

thoughts within you in order to become master of all beings. Thus, the power which was given us through living beings prepares us to exercise dominion over ourselves.¹¹

The beast-like passions are within us owing to our kinship with the animal creation through our fall. St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

As brute life first entered into the world, and man, for the reason already mentioned, took something of their nature (I mean the mode of generation), he accordingly took at the same time a share of the other attributes contemplated in that nature; for the likeness of man to God is not found in anger, nor is pleasure a mark of the superior nature; cowardice also, and boldness, and the desire of gain, and the dislike of loss, and all the like, are far removed from that stamp which indicates Divinity. These attributes, then, human nature took to itself from the side of the brutes.¹²

This is a very profound teaching. The people who believe in evolutionary ideas say, "Man comes from monkeys; therefore, you are an animal-like creature." The Holy Fathers, however, say that we are mingled creation, part heavenly, part earthly. In the earthly

side, God made allowance for the animal-like mode of reproduction; and thus

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we see how animalistic we are when we let passions control us. We have these "animals" within ourselves, but we also have the heavenly side, to which we are striving to get back.

1:29-30 And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to every thing that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it wets so.

Here we are told that in the beginning, when the earth and all its creatures were still new and man had not fallen, not only men, but even the beasts, were given only green plants for food; the beasts were not meant to be, and in the beginning were not, carnivorous. Of this St. Basil says:

Let the Church neglect nothing: everything is a law. God did not say: "I have given you the fishes for food, I have given you the cattle, > the reptiles, the quadrupeds." It is not for this that He created, says the Scripture. In fact, the first legislation allowed the use of fruits, for we were still judged worthy of Paradise.

What is the mystery which is concealed for you under this?

To you, to the wild animals and the birds, says the Scripture,

fruits, vegetation, and herbs (are given) We see, however, many

wild animals who do not eat fruits. What fruit does the panther accept to nourish itself? What fruit can the lion satisfy himself with?

Nevertheless, these beings, submitting to the law of nature, were nourished by fruits. But when man changed his way of life and departed from the limit which had been assigned him, the Lord, after the Flood, knowing that men were wasteful, allowed them the use of all foods: "Eat all that in the same way as edible plants" (Gen. 9:3). By this allowance, the other animals also received the liberty to eat them.

Since then the lion is a carnivore, since then also vultures watch for carrion. For the vultures were not yet looking over the earth at the very moment when the animals were born; in fact, nothing of

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what had received designation or existence had yet died so that the vultures might eat them. Nature had not yet divided, for it was in all its freshness; hunters did not capture, for such was not yet the practice of men; the beasts, for their part, did not yet tear their prey, for

they were not carnivores But all followed the way
of the swans,

and all grazed on the grass of the meadow....

Such was the first creation, and such will be the
restoration after

this. Man will return to his ancient constitution in
rejecting malice,

a life weighed down with cares, the slavery of the soul
with regard to

daily worries. When he has renounced all this, he will
return to that

paradisal life which was not enslaved to the passions
of the flesh,

which is free, the life of closeness to God, a partaker of
the life of the

angels.¹³

This life of the original creation, it should be noted, is not the life of Paradise, into which man has not yet been led; it is the life of the earth outside of Paradise, which God has already blessed as man's dwelling-place after his fall. St. Ephraim the Syrian writes of this:

God blessed our first ancestors on the earth,
because, even before they sinned He prepared the
earth for their dwelling; for, before they

sinned, God knew that they would sin He blessed
(man) before

settling him in Paradise, on the earth, so that by the
blessing, which was preceded by His goodness, He
might weaken the power of the curse which soon
struck the earth.¹⁴

In the beginning, therefore, before man's fall, the whole earth was like a kind of Paradise. St. Symeon the New Theologian teaches:

God, in the beginning, before He planted Paradise and gave it over to the first-created ones, in five days set in order the earth and what is on it, and the heaven and what is in it. And on the Sixth Day He created Adam and placed him as lord and king of the whole visible creation. Then there was not yet Paradise. But this world was from God as a kind of Paradise, although it was material and sensuous—God gave it over to the authority of Adam and all his descendants, as

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the Divine Scripture says (Gen. 1:26—30) God gave over to man

at the beginning this whole world as a kind of Paradise
_____Adam was

made with a body that was incorrupt, although material and not yet spiritual, and was placed by the Creator God as an immortal king over an incorrupt world, not only over Paradise, but also over the whole of creation which was under the heavens
_____This whole crea-
tion in the beginning was incorrupt and was created by God in the manner of Paradise. But later it was subjected by God to corruption, and submitted to the vanity of men.¹⁵

That is a remarkable view of the original creation.

1:31 And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, a sixth day.

The first chapter of Genesis is entirely devoted to the Six Days of Creation. In chapter two, the creation of man is described in more detail. One might say that chapter one describes the creation of *humanity*, both in the exalted sense as God's image, and in its divided, earthly aspect as male and female; while in chapter two the specific creation of the *first man* Adam and the *first woman* Eve is set forth. Some of the other creations of the Six Days are also mentioned in chapter two, but not in the strict chronological order of the first chapter. We should keep this in mind to avoid the elementary mistakes of rationalist critics who find "contradictions" between these two chapters and suppose there must be different authors of them.

2:4-6 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not

caused it to rain ^upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went ^uP a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground (KJV).

This is a brief description of the state of the world before the appearance of man, emphasizing that without God there would have been nothing, that He brought everything into being out of nothing. St. John Chrysostom comments on this passage:

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When (the Scripture) speaks of heaven and earth, it understands everything together that is in heaven and on earth. Therefore, just as in the account of the creatures (in chapter one) it does not speak about all of them in order, but having mentioned the most important, it does not relate to us about each one in detail—so also this whole book, although it contains in itself much else, it calls the book of "the generations of the heaven and of the earth," allowing us to conclude from the mention of them that in this book is to be included everything visible that is in heaven and on earth.... The Holy Spirit shows ... what occurred first and what afterwards, and likewise the fact that the earth produced its seeds by the word and command of the Lord and began to give birth without needing either the cooperation of the sun, nor the moisture of rain, nor the tilling of

man, who was not yet created... This (passage) means that what

had not existed previously received existence, and what had not been

appeared suddenly by His word and command All this is so that

we might know that the earth, for the germination of its seeds, had no need of the cooperation of other elements, but the command of the Creator was sufficient for it.¹⁶

2:7 Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Here we are given as much as we can know of the *how* of man's creation. There can be no doubt that the Holy Fathers understood by "dust" the literal dust of the earth; but when they speak of the "hands" of God which "took" this dust, they mean to emphasize the great care of God and His direct action in this work. Blessed Theodoret writes:

When we hear in the account of Moses that God took *dust horn* the earth and formed man, and we seek out the meaning of this utterance, we

discover in it the special good disposition of God towards the human race. For the great Prophet notes, in his description or

—*~~Blessed~~ Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrus near Antioch, was a fifth-century Father who wrote commentaries on Scripture.

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the creation, that God created all the other creatures by His word, while man He created with His own hands.... We do not say that the Divinity has hands ... but we affirm that every one of these expressions indicates a greater care on God's part for man than for the other creatures.¹⁷

St. Basil states that this verse emphasizes how different in his origin is man from the animals:

Above, the text says that God created; here it says *how* God created. If the verse had simply said that God created, you could have believed that He created [man] as He did for the beasts, for the wild animals, for the plants, for the grass. This is why, to avoid your placing him in the class of wild animals, the Divine word has made known the particular art which God has used for you: "God took of the dust of the earth."¹⁸

The same Father tells of the difference between the "creation" of man and his "fashioning":

God *created* the inward man, and *fashioned* the outward man. Fashioning is suited to the clay, and creation to that which is in the image. Thus, the flesh was fashioned, but the soul was created.¹⁹

The creation of man indicates both his greatness and his nothingness:

God took of the dust of the earth and fashioned man." In this world I have discovered the two affirmations that man is nothing and that man is great. If you consider nature alone, he is nothing and has no value; but if you regard the honor with which he has been treated, man is something great.... If you consider what it is that (God) took, what is man? But if you reflect on the One Who fashioned, what a great thing is man! Thus at the same time he is nothing because of the material, and great because of the honor (St. Basil).²⁰

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In the usual interpretation of the Holy Fathers, what was "breathed" into man was his *soul*. St. John Chrysostom writes:

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life!" Moses used such a crude manner of speaking because he was speaking to people who could not listen to him otherwise, as we are able to do; and also to show us that it was pleasing to God's love of mankind to make this thing created out of earth a participant of the rational nature of the soul, through which this living creature was manifest as excellent and perfect. "And He breathed into his nostrils (face?) the breath of life": that is, the inbreathing communicated to the one created out of earth the power of life, and thus the nature of the soul was formed. Therefore Moses added: "And man became a living soul"; that which was created out of dust, having received the inbreathing, the breath of life, "became a living soul." What does "a living soul" mean? An active soul, which has the members of the body as the implements of [>] its activities, submissive to its will.²¹

St. Seraphim of Sarov has a rather different interpretation of this passage of Scripture; in his "Conversation with Motovilov" he states that what was made from the dust of the earth was the entire human nature—body, soul, and spirit ("spirit" being the higher part of the soul)—and that what was breathed into this nature was the grace of the Holy Spirit.* This is a different perspective on the creation of man (found in few other Fathers), and does not really contradict the usual interpretation that it was the soul that was breathed into man; those who hold the latter view also believe that man was created in the grace of God.

St. Gregory the Theologian speaks of the exalted nature of man, the highest part of whose nature comes not from earth but directly from God:

The soul is the breath of God, and while being heavenly, it endures

— See pp. 435-42 below.—Ed.

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being mixed with what is of the dust. It is a light enclosed in a cave,

but still it is divine and inextinguishable The Word spoke, and

having taken a part of the newly created earth, with His immortal hands formed my image and imparted to it His life; because He sent into it the Spirit, which is a ray of the invisible Divinity.²²

Such expressions, however, should not lead us to the false opinion that the soul itself is Divine, or a part of God. St. John Chrysostom writes about this:

Certain senseless ones, being drawn away by their own conceptions, without thinking of anything in a God-befitting manner, and without paying any attention to the adaptation of the expressions (of Scripture), dare to say that the soul has proceeded from the Essence of God. O frenzy! O folly! How many paths of perdition has the devil opened up for those who will to serve him!... Thus, when you hear that God "breathed into his face the breath of life," understand that, just as He brought forth the bodiless powers, so also He was pleased that the body of man, created out of dust, should have a rational soul which could make use of the bodily members.²³

There are those today who would like to use the order of man's creation in this verse to "prove" that man "evolved" from lower beasts: that his body or earthly nature came first in time, and his soul or state of being in God's grace came second. Such an interpretation is quite impossible if we accept the Patristic understanding of man's creation.

To begin with, we have seen that in the Patristic view the days of creation—whatever their precise "length" may have been—were very short periods of time; that God's work in each of the days was swift, indeed, instantaneous; that at the end of the Six Days the "world was still "new" and not yet given over to corruption and death.

Secondly, the Holy Fathers themselves insist that the creation of man is not to be understood *chronologically*; it is rather an *ontological* description that tells the

makeup of man, but not the chronological order in which it occurred. When St. John Chrysostom states that "before" the inbreathing man was a "lifeless dummy,"²⁴ or St. Seraphim

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states that he was *not* a "lifeless dummy" but a living and active human being—we must understand the word "before" in the ontological sense of "without." But the creation of man itself—both body and soul, together with the grace in which man was made—was instantaneous. The Fathers found it necessary to set forth this teaching quite explicitly because in ancient times there were two opposed but equally false teachings on this subject: one, that of the Origenists who stated that souls "pre-existed" the creation of bodies and only entered their bodies as a "fall" from a higher state; and the other, that the body pre-existed the soul and was therefore of a nobler nature. St. John Damascene teaches:

From the earth He formed his body and by His own inbreathing gave him a rational and understanding soul, which last we say is the

divine image The body and the soul were formed at the same

time—not one before and the other afterwards, as the ravings of Origen would have it.²⁵

And St. Gregory of Nyssa teaches in more detail (referring both to the original creation of man and the conception of individual men today), after refuting the opposite error of Origen:

Others, on the contrary, marking the order of the making of man as stated by Moses, say that the soul is second to the body in order of time, since God first took dust from the earth and formed man, and then animated the being thus formed by His breath: and by this ar-
gument they prove that the flesh is more noble than the soul, that which was previously formed [more noble] than that which was af-
terwards infused into it Nor again are we in our doctrine to begin

by making up man like a clay figure, and to say that the soul came into being for the sake of this; for surely in that case the intellectual nature would be

shown to be less precious than the clay figure. But as man is one, the being consisting of soul and body, we are to suppose that the beginning of his existence is one, common to both parts, so that he should not be found to be antecedent and posterior to himself, if the bodily element were first in point of time, and the

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other were a later addition For as our nature is conceived as two fold, according to the apostolic teaching, made up of the visible man and the hidden man, if the one came first and the other supervened, the power of Him that made us will be shown to be in some way imperfect, as not being sufficient for the whole task at once, but dividing the work, and busying itself with each of the halves in turn.²⁶

The idea of the "evolution" of man from a lower animal cannot be harmonized with the Patristic and Scriptural view of man's creation, but requires a sharp break with it: If man "evolves" solely according to the laws of nature, then his rational nature, his soul, the image of God, differs not *qualitatively* but only *quantitatively* from the beasts; he is then a creature only of the earth, and there is no room for the Patristic view that he is partly of earth and partly of heaven, a "mixture" of two worlds, to use the phrase of St. Gregory the Theologian. But if, to escape such earthly thinking, a Christian evolutionist admits a Divine creation of man's soul—"when his body was ready for it," as some say—then he not only parts company with scientific thinkers, who will not admit "Divine" acts into their conceptual framework, but he also presents no consistent Christian outlook, mixing scientific speculations with "revealed" knowledge in a most haphazard way. In the Patristic-Scriptural view, the entire Six Days of Creation is a series of Divine acts; in the uniformitarian scientific view, the origins of things (as far back as scientists think they can be traced) are nothing but natural processes. These two views are as opposed as any two views can be, and any mixture of the two must be purely arbitrary and fanciful.

CHAPTER

FIVE

Paradise

(Genesis 2:8-24)

2:8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom He had formed. '

In the garden ("paradise" in Greek) where Adam dwelt before his fall, we approach a subject that is subtle and mystical, and at the same time is a necessary key to understanding the whole of Christian teaching. This Paradise, as we shall see, is not merely something that existed before the fall; it exists even now and has been visited by some while still alive on this earth; and it is also (in a somewhat different form) the goal of our whole earthly life—the blessed state to which we are striving to return and which we shall enjoy in its fullness (if we are among the saved) at the end of this fallen world.

Our knowledge of Paradise, therefore, is in a sense fuller than our knowledge of the world of the Six Days of Creation; but at the same time it is of a mystical nature that renders "precise" statements about it very difficult to make.

Let us see here what the Holy Fathers say about it.

St. Ambrose reminds us, in the first chapter of his treatise on "Paradise," that we must be very careful in discussing the "place" or Paradise and its nature:

On approaching this subject I seem to be possessed by an unusual eagerness in my quest to clarify the facts about Paradise, its place, and its nature to those who are desirous of this knowledge. This is all the more remarkable since the Apostle did not know whether he was in the body or out of the body, yet he says that he "was caught up to

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the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:2). And again he says: "I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—that he was caught up into Paradise and heard secret words

that man may not repeat" (2 Cor. 12:3—5) If Paradise, then, is of

such a nature that Paul alone, or one like Paul, could scarcely see it while alive, and still was unable to remember whether he saw it in the body or out of the body, and moreover, heard words that he was forbidden to reveal—if this be true, how will it be possible for us to declare the position of Paradise which we have not been able to see and, even if we had succeeded in seeing it, we would be forbidden to share this information with others? And, again, since Paul shrank from exalting himself by reason of the sublimity of the revelation, how much more ought we to strive not to be too anxious to disclose that which leads to danger by its very revelation! The subject of Paradise should not, therefore, be treated lightly.¹

Nevertheless, despite the difficulty of speaking about it, there are certain things we can know about Paradise, as interpreted by the Holy Fathers.

First of all, it is not merely a spiritual phenomenon which may be beheld now in vision as the Apostle Paul beheld it (of which more below); it is also a part of the history of the *earth*. The Scripture and Holy Fathers teach that in the beginning, before the fall of man, Paradise was right here on earth. St. Ambrose writes:

Take note that God placed man (in Paradise) not in respect to the image of God, but in respect to the body of man. The incorporeal does not exist in a place. He placed man in Paradise, just as He placed the sun in heaven.²

Likewise, St. John Chrysostom teaches:

Blessed Moses registered even the name of this place (Eden), so that those who love to speak empty words could not deceive simple listeners and say that Paradise was not on earth but in heaven, and rave

with similar mythologies... As you hear that "God
planted a garden

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eastward in Eden," the word "plant" understand of God in a God-befitting way, that is, that He commanded; but regarding the following words, believe that Paradise precisely was created and in the very place where the Scripture has assigned it.... And the word "plant" let us understand as if it had been said: He commanded man to live there, so that his view of Paradise and his stay there might furnish him a great satisfaction and might arouse him to a feeling of gratitude.³

2:9 And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The connection of Paradise with the earth is understood by St. Ephraim in such a literal way that he specifies, in his *Commentary on Genesis*, that as a place of trees it was created on the Third Day with the rest of the vegetable creation.⁴

But what connection can there be between this earthly Paradise with its growing trees, and the obviously spiritual Paradise that St. Paul beheld? We may see an answer to this question in the description of Paradise by a Holy Father of the highest spiritual life, St. Gregory the Sinaite, who visited Paradise in the same state of Divine vision as St. Paul:

Eden is a place in which there was planted by God every kind of fragrant plant. It is neither completely incorruptible, nor entirely corruptible. Placed between corruption and incorruption, it is always both abundant in fruits and blossoming with flowers, both mature and immature. The mature trees and fruits are converted into fragrant earth which does not give off any odor of corruption, as do the trees of this world. This is from the abundance of the grace of sanctification which is constantly poured forth there.⁵

A number of cases are known in the Lives of saints and righteous people of literal fruits being brought back by those who have been lifted up to Paradise—for example, the apples which St. Euphrosynus the Cook brought back and which were eaten by the pious as some

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holy thing with a nature quite different from that of ordinary earthly fruits (Lives of Saints, September 11).

A striking experience of Paradise is found in the Life of St. Andrew the Fool for Christ of Constantinople (ninth century). This experience was written down in the Saint's own words by his friend Nicephorus:

Once during a terrible winter when St. Andrew lay in a city street frozen and near death, he suddenly felt a warmth within him and he held a splendid youth with a face shining like the sun, who conducted him to Paradise and the third heaven. "By God's will I remained for two weeks in a sweet vision.... I saw myself in a splendid and marvelous Paradise.... In mind and heart I was astonished at the unutterable beauty of the Paradise of God, and I took sweet delight walking in it. There were a multitude of gardens there, filled with tall trees which, swaying in their tips, rejoiced my eyes, and from their branches there came forth a great fragrance... One can not compare these trees in their beauty to any earthly tree... In

these gardens there were innumerable birds with wings golden, snow-white, and of various colors. They sat on the branches of the trees of Paradise and sang so wondrously that from the sweetness of their singing I was beside myself....⁶

Therefore, Paradise, while originally a reality of this earth, akin to the nature of the world before the fall of man, is of a "material" which is different from the material of the world we know today, placed between corruption and incorruption. This exactly corresponds to the nature of man before his fall—for the "coats of skins" which he put on when banished from Paradise (as we shall see) symbolically indicate the cruder flesh which he then put on. From that time on", in his cruder state, man is no longer capable of even seeing Paradise unless

his spiritual eyes are opened and he is "raised up" like St. Paul. The present "location" of Paradise, which has remained unchanged in its nature, is in this higher realm, which also seems to correspond to a literal "elevation" from the earth; indeed, some Holy Fathers state that even before the fall Paradise was in an elevated place, being "higher than all the rest

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of the earth" (St. John Damascene, *Orthodox Faith* 2:11, p. 230; see also St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis!*, p. 310).

Concerning the two trees—one of life and one of the knowledge of good and evil—we shall speak later.

2:10-14 *A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bellium and onyxstone are there. The name of the second river is Gilion; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Cush (Septuagint: "Ethiopia"). And the name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.*

This passage emphasizes that Paradise before the fall was located in a definite place on earth. The Fathers forbid merely allegorical interpretations of these four rivers. Thus, St. John Chrysostom says:

Perhaps those who love to speak from their own wisdom here also will not allow that the rivers are actually rivers or the waters precisely waters, but will instill in those who decide to listen to them that they (under the name of rivers and waters) represented something else. But I beg you, let us not pay attention to these people, let us close our hearing against them, and let us believe the Divine Scripture.⁷

These four rivers are generally understood by the Fathers to be the Tigris, Euphrates, Nile and Danube (or, according to others, the Ganges); the area of the earthly Paradise, therefore, is in the cradle of ancient civilization. St. John Chrysostom says of this passage (in another treatise):

From this know that Paradise was not a small garden which had an insignificant area. It is watered by such a river that from its fullness come out four rivers.⁸

It would be fruitless to speculate how the one river of Paradise divided into four rivers which, as we know them today, have four distinct sources. The world of today is so different from the world before the

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fall, and even before the Flood in Noah's time, that such geographical questions are not to be traced out.

What is more difficult for our modern mentality, formed by literalistic science, to puzzle out is how the Fathers can speak without distinguishing between Paradise as a geographical location (before the fall), and Paradise as a spiritual habitation of the righteous (at the present time). Thus, St. John Chrysostom, in the same treatise just quoted, speaks of the one river of Paradise being so abundant because it was prepared also for the later Patriarchs, Prophets, and other saints (beginning with the thief on the Cross—Luke 23:43) who are to inhabit it.⁹ Evidently our modern ideas have become too dualistic: we divide things too easily into "spirit vs. matter," whereas the reality of Paradise partakes of both.

2:15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till and keep it.

In this passage, as interpreted by the Fathers, we may see something of the *spiritual* occupation of Adam in Paradise. Before the fall there was no need for a physical tilling or cultivation of Paradise; this refers to Adam's spiritual state. St. John Chrysostom writes (in a teaching identical to that of St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis 2*, p. 311):

"To till." What was lacking in Paradise? And even if a tiller was needed, where was the plow? Where were the other implements of agriculture? The "tilling" (or "working") of God consisted in tilling and keeping the commandments of God, remaining faithful to the

commandment Just as to believe in God is the work of God

(John 6:29), so also it was a work to believe the commandment that if he touched (the forbidden tree) he would die, and if he did not touch it, he would live. The work was the keeping of the spiritual words.... "To till and to keep it," it is said. To keep it from whom? There were no thieves, no passersby, no one of evil intent. To keep from whom? To keep it for oneself; not to lose it by transgressing the

commandment; to keep Paradise for oneself,
observing the commandment.¹⁰

St. Gregory the Theologian opens up a deeper understanding of this "work" of Paradise:

This being He placed in Paradise ... to till the immortal plants, by which is perhaps meant the Divine conceptions, both the simpler and the more perfect.¹¹

And, in general, the ascetic Fathers refer the "tilling" and "keeping" to the spiritual work of prayer. Thus, St. Nilus of Sora, commenting on this interpretation by the ancient Father, St. Nilus of Sinai, writes:

Now this Saint brings forth from antiquity that one should till and keep; for the Scripture says that God created Adam and placed him in Paradise to till and keep Paradise. For here this St. Nilus of Sinai calls prayer the tilling of Paradise, and the guarding against evil thoughts after prayer he calls keeping.

And Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky, commenting in his turn on these two Holy Fathers, writes:

From these testimonies it is clear that God, having created man according to His image and likeness, conducted him into a Paradise of sweetness to till the immortal gardens, that is, the most pure, exalted, and perfect Divine thoughts, according to St. Gregory the Theologian. And this means nothing else than that he remained, as being pure in soul and heart, in contemplative, grace-filled prayer, sacredly working in the mind alone, that is, in the sweetest vision of God, and that he manfully preserved this, it being the work of Paradise, as the apple of his eye, lest it ever decrease in his soul and heart. Wherefore, great is the glory of sacred and Divine mental prayer, whose verge and summit, that is, beginning and perfection, were given to man by God in Paradise, and so it is from there that it has its beginning.¹²

2:16—17 *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Thou*

mayest freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat, for in the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt surely die.

If one is tempted to find allegory in the account of creation and Paradise, nowhere is the temptation stronger than with regard to the two trees: one of "life" and one of "the knowledge of good and evil." Yet the whole "realism" of the Patristic interpretation of Genesis, as well as the fact that Paradise was (and is) indeed a "garden" with material (or semi-material) trees, point to the fact that these trees were actually trees; and, as we have already seen, this very fact is emphasized by St. Gregory Palamas, speaking for St. Gregory the Theologian and other Fathers.

The account of the temptation in Paradise, therefore, is not an allegory—a spiritual lesson clothed in the tale of a garden—but an historical account of what actually happened to our first ancestors. What happened, of course, was primarily a spiritual event, just as Adam's dwelling in Paradise was primarily a spiritual dwelling (as we shall see more clearly below); but the way in which this spiritual event occurred was indeed through the tasting of the fruit of a "forbidden tree."

St. John Damascene well describes the double aspect, material and immaterial, of Adam's dwelling in Paradise:

Some have imagined Paradise to have been material, while others have imagined it to have been spiritual. However, it seems to me that, just as man was created both sensitive and intellectual, so did this most sacred domain of his have the twofold aspect of being perceptible both to the senses and to the mind. For, while in his body he dwelt in this most sacred and superbly beautiful place, as we have related, spiritually he resided in a loftier and far more beautiful place. There he had the indwelling God as a dwelling place and wore Him as a glorious garment. He was wrapped about with His grace, and, like some one of the angels, he rejoiced in the enjoyment of that one most sweet fruit which is the contemplation of God, and by this he was nourished. Now, this is indeed what is fittingly called the tree of life, for the sweetness of Divine contemplation communicates a

life uninterrupted by death to them that partake of it.¹³

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Again, St. Damascene says that Adam in

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while in his body he lived on earth in the world of sense, in his spirit he dwelt among the angels, cultivating thoughts of God and being nurtured on these. He was naked because of his innocence and his simplicity of life, and through creatures he was drawn up to their only Creator, in Whose contemplation he rejoiced and took de-light.¹⁴

The purpose of man's dwelling in Paradise and eating of "every tree" was obviously not merely to be satisfied with the delights of this marvelous place, but to look and strive towards something higher; the very presence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and of the commandment not to eat of it, indicates a challenge and a test which man must pass through before ascending higher. St. Damascene thus sets forth the ascension to perfection which was set forth before Adam in Paradise:

God says: "Of every tree of Paradise thou shalt eat," meaning, I think: By means of all created things be thou drawn up to Me, their Creator, and from them reap the one fruit which is Myself, Who am the true Life; let all things be fruitful life to thee and make participation in Me to be the substance of thy own existence; for thus thou

shalt be immortal He made him a living being to be governed

here according to this present life, and then to be removed elsewhere, that is, to the world to come, and so to complete the mystery by becoming Divine through reversion to God—this, however, not by being transformed into the Divine substance, but by participation in the Divine illumination.¹⁵

Thus Paradise—and indeed the whole earthly life of man—was made by God, in the phrase of St. Basil, "primarily as a place of training and a school for the souls of men."¹⁶ Man was given in the beginning a path of ascent from glory to glory, from Paradise to the status of a spiritual dweller of heaven, through the training

and testing which God might send him, beginning with
the commandment not to taste

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of the one tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man was placed in Paradise as in a state between that of heaven, where only the purely spiritual may dwell, and the corruptible earth—which came about, as we shall see, because of his fall.

What, then, was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and why was it forbidden to Adam? In the classical interpretation of St. Gregory the Theologian, God gave Adam in Paradise

a Law, as a material for his free will to act upon. This law was a commandment as to what plants he might partake of, and which one he might not touch. This latter was the tree of knowledge; not, however, because it was evil from the beginning when planted; nor was it forbidden because God grudged it to us—let not the enemies of God wag their tongues in that direction, or imitate the serpent. But it would have been good if partaken of at the proper time; for the tree was, according to my theory, Contemplation, which it is only safe for those who have reached maturity of habit to enter upon, but which is not good for those who are still somewhat simple and greedy; just as neither is solid food good for those who are yet tender and have need of milk.* ¹⁷

And St. John Damascene writes:

The tree of knowledge of good and evil is the power of discernment by multiple vision, and this is the complete knowing of one's own nature. Of itself it manifests the magnificence of the Creator and it is good for them that are full-grown and have walked in the contemplation of God—for them that have no fear of changing, because in the course of time they have acquired a certain habit of such contemplation. It is not good, however, for such as are still young and are more greedy in their appetites, who, because of the uncertainty of their perseverance in the true good and because of their not yet being solidly established in their application to the only good, are

* St. Gregory Palamas expounds on this teaching of St. Gregory the Theologian. See *The Philokalia*, vol. 4, pp. 369-70.—Ed.

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naturally inclined to be drawn away and distracted by their solicitude for their own bodies.¹⁸

To sum up the Orthodox teaching on the two trees of Paradise, St. John Chrysostom writes:

The tree of life was in the midst of Paradise as a reward; the tree of knowledge as an object of contest and struggle. Having kept the commandment regarding this tree, you will receive a reward. And behold the wondrous thing. Everywhere in Paradise every kind of tree blossoms, everywhere they are abundant in fruit; only in the center are there two trees as an object of battle and exercise.¹⁹

This is a profound subject, which is very much bound up with our human nature.* In fact, we see in human life today something of this very temptation that Adam had. Although Adam was not fallen then—and in this regard his state was different from our present state—nonetheless, his situation was similar to that of a young person of sixteen, seventeen or eighteen years old who is brought up in goodness and then comes to the age when he must himself make the choice of whether to be good or not. It so happens that, because we have freedom, there must be a choice. One must *consciously* will to do good. You cannot simply be good because someone tells you to be good. Sooner or later in your freedom you must actively choose the good or else it does not become part of you. That is true of everyone except, of course, a child who dies quite young.

Therefore when one comes to the age at which one must become a man, it is then that one must make the same choice Adam made—either to freely choose to do good or else to make the mistake of entering into evil, into a life of sin.

The Holy Fathers say that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is something which is only for *mature* people. Because we have

* ~~The~~ The following discussion has been taken from Fr. Seraphim's oral delivery—Many of the people listening to him were in their teens or early twenties, and he was applying the subject matter directly to their own situation.—ED.

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freedom, it cannot be that we will not have knowledge of evil. The only choice is whether we have knowledge of evil through the mistakes of others, or through ourselves overcoming evil.

Everyone, in order to become a mature Christian and to be established in the way of doing good, *has* to know about evil. He has to know what it is that he has chosen not to do. And this knowledge *can* be without falling into great sins—if you are willing to take the examples of others. If you are able to see, almost as if it is your own experience, when someone else makes a tremendous sin, and if you are able to see the result of that sin, then you can make that part of your experience without falling into sin.

Evidently that is what Adam could have done. If he had resisted this temptation, he would have seen that there was a temptation, that is, that everything was not perfect, and that there was someone out to *get him*. Then, if a second temptation had come, he would have seen that the serpent (or whatever else was used by the devil) was out to make him fall. He would have begun to realize there was such a thing as evil: an evil will that makes him want to lose his Paradise. Through this he could have attained that knowledge of evil and eventually tasted of that tree.

The tree itself represents the knowledge of evil, since tasting of it meant disobeying the commandment. Adam learned about evil through his disobedience. He chose the way of sin and thereby discovered in bitter experience what it meant to be evil, and then to repent of that evil and come back to goodness.

So that is the path that Adam chose; and because of that our whole nature has been changed. Each person is free—the same as Adam—but we have been born in sins already. Even small children are filled with all kinds of evil things. Nonetheless, real evil does not come in until one consciously chooses to be evil. And that is the choice of adulthood.

Thus, in a sense everyone tastes of this tree, or else refrains from tasting of it and goes on the path of goodness. Unfortunately, the odds are very much against one's surviving without falling into these evils, although there's no reason to fall into them. We see now

the evil all around us, and we have instructors and Holy Fathers to keep us on the path of good. A person can be raised in Christianity—like St. Sergius

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of Radonezh or other saints who were in monasteries from their childhood—and he can be surrounded by good examples. He can see the results of evils in others and can choose not to do that himself. Theoretically, it is quite possible. In bitter practice, however, usually it happens that we taste the tree by sinning ourselves.

2:18-20 And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him (KJV).

In this passage, again, we should not look for the "contradiction" some rationalist scholars think they have found, as though the text describes the creation of the animals *after* the creation of man, contradicting the order of creation in the first chapter. The subject of this passage is the naming of the animals by Adam, and only incidentally does the text mention that these animals had already been created by God, and that they were not the "help meet" for Adam, which could only be someone of the same nature as he (woman, as mentioned in the next passage).

The animals are "brought" to Adam because their place is not in Paradise but in the earth outside; Paradise is meant for the dwelling of man alone—a pre-indication that man alone of all earthly creatures is meant for the heavenly kingdom to which he can ascend from Paradise through keeping the commandments of God. St. John Damascene writes that Paradise

was a divine place and a worthy habitation for God in His image. And in it no brute beasts dwelt, but only man, the handiwork of God.

And St. John Chrysostom teaches:

Adam was given the whole earth, but his chosen dwelling was Paradise. He could also go outside of Paradise, but the earth outside of

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Paradise was assigned for the habitation not of man, but of the irrational animals, the quadrupeds, the wild beasts, the crawling things. The royal and ruling dwelling for man was Paradise. This is why God brought the animals to Adam—because they were separated from him. Slaves do not always stand before their lord, but only when there is need for them. The animals were named and immediately sent away from Paradise; Adam alone remained in Paradise.²¹

The Holy Fathers interpret the naming of the animals by Adam quite literally, and see in it an indication of man's dominion over them, his undisturbed harmony with them, and a wisdom and intellect in the first man which far surpasses anything since known to man. St. Ephraim writes of this:

The words "He brought them to Adam" shows the wisdom of Adam, and the peace which existed between the animals and man before man transgressed the commandment. For they came together before man as before a shepherd filled with love; without fear, according to kinds and types, they passed before him in flocks, neither

fearing him nor trembling before each other It is not impossible

for a man to discover a few names and keep them in his memory. But it surpasses the power of human nature, and is difficult for him, to discover in a single hour thousands of names and not to give the

last of those named the names of the first This is the work of

God, and if it was done by man, it was given him by God.²²

In other words, this was a sign of a truly Divine intelligence in Adam. St. John Chrysostom writes:

God does this in order to show us the great wisdom of Adam ... and also so that in the giving of names might be seen a sign of dominion— Just think what wisdom was needed to give names to so many kinds of birds, reptiles, wild and domestic animals, and

other irrational creatures ... to give them all names,
and names belonging to them and corresponding to
each kind.... Just think of how the lions and leopards,
vipers and scorpions and serpents and all the other



Adam naming the animals.
*Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan in the Catholicon of the
Monastery of St. Nicholas Anapausas, Meteora, Greece, 1527.*

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even more ferocious animals came to Adam as to a lord, with all submission, in order to receive names from him, and Adam did not fear

a single one of these wild beasts The names which Adam gave them remain until now: God confirmed them so that we might constantly remember the honor which man received from the Lord of all when he received the animals under his authority, and might ascribe the reason for the removal (of this honor) to man himself, who lost his authority through sin.²³

Because man possesses in himself something of the animal nature, as we have seen, and this animal nature became dominant in him because of his fall, Adam's naming of the animals also indicates the original dominance of man's mind over this lower, passionate nature. St. Ambrose writes:

The beasts of the field and the birds of the air which were brought to Adam are our irrational senses, because beasts and animals represent the diverse passions of the body, whether of the more violent kind or even of the more temperate. God granted to you the power of being able to discern by the application of sober logic the species of each and every object, in order that you may be induced to form a judgment on all of them. God called them all to your attention, so that you might realize that your mind is superior to all of them.²⁴

2:21—22 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into A woman and brought her to the man.

Perhaps no passage of Genesis is more a touchstone of our interpretation of the whole book than this brief passage of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib. If we understand it "as it is written," as the Holy Fathers did, we will have no difficulty understanding the rest of the book in the same way. But if we have difficulty understanding it in this simple way—and our modern minds almost instinctively rebel against this simple interpretation—we will undoubtedly find much else in Genesis that we have difficulty understanding as the Fathers did.



The creation of Eve from the rib of Adam.
Fresco from Dechani Monastery, Serbia, thirteenth century.

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This passage is also a stumbling block for those who wish to promote the evolutionist view of the origin of life and of mankind. In this view, man (at least in his body) is a descendent of lower animals; the "father" of the first man, therefore, must have been a non-human creature closely related to the higher apes. The whole point of

this evolutionary view is that man and every living being developed from more primitive organisms by natural laws now known (or hypothesized) by science; to accept the evolution of the first man from lower animals, and then provide a wife for him by the miracle of taking one of his ribs—is surely something no evolutionist could agree to. If Adam "evolved naturally" from the beasts, then Eve must have done the same; but if you accept the miraculous account of Eve's creation as described in Genesis, you open yourself by this very fact to understanding the entire Six Days of Creation in the Patristic, and not the naturalistic, way.

What do the Holy Fathers say of the creation of Eve?
St. Ambrose writes:

Woman was made out of the rib of Adam. She was not made of the same earth with which he was formed, in order that we might realize that the physical nature of both man and woman is identical and that there was one source for the propagation of the human race. For that reason, neither was man created together with a woman, nor were two men and two women created at the beginning, but first a man and after that a woman. God willed it that human nature be established as one. Thus, from the very inception of the human stock He eliminated the possibility that many disparate natures should

arise_Reflect on the fact that He did not take a part from Adam's

soul but a rib from his body, that is to say, not soul from a soul, but "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" will this woman be called.²⁵

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, trying to make beginning Christians understand the virgin birth of Christ, writes:

Of whom in the beginning was Eve begotten? What mother conceived her the motherless? But the Scripture saith that she was born



The creation of Eve from the rib of Adam.
*Fresco from the Church of the Resurrection, Suchevitsa Monastery,
 Romania, sixteenth century.*

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out of Adam's side. Is Eve then born out of man's side without a mother, and is a child not to be born without a father, of a virgin's womb? This debt of gratitude was due to men from womankind: for Eve was begotten of Adam, and not conceived of a mother, but as it were brought forth of man alone.²⁶

(We shall see later how the Church sees the parallel between Eve and the Virgin Mary, and between the miracles of the first creation and the miracles of the re-creation through Christ.)

St. John Chrysostom, while warning us that the word "took" must be understood in a way befitting God, Who has no "hands," clearly indicates his literal interpretation of this passage:

Great are these words; they surpass every mind of man: their greatness can be understood in no other way than by beholding them

with the eyes of faith "God caused a deep sleep to fall upon

Adam, and he slept." This was not a simple ecstasy and not a usual sleep; but since the most wise and skilled Creator of our nature wished to take from Adam one of his ribs, therefore, so that he might not feel the pain and then be hostilely disposed to the one created from his rib, lest, remembering the pain, he hate the created being, God plunged Adam into a deep sleep and, as it were commanding him to be embraced by a kind of numbness, brought upon him such a sleep that he did not feel in the least what happened. ... Taking a certain small part from an already prepared creation, from this part He made a whole living being. What power does the Highest Artist, God, have to produce from this small part the composition of so many members, to arrange so many organs of sense and form a whole, perfect and complete being which could converse and, because of its oneness of nature, furnish the man great consolation!²⁷

In another treatise the same Father writes:

How did Adam not feel pain? How did he not suffer? One hair is torn out of the body, and we experience pain, and even if one is im-

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mersed in a deep sleep he wakes up from the pain. Moreover, such a large member is taken out, a rib is torn out, and the sleeping one does not wake up? God removed the rib not violently, lest Adam wake up; He did not tear it out. The Scripture, desiring to show the speed of the Creator's act, says: "He took."²⁸

And St. Ephraim writes:

The man who up to now had been awake and was enjoying the shining of the light and had not known what rest was, is now stretched out naked on the earth and given over to sleep. Probably, Adam saw in sleep the very thing that was happening to him. When in the twinkling of an eye the rib was taken out, and likewise in an instant flesh took its place, and the bared bone took on the full appearance and all the beauty of a woman—then God brought and presented her to Adam.²⁹

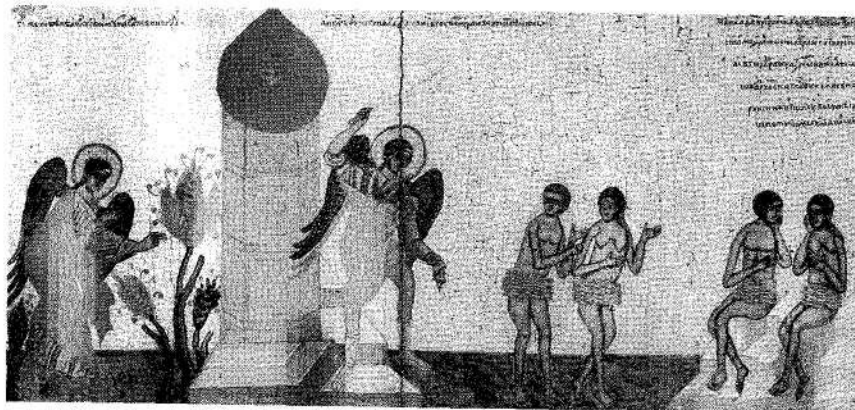
All this took place on the very day of man's creation, the Sixth Day. To our limited minds the creation of man and woman is just as inconceivable, as miraculous, as "spectacular" as all the other creations of God when they were made in the beginning.

*2:23-24 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh**

Here Adam names the first woman even as he had just named the animals, indicating at the same time her oneness in nature with him, owing to her literal origin from his body, and the institution of marriage, since in prophecy he foresaw that the marriage union would be necessary because of the fall.

Commenting on this passage, St. Ephraim writes:

—*Christ Himself quotes from this verse of the book of Genesis (see Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7-8), following it with the words: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."—ED.



The creation of Adam and Eve, their temptation, their expulsion from Paradise, and their sorrow.

Details of a Russian icon of the seventeenth century.

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"This now": that is, the one who has come to me after the animals is not such as they; they came from the earth, but she is "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." Adam said this either in a prophetic way or, as noted above, according to his vision in sleep. And just as on this day all the animals received from Adam their names according to their kinds, so

also the bone, made into a woman, he called not by her proper name, Eve, but by the name of woman, the name belonging to the whole kind.³⁰

St. John Chrysostom says of the same passage:

How did it come to his mind to say this? How did he know the future, and the fact that the human race would multiply? How did it become known to him that there would be intercourse between man and wife? After all, this occurred after the fall; but before that they lived in Paradise like angels, were not aroused by the flesh, were not inflamed by other passions either, were not weighed down by bodily needs, but being created entirely incorrupt and immortal, did not

even need the covering of clothing... And so, tell me, from whence

did the idea come for him to say this? Is it not clear that, since before the transgression he was a participant of the grace of prophecy, he saw all this with his spiritual eyes?³¹

Thus we see that Adam was not only a great intellect—a great seer of the reality of this world who was given the ability to name the animals. He was also a prophet who saw the future.

2:25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Adam and Eve were created, like the whole of the first creation, in the bloom of youth and beauty, and already possessing the sexual distinction that would be needed in their fallen states, yet there was no desire, no passionate thought between them. This, in the view of the Fathers, is the clearest indication of their dispassionateness before the

Fall, and of the fact that their minds were directed first of all to the glory of the heavenly world above. St. Ephraim writes:

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They were not ashamed because they were clothed
with glory.³²

St. John Chrysostom teaches the same thing:

Before sin and disobedience occurred, they were clothed in the glory on high, and were not ashamed; but after the violation of the commandment there came both shame and the awareness of their nakedness.³³

And St. John Damascene writes:

God wanted us to be dispassionate like that, for that is passionlessness to the highest degree.³⁴

Let us now sum up the state of Adam in Paradise in the words of a recent Father, St. Seraphim of Sarov:

Adam was immune to the action of the elements to such a degree that water could not drown him, fire could not burn him, the earth could not swallow him in its abysses, and the air could not harm him by any kind of action whatever. Everything was subject to him as the beloved of God, as the king and lord of creation, and everything looked up to him, as the perfect crown of God's creatures. Adam was made so wise by this breath of life which was breathed into his face from the creative lips of God, the Creator and Ruler of all, that there never has been a man on earth wiser or more intelligent than he, and it is hardly likely that there ever will be. "When the Lord commanded him to give names to all the creatures, he gave every creature a name which completely expressed all the qualities, powers and properties given it by God at its creation. Owing to this very gift of the supernatural grace of God which was infused into him by the breath of life, Adam could see and understand the Lord walking in Paradise, and comprehend His words, and the conversation of the holy Angels, and the language of all beasts, birds, and reptiles and all that is now hidden from us fallen and sinful creatures, but was so clear to Adam before his fall. To Eve also the Lord God gave the same wis-

dom, strength and unlimited power, and all the other good and holy qualities.³⁵

To some extent man even today can return to something of this paradisal state through the grace of God, as may be seen in the lives of many saints, which abound in miracles unbelievable to worldly men. The Life of St. George, for example (April 23), who was preserved unharmed in the midst of the crudest tortures and even deaths, reminds us of Adam's invulnerability in Paradise.

Still, however, in his fallen state man can attain to no more than a glimpse of the state of Adam; only in the age to come will this Paradise be restored to us in its fullness, and then (if only we be among the saved) we will see what an angelic state it is (and was). St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

The resurrection promises us nothing else than the restoration of the fallen to their ancient state; for the grace we look for is a certain return to the first life, bringing back again to Paradise him who was cast out from it. If then, the life of those restored is closely related to < that of the angels, it is clear that the life before the transgression was a kind of angelic life, and hence also our return to the ancient condition of life is compared to the angels.³⁶

In Orthodox ascetic literature, where the aim constantly kept in view is our restoration to Paradise, the unspoiled and dispassionate nature of Adam before the fall is held up as the model and goal of our ascetic struggle. St. Abba Dorotheus writes, in the very first words of his *Spiritual Instructions*:

In the beginning, when God created man, He placed "him in Paradise and adorned him with every virtue, giving him the commandment not to taste of the tree which was in the midst of Paradise. And thus he remained there in the enjoyment of Paradise: in prayer, in vision, in every glory and honor, having sound senses and being in the same natural condition in which he was created. For God created man according to His own image, that is, immortal, master of him-

self, and adorned with every virtue. But when he transgressed the commandment, eating the fruit of the tree of which God had commanded him not to taste, then he was banished from Paradise, fell away from the natural condition, and fell into a condition against nature, and then he remained in sin, in love of glory, in love for the enjoyments of this age, and of other passions, and he was mastered by them, for he became their slave through the transgression.³⁷

The awareness that Adam's state in Paradise was the *natural* human condition, and the one to which we may hope to return by God's grace, is one of the greatest spurs to ascetic struggle. This awareness is thus of the most practical benefit to Orthodox Christians who hope to inherit God's Kingdom. With the fall of man, Paradise ceased to be a reality of this earth and was placed out of our reach; but through the grace of God made available to Christians through the Second Adam, Christ, we may still hope to attain it. Actually, through Christ we are able not only to gain back the state of Adam before the fall, but to attain a state even higher than that: the state which Adam would have attained had he not fallen.

Even in our fallen state, can we not be reminded of Paradise and our fall from it in the nature that surrounds us? In the animals it is not difficult to see the passions over which we should be masters, but which have largely taken possession of us; and in the peaceful murmur of the forests (where so many ascetic strugglers have taken refuge) can we not see a reminder of the Paradise of vegetation originally intended for our dwelling and food, and still existing for those able to ascend, with St. Paul, to behold it?

CHAPTER SIX *The Fall of Man*

(Genesis 3:1-24)

PREPARED by the Patristic teaching on the Six Days of Creation, the creation of the first man and his dwelling in Paradise, we are now ready to understand the account of his fall in the third chapter of Genesis. It is clear that, like all else in this God-inspired book, this is an historical account, but one which must be understood, first and foremost, in a spiritual sense.

3:1 Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made.

With the "serpent," once again, we find an image that our modern rationalistic mind would like to understand allegorically. But here again, the Fathers are relentlessly realistic in their interpretation. St. John Chrysostom teaches:

Do not regard the present serpent; do not regard how we flee it and feel repulsion towards it. It was not such in the beginning. The serpent was the friend of man and the closest of those who served him. And who made it an enemy? The sentence of God: "Cursed are you

above all the cattle, and above all wild animals I
will put enmity

between you and the woman" (Gen. 3:14-15). It was this enmity that destroyed the friendship. I mean not a rational friendship, but one of which an irrational creature is capable. Similar to the way that now the dog manifests friendship, not by word but by natural movements, just so did the serpent serve man. As a creature who enjoyed great closeness to man, the serpent seemed to the devil to be a con-

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venient tool (for deception).... Thus, the devil spoke through the serpent, deceiving Adam. I beg your love to hear my words not carelessly. The question is not an easy one. Many ask: How did the serpent speak—with a human voice, or with a serpent's hissing, and how did Eve understand? Before the transgression Adam was filled with wisdom, understanding, and the gift of prophecy.... The devil noticed both the wisdom of the serpent and Adam's opinion of it—because the latter considered the serpent wise. And so he spoke through it, so that Adam might think that the serpent, being wise, was able to mimic the human voice also.¹

To understand why the devil should want to tempt Adam, one must understand that the "warfare" in heaven (Apoc. 12:7) has already occurred, and that the devil and his angels have already been cast out of heaven into the lower realm of earth because of their pride. The motive of the devil is *envy of man*, who is called to the estate the devil has lost. St. Ambrose writes:

"By the envy of the devil death came into the world" (Wisdom 2:24). The cause of envy was the happiness of man placed in Paradise, because the devil could not brook the favors received by man. His envy was aroused because man, though formed in slime, was chosen to be an inhabitant of Paradise. The devil began to reflect that man was an inferior creature, yet had hopes of an eternal life, whereas he, a creature of superior nature, had fallen and had become part of this mundane existence.²

3:1-6 And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took



Adam and Eve with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
*Fresco from the Church of the Resurrection, Suchevitsa Monastery,
 Romania, sixteenth century.*

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of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (KJV).

The childlikeness of this dialogue, and the ease with which our first parents fell into a transgression of the only commandment that had been given them, indicate the

untested nature of their virtue: everything had been given them by God's grace, but they were not yet skilled in "tilling and keeping" their inward state.

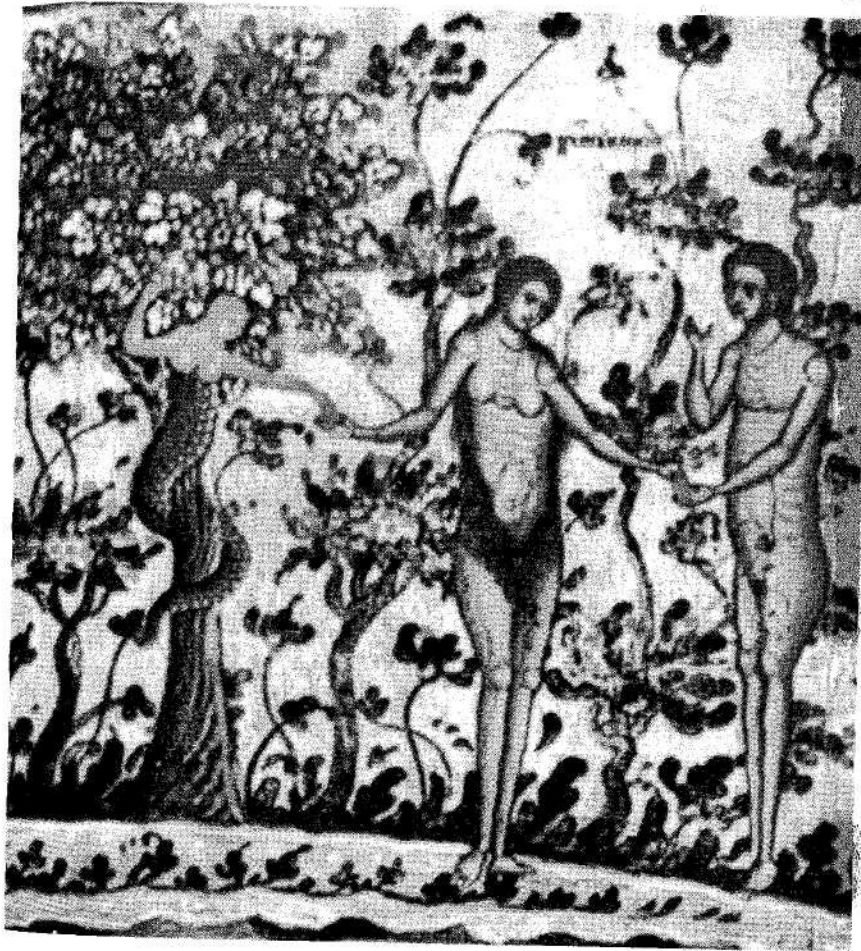
The temptation offered by the devil contains the same elements we fallen men know in our own fight against sin. He offers, first of all, not an obvious evil but something which seems good and true. Men were indeed created to be "gods and sons of the most high" (Ps. 81:6, 11th Kathisma), and were aware that from Paradise they were to ascend to a higher condition. The devil, therefore, as it were thought to himself (as St. Ambrose expresses it):

This, therefore, is my first approach, namely, to deceive him while he is desirous of improving his condition. In this way an attempt will be made to arouse his ambition.³

In causing our first ancestors to look at the good thing of becoming like gods, the devil hoped to cause them to forget the "small" commandment which was the way God ordained them *to* achieve this goal.

Again, the devil attacked not through the man, but through the woman—not because the woman was weaker or more passionate, because both Adam and Eve still preserved the dispassionateness of their original nature—but for the simple reason that Adam alone had heard the command of God, whereas Eve knew it only indirectly, and thereby might be considered more likely to disobey it. St. Ambrose writes of this:

(The devil) aimed to circumvent Adam by means of the woman. He did not accost the man who had in his presence received the heavenly command. He accosted her who had learned of it from her husband and who had not received from God the command which was to be observed. There is no statement that God spoke to the woman.



The temptation of Adam and Eve.
Detail of a Russian icon of the eighteenth century.

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We know that He spoke to Adam. Hence we must conclude that the command was communicated through Adam to the woman.⁴

The success of the devil's temptation, finally, was due to his knowledge (or guess) as to what is in the heart of man himself. It was not the devil who caused Adam's fall, but Adam's own desire. St. Ephraim writes:

The tempting word would not have led into sin those who were tempted if the tempter had not been guided by their own desire. Even if the tempter had not come, the tree itself by its beauty would have led their desire into battle.

Although the first ancestors sought an excuse for themselves in the counsel of the serpent, they were harmed more by their own desire than by the counsel of the serpent.⁵

As a result of the temptation, as St. John Chrysostom describes it,

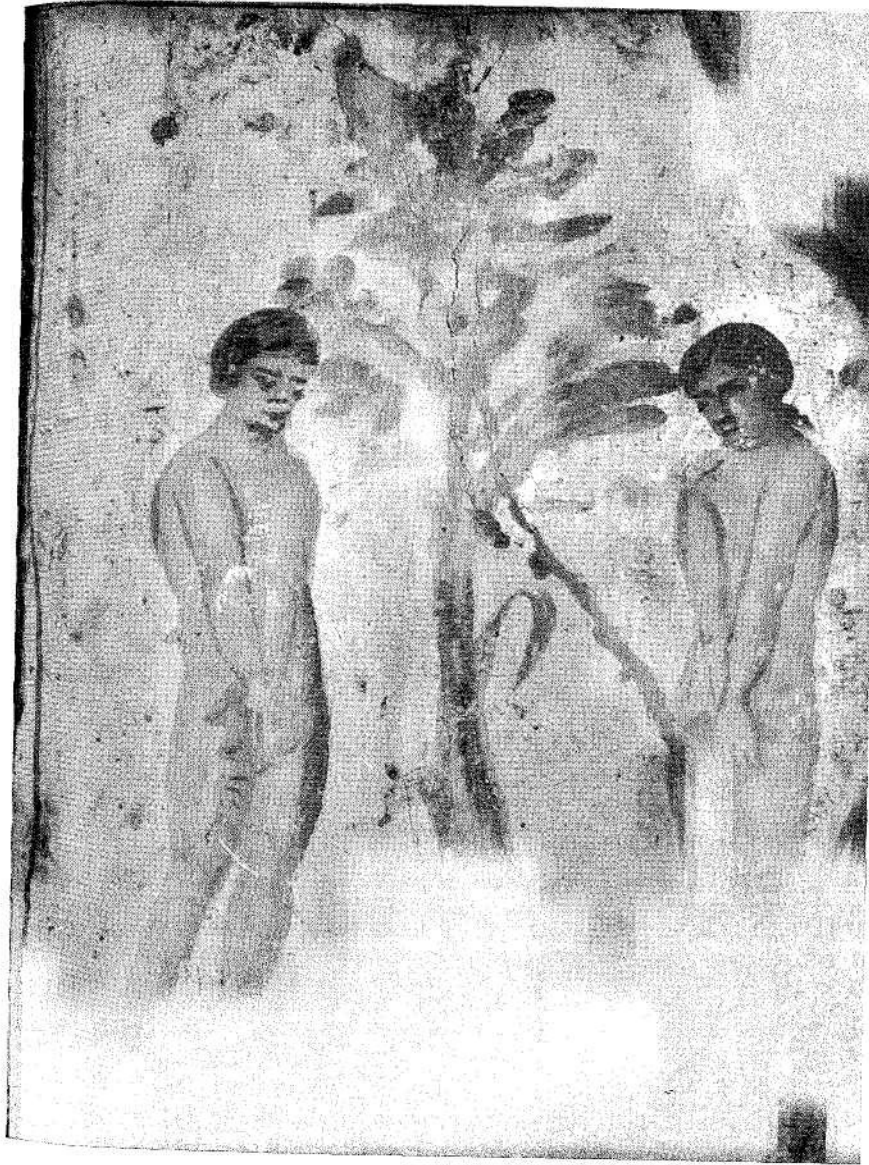
the devil led the woman into captivity, drew away her mind and caused her to think of herself above her worth, so that, being drawn away by empty hopes, she might lose even what had been given her.*⁶

3:7 And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons (KJV).

On this passage St. John Chrysostom says:

It was not the eating of the tree that opened their eyes: they had seen even before eating. But since this eating served as an expression of

—* St. Ephraim adds that part of Eve's sin Lay in her trying to usurp Adam's headship and "seniority": "She hastened to eat before her husband that she might become head over her head, that she might become the one to give command to that one by whom she was to be commanded and that she might be older in divinity than the one who was older than she in humanity" (St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis*, English version, p. 113).—Ed.



"And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked."
Fresco from the ancient Christian catacombs in Rome, third century A.D.

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disobedience and violation of the commandment given by
God, and
for this reason they were then deprived of the glory that
clothed
them, having become unworthy of such great honor, the
Scripture
says: They ate, and their eyes were opened, and they knew
that they

were naked. Being deprived of the grace from on high for the transgression of the commandment, they saw also their physical nakedness, so that from the shame that took hold of them they might understand into what an abyss they had been cast by the transgression of the Master's commandment When you hear, "their eyes

were opened," understand this to mean that (God) gave them to feel their nakedness and the loss of the glory which they had enjoyed before the eating Do you see that the word "opened" refers not to

the bodily eyes, but to mental vision?⁷

With the opening of their eyes through the transgression, Adam and Eve have already lost the life of Paradise, even though they have not yet been banished from it; from now on their eyes will be open to the lower things of this earth, and they will see only with difficulty the higher things of God. They are no longer dispassionate, but have begun the passionate earthly life we still know today.

3:8 And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

St. John Chrysostom writes of this:

What do you say? God walks? Are you going to ascribe feet to Him, and not understand anything higher? No, God does not walk—may this not be! In very fact, how can He Who is everywhere and fills all things, Whose throne is heaven and the earth His footstool—walk in Paradise? What sensible man would say this? Then what does it mean: "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day (midday)"? He wished to arouse in them such a feeling of God's closeness that it would make them uneasy, which indeed happened: They felt this, and tried to hide themselves from God, Who was approaching them.⁸

THE FALL

OF MAN And St. Ambrose

writes:

In my opinion God may be said to walk wherever throughout Scripture the presence of God is implied.⁹

In the dialogue that follows, we see that God comes to Adam not to condemn him or banish him from Paradise, but to bring him to his senses. St. John Chrysostom writes:

He did not delay in the least, but as soon as He saw what had happened and the seriousness of the wound, He immediately hastened with a treatment, so that the wound would not become inflamed

and become incurable Pay heed to the Lord's
love of mankind

and His extreme lack of ill will. He could, without even vouchsafing a reply to the one who had performed such a sin, have immediately subjected him to the punishment which He had already decreed beforehand for the transgression; but He is long-suffering, delays, asks and listens to the answer, and again asks, as if evoking the guilty one to justify himself in order that when the matter had been revealed He might show him His love of mankind even after such a transgres-

sion.¹⁰

3:9 And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

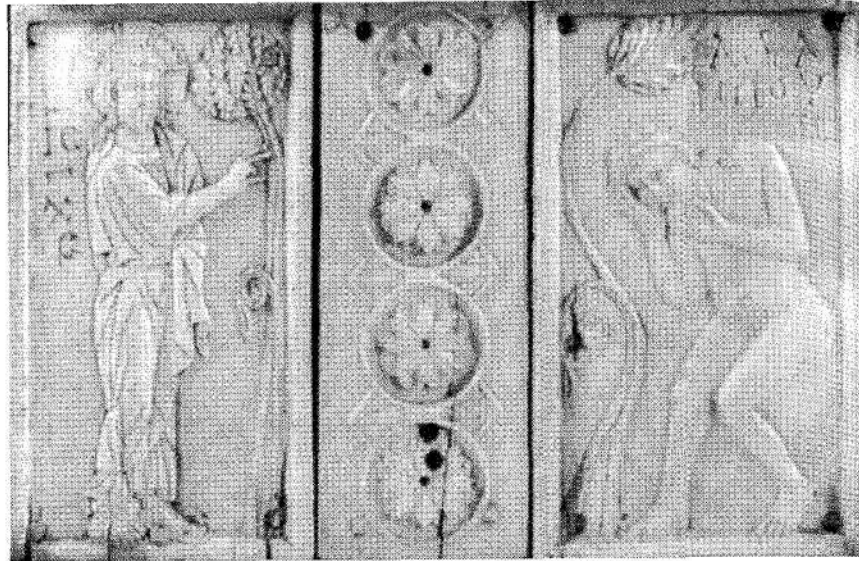
Of this St. Ambrose says:

What, then, does He mean by "Adam, where art thou?" Does He not mean "in what circumstances" are you; not, "in what place"? It is, therefore, not a question, but a reproof. From what condition of goodness, beatitude, and grace, He means to say, have you fallen into this state of misery? You

have forsaken eternal life. You have entombed yourself in the ways of sin and death.¹¹

3:10-13 *And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And He said, Who told thee*

GENESIS, CREATION AND EARLY MAN



"Adam, where art thou?"
*Ivory carvings from a Byzantine casket, Constantinople,
tenth century.*

THE FALL OF MAN

Instead of acknowledging what he had done himself, which acknowledgment would have been profitable for him, Adam retells

what happened to him, something that was profitless for him _____

Adam does not confess his guilt, but accuses the woman.... And when Adam does not wish to confess his guilt, God addresses a question to Eve and says: "What is this that thou hast done?" And Eve, instead of entreating with tears and taking the guilt upon herself, as if she does not desire to obtain forgiveness for herself and her husband, does not mention the promise given her by the serpent and

how he persuaded her When both had been questioned and it

was revealed that they have neither repentance nor any true justification, God turns to the serpent, not with a question but with definite punishment. For where there was room for repentance, there was questioning; but one

who is a stranger to repentance is simply given the judge's sentence.¹³

The same Father adds:

If our first ancestors had desired to repent even after the transgression of the commandment, then, even though they would not have restored to themselves what they had before the transgression of the commandment, at least they would have been delivered from the curses that were uttered to the earth and to themselves.¹⁴

So we cannot simply say that Adam and Eve sinned and then were condemned. They were given a chance to repent before they were condemned.

St. Abba Dorotheus takes this account from Genesis as the classic example of man's unwillingness to repent and his deep-seated desire to justify his own behavior even when it is exposed as sinful by God Himself:

After the fall, (God) gave (Adam) the opportunity to repent and be pardoned, but his neck remained unbending. For (God) came and said to him: "Adam, where art thou?" That is, from what glory into what shame have you come? And then, when He asked him why he

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sinned, why he transgressed, He prepared him especially so that he might say: "Forgive me." But there was no humility! Where was the word "forgive"? There was no repentance, but the complete opposite. For he contradicted and retorted: "The woman whom Thou gavest me" (deceived me). He did not say, "My wife deceived me," but "the woman whom Thou gavest me," as if to say: "this misfortune which Thou hast brought on my head." For thus it always is, brethren: When a man does not wish to reproach himself, he does not hesitate to accuse God Himself. Then (God) came to the woman and said to her: And why did you not keep the commandment? As it were, He especially hinted to her: At least you say "forgive," so your soul might be humbled and you might be pardoned. But again He (did not hear) the word "forgive." For she also replied: "The serpent beguiled me," as if to say: The serpent sinned, and what is that to me? What are you doing, wretched ones? Repent, acknowledge your sin, have pity on your nakedness. But neither of them wished to accuse himself; neither had the least humility. And so you see now clearly to what our state has come, into what great misfortunes we have been led by the fact that we justify ourselves, that we hold to our own will and follow our selves.¹⁵

3:14-15 And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shah thou go, and dust shah thou eat all the days of thy

life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and, between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (KJV).

The Fathers, with the realism of their understanding of Genesis, interpret this punishment as applying first of all to the animal who was the instrument of man's fall, but then also to the devil who used this creature. St. John Chrysostom writes:

But perhaps someone will say: If the counsel was given by the devil, using the serpent as an instrument, why is this animal subjected to

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such a punishment? This also was a work of God's unutterable love of mankind. As a loving father, in punishing the murderer of his son, breaks also the knife and sword by which he performed the murder, and breaks them into small pieces—in similar fashion the All-good God, when this animal, like a kind of sword, served as the instrument of the devil's malice, subjects it to a constant punishment, so that from this physical and visible manifestation we might conclude the dishonor in which it finds itself. And if the one who served as the instrument was subjected to such anger, what punishment must the other be undergoing?... The unquenchable fire awaits him (Matt. 25:41).¹⁶

St. John even speculates that before the curse the serpent, without having legs, went about in an upright position similar to the way it now stands up when ready to strike.¹⁷

Before Adam fell, he could be naked and not notice it; afterwards, this is impossible. Before the fall, Adam had friendship with the serpent like we have with dogs or cats or some domestic animal; afterwards we have an instinctive reaction against snakes—which everyone has probably experienced. This shows that our nature has somehow changed.

The "enmity" in our fallen life, of course, much more than between man and serpent, is between man and the devil; and in a special sense the "seed of the woman" is Christ. One nineteenth-century Orthodox commentary on this passage says:

The first woman in the world was the first to fall into the devil's net and easily gave herself into his power; but by her repentance she will shake off his power over her. Likewise, in many other women also, especially in the person of the most blessed woman, the Virgin Mary, he will meet a powerful resistance to his wiles.... By the seed of the woman, which is hostile to the seed of the devil, one must understand in particular one person from among the posterity of the woman, namely He Who from eternity was predestined for the salvation of men and was born in time of a woman without a man's seed. He

subsequently appeared to the world to "destroy the works

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of the devil" (1 John 3:8), that is, the kingdom of the devil, filled with his servants, with his seed The striking of the spiritual serpent in the head by the seed of the woman signifies that Christ will completely defeat the devil and take away from him all power to harm men.... Until the Second Coming the devil will have the opportunity to harm men, including Christ Himself; but his wounds will be easily healed, like wounds in the heel, which are not dangerous because in the heel, which is covered with hard skin, there is little blood. A wound in the heel was given by the powerless malice of the devil to Christ Himself, against Whom he aroused the unbelieving Jews who crucified Him. But this wound served only for the greater shame of the devil and the healing of mankind.¹⁸

Thus the "wound in the heel" represents the small amount that the devil is able to harm us since the coming of Christ.

3:16 And to the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy pains and thy groanings; in pain thou shalt bring forth children, and thy submission shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee (Septuagint).

Even while cursing the serpent, God is awaiting the repentance of Adam and Eve. St. Ephraim writes:

God began with the despised (serpent) so that, while the anger of righteous judgment was directed against it alone, Adam and Eve might become terrified and repent, and thereby the opportunity would have been given to (God's) goodness to deliver them from the curses of righteous judgment. But when the serpent had been cursed, and Adam and Eve did not hasten to entreaties, God uttered the punishment to them. He addressed Eve first, because by her hand sin was given to Adam.¹⁹

St. John Chrysostom writes of Eve's punishment:

Behold the Lord's goodness, and what meekness He shows after such a transgression. He says: I wished that you would lead a life without sorrow and pain, free of every grief and bitterness, and filled with

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every satisfaction; that, being clothed in a body, you might not feel anything bodily. But since you did not make fitting use of such happiness, but the abundance of good things brought you to such great ingratitude, therefore, so that you might not be given over to yet greater self-will, I am laying upon you a bridle, and I condemn you to sorrow and groaning. I shall arrange that your giving birth to children—a source of great consolation—will begin with sorrow, so that in daily grief and sorrow in giving birth you might have a constant reminder of how great was this sin and disobedience.... At first I created you equal in honor (to your husband) and wished that, being of one dignity with him, you might have communion in everything with him; and I entrusted to you, as to your husband, authority over all creatures. But since you did not make fitting use of the equality in

honor, for this I am subjecting you to your husband...
I subject you

to him and proclaim him your lord, so that you might acknowledge his authority; since you are unable to lead, therefore, learn to be a good subject.²⁰

St. John Chrysostom provides the answer to the problem of "women's liberation": become saints and your problems are ended.

3:17-19 And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto*

—*—St. John Chrysostom writes that the equality that existed between Adam and Eve before the fall did not exclude a certain order in which Adam even then was the head. Thus, he blames Adam for not guiding and correcting Eve: "After all, you are head of your wife, and she has been created for your sake; but you have inverted the proper order: not only have you failed to keep her on the straight

and narrow but you have been dragged down with her, and whereas the rest of the body should follow the head, the contrary has in fact occurred, the head following the rest of the body, turning things upside down" (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 17:17, English version, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 74, p. 231).—Ed.

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the ground; for out of it wast thou taken For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.*

Here Adam is given an image of the trials and tribulations of simply living in this fallen world. First of all, the earth is cursed for his sake. St. John Chrysostom writes:

Behold the reminders of the curse! Thorns it will bring forth, He (God) says, and thistles. I will do this so that you will endure severe labor and cares and spend your whole life in sorrow, that this might be a restraint for you, that you might not dream that you are higher than your station; but that you might constantly remember your nature and might henceforth not allow yourself to come to a similar state of deception.

"Thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." See how after his (Adam's) disobedience everything was not as it had been before in his life! I, He says, bringing you into this world, wanted you to live without afflictions, without labors, without cares, without sorrows; to be in contentment and prosperity and not be subject to bodily needs, but to be a stranger to all this and enjoy perfect freedom. But since such freedom was not of benefit to you, I will curse the earth so that henceforth it will not be as it was formerly, giving forth fruit without sowing and cultivation, but will do so only with great labor, exertion and cares. I will subject you to constant afflictions and sorrows, and force you to do everything with exhausting efforts, that these tormenting labors might be

—* It may be noted here that—in modern society especially—the attempt of men and women to avoid the penances given by God at the fall has resulted in untold damage, both to the earth and to human beings. The attempt of modern men to avoid working by "the sweat of [their] face[s]" has resulted in modern technology, which in turn has led to massive pollution and destruction of God's creation. Modern women have avoided the "pains and groanings" of millions of births, but in so doing have been responsible (along with the men) for millions of murders by

abortion. The abdication by modern men of their position of headship in the family, in conjunction with the unwillingness of modern women to be in "submission to [their] husband[s]," has resulted in the emotional and spiritual crippling of countless children—not to mention of the husbands and wives themselves.—ED.

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for you a constant lesson to behave modestly and
know your own

nature.* ²¹

Secondly, Adam now becomes *mortal*, along with the creatures. St. John Chrysostom writes that, even though Adam and Eve lived a long time after their fall,

nevertheless from the moment they heard, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," they received a death sentence, became mortals and, one may say, died. Indicating this, the Scripture said, "In the day that thou eatest of it [the tree] thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17)—in other words, you shall receive a sentence; you shall now be mortals.** ²²

The Wisdom of Solomon declares: "God made man incorruptible" (Wisdom 2:23); but through Adam's disobedience both he and the creatures became mortal and corruptible.

In the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans there is a teaching about how the whole creation is "groaning" because it is subject to "vanity," that is, to the corruption (decay) that entered the world because of the pride of one man. The creation is waiting for man to be delivered so that it itself can be restored to the original state of incorruption—when the creatures will be wandering around the forest like they are now, but incorrupt like they were in the days of Adam.

In Romans 8:19—22 we read: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the crea-

—* I.e., so that Adam would recognize that he was a created being and not God, since he had succumbed to the devil's temptation: "Ye shall be as gods."—Ed.

** St. Gregory Palamas adds to this teaching by saying that man's physical corruptibility and death resulted from a spiritual death that occurred at the time of the fall: "It was indeed Adam's soul that died by becoming through his transgression separated from God; for bodily he continued to live after that time, even for 930 years. The death,

however, that befell the soul because of the transgression not only crippled the soul and made man accursed; it also rendered the body itself subject to fatigue, suffering and corruptibility, and finally handed it over to death" (*The Philokalia*, vol. 4, p. 296). The Holy Fathers teach that this physical change in man's nature also passed over to the other creatures (see below).—Ed.

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ture was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected it in hope.* Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption (decay) into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

The commentary of St. John Chrysostom on this passage makes the doctrine absolutely explicit:

What means "for the creature was made subject to vanity"? It became corruptible. Why, and by what cause? By your fault, O man. Because you received a body mortal and subject to sufferings, so the earth also was subject to a curse, and brought forth thorns and thistles.

And later in the same section:

Just as the creature became corruptible when your body became corruptible, so also when your body will be incorrupt, the creature also will follow after it and become corresponding to it.²³

Here, it should be noted, the word "you" means the same thing as the word "I" often does in the Orthodox Divine services: Adam (because we are all one man). St. John makes this clear in another passage:

What armed death against the whole universe? The fact that only one man tasted of the tree (Commentary on Romans 5:15—21).²⁴

St. Macarius the Great says the same thing:

Adam was placed as lord and king of all the creatures.... But after his captivity, there was taken captive together with him the creation which served him and submitted to him, because through him death came to reign over every soul.²⁵

—* Earlier in the same Epistle (Rom. 5:12), St. Paul explains that "by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin." Elsewhere (1 Cor. 15:21-22) he writes: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." —ED.

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St. Symeon the New Theologian is also very explicit that the material creation—and not just Paradise—before Adam's fall was incorrupt and without death.* As we saw earlier, he writes that Adam was originally "placed by the Creator God as an immortal king over an incorrupt world, not only over Paradise, but also over the whole creation which was under the heavens." In the same Homily he goes on to say that, after Adam's transgression,

God did not curse Paradise ... but He cursed only the whole rest of the earth, which also was incorrupt and brought forth everything by itself....

And thus it was fitting in all justice for the one who had become corrupt and mortal by reason of the transgression of the commandment, to live upon the corruptible earth and eat corruptible food...

Then also all creatures, when they saw that Adam was banished from Paradise, no longer wished to submit to him, the criminal.... But God restrained all these creatures by His power, and in His compassion and goodness He did not allow them immediately to strive against man, and He commanded that the creation should remain in submission to him, and having become corrupt, should serve corrupt man for whom it had been created

Do you see that this whole creation in the beginning was incorrupt and was created by God in the manner of Paradise? But later it was subjected by God to corruption, and submitted to the vanity of

men.** 26

—*In his notes, Fr. Seraphim introduces this teaching with the following words about St. Symeon: "Let us now read and be inspired by this teaching as set forth in Perfect and

unequivocal form by one of the greatest Saints of the Orthodox Church, ^a late Father who stated the teaching of the Orthodox Church so divinely and clearly that he was the third and last, after St. John the Evangelist and St. Gregory Nazianzen, to be called 'Theologian by the Church.'—ED.

* Cf. St. Maximus the Confessor: "In Adam the sentence of death was imposed on nature, since sensual pleasure had become the principle of its generation" (*The Philokalia*, vol. 2, p. 248).

On the rest of the creatures becoming corruptible through man's fall, see also pp. 409-22, 591-93 below.—ED.

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The Fathers also mention that the sentence of death, which took effect at the fall, was not just a punishment. It was also a good, because once man fell, if he were to still be immortal, there would be no way out for him. Imagine being in a state of being unable to redeem your self, unable to get to Paradise, and then living and living and living with no hope of getting out of this state. Death puts an end to sin. The fact that we are afraid of death already wakes us up to begin to struggle. Even if we forget about Paradise, we will be afraid of death and begin to struggle, to overcome our fallen nature.

Cyril of Alexandria (c444) writes about the meaning of disease and death in fallen man:

Man, having received as his lot an exhausting fast and sorrows, was given over to illnesses, sufferings, and the other bitter things as to a kind of bridle. Because he did not sensibly restrain himself in that life which was free from labors and sorrows, he is given over to misfortunes so that by sufferings he might heal in himself the disease which came upon him in the midst of blessedness.

By death the Giver of the Law stopped the spread of sin, and in the very chastisement reveals His love for mankind. Inasmuch as he, in giving the commandment, joined death to the transgression of it, and inasmuch as the criminal thus fell under the chastisement, so He arranged that the chastisement itself might serve for salvation. For death dissolves this animal nature of ours and thus, on the one hand, stops the activity of evil, and on the other delivers a man from illnesses, frees him from labors, puts an end to his sorrows and cares, and stops his bodily sufferings. With such a love for mankind has the Judge mixed the chastisement.²⁷

Finally, St. Symeon the New Theologian writes of how, through the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the sentence of death is abolished:

The decree of God, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," just like everything else

laid upon mankind after the fall, will be in effect until the end of the age. But by God's mercy, through the

At right: The banishment of Adam and Eve from Paradise.

Below: Cain slaying Abel, Cain asking God for mercy, Adam and Eve weeping over Abel's death, Eve (with child) and Adam lamenting, Adam tilling the ground. Here are shown the major consequences of the fall: inclination toward sin (including murder), pain (including pain in childbirth), sorrow, hard labor, and death.

Details of a Russian icon of the eighteenth century.



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power of the extraordinary sacrifice of Christ, in the future age it will no longer have any effect, when the general resurrection will occur, which resurrection could not possibly occur unless the Son of God Himself had risen from the dead, Who had died for the abolition of the above-mentioned decree and for the resurrection of the entire human nature.²⁸

In the general resurrection, all of creation will be delivered from corruption together with man, just as it once became subject to corruption because of him. St. Symeon writes:

When man again will be renewed and become spiritual, incorrupt and immortal, then also the whole creation, which had been subjected by God to man to serve him, will be delivered from this servitude, will be renewed together with him, and become incorrupt and

as it were spiritual

It is not fitting for the bodies of men to be clothed in the glory of resurrection and to become incorrupt before the renewal of all creatures. But just as in the beginning, first the whole creation was created incorrupt, and then from it man was taken and made, so also it is fitting that again first all the creation should become incorrupt, and then the corruptible bodies of men also should be renewed and become incorrupt, so that once more the whole man might be incorrupt and spiritual and that he might dwell in an incorruptible, eternal, and spiritual dwelling.²⁹

3:20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living.

Eve means "life." Adam now gives her a particular name in addition to the name Woman.

3:21 Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make then coats of skins, and clothed them.

St. Gregory of Nyssa says this means that they literally put on "coats of skins," but it also means, figuratively, that they became clothed in a *different* kind of flesh; that is, their nature was changed.



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3:22-23 And the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever, therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

The Lord says "as one of Us," referring to Himself in plural: the Holy Trinity. He casts Adam out so that Adam would not eat of the Tree of Life, which we see also in the Book of Apocalypse (Revelation): the Tree of Life in the center of Paradise. Eating of this Tree would make man immortal without being good, and God does not want that; therefore, He casts him out.

3:24 And He cast out Adam and caused him to dwell over against the Garden of Delight, and stationed the Cherubim and the fiery sword that turns about to keep the way of the tree of life (Septuagint).

As we said in the first talk, St. Macarius of Egypt interprets this mystically, saying that this is what happens to every soul when Paradise is closed to it. But it also means exactly what it says: that there is a Cherubim with a flaming sword.

We have now covered the first three chapters of Genesis, from which is taken the basic theology of the Church about the origin of man and, therefore, his goal. The services are filled with this theology, especially the services to the Cross. On September 14th, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, there are a number of very good verses which show how the Church views what happened in Paradise and what happened when Christ came. They compare the tree of which Adam tasted with the Tree which was the Cross. One of the verses for Great Vespers says:

Come, O ye peoples, let us venerate the blessed Wood, through which the eternal justice has been brought to pass. For he who by a tree deceived our forefather Adam, is by the Cross himself deceived; and he who by tyranny gained possession of the creature endowed by God with royal dignity, is overthrown in headlong fall. By the Blood of God the poison of the serpent is washed away; and the

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unjust punishment inflicted on the Just. For it was fitting that wood should be healed by wood, and that through the Passion of One Who knew not passion should be remitted all the sufferings of him who was condemned because of wood.³⁰

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It is very profound and moving when you read verses like this, knowing the theology of Paradise and the future age.

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In the Sessional Hymn of Matins of that same service, we sing:

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In Paradise of old, the wood [i.e., of the tree] stripped me bare, for by giving its fruit to eat, the enemy brought in death. But now the wood of the Cross that clothes men with the garment of life has been set up in the midst of the earth, and the whole world is filled with boundless joy.³¹

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Another canticle:

O thrice-blessed Tree, on which Christ the King and Lord was stretched! Through thee the beguiler fell who tempted mankind with the tree. He was caught in the trap set by God, Who was crucified upon thee in the flesh, granting peace unto our souls.³²

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And the Ninth Song, Irmos:

Today the death that came to man through eating of the tree is made of no effect through the Cross. For the curse of our mother Eve that fell on all mankind is destroyed by the fruit of the pure Mother of God, whom all the powers of heaven magnify.³³

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The Canon of the Feast of Epiphany, composed by St. John Damascene, tells us that the devil introduced death into the creation, but that Christ has overcome him:

He who once assumed the appearance of a malignant serpent and implanted death in the creation, is now cast into darkness by Christ's coming in the flesh.³⁴

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That is briefly the theology of the beginning of all things, Paradise original Adam, his fall and the state to which we have to try to get back by the Second Adam Who is Christ.

If you interpret all these events in the early history of mankind as simply an allegory, as a pretty story which says something else entirely, you will be deprived of a true understanding of Paradise. For example, many Roman Catholic theologians say that the idea of Paradise does not fit in with the findings of modern anthropology; therefore, we have to reinterpret everything from the conclusion that man evolved from lower animals. Original sin, they say, must mean that as soon as man became sufficiently developed to become aware of himself, and therefore to become man, this *awareness was* like a fall. They cannot fit Paradise into this scheme, because in Paradise man was a divinized being.

It is very important for us to see these two entirely opposed conceptions. The first view is that man was created directly by God with a superhuman intelligence, with that original nature from which we fell away and to which we are called back. The other view is that man comes up from lower creatures. The second view, of course, leads to a philosophy of moral relativism, because if we were once something else, some kind of ape-like creature, then we are going to *be* something else—we are heading for Superman. (Most evolutionists say in so many words that collective humanity will become Superman.) This view also leads to religious ideas like those of Teilhard de Chardin, who says that the whole world is evolving into a higher state, that the world itself is like the bread which is being transmuted into the other world, and then it all becomes Christ. Of course, that is like pantheism, like some frightful heresy—which is exactly what Antichrist needs in order to come to reign. People will think they are gods while actually having this animalistic philosophy.

When we hold to the view of the Holy Fathers, we see that Christ actually died on the Cross. It is a real, physical event, not an image or allegory; and at the same time it has spiritual consequences, bringing about a change in man's condition. It gives us salvation: not figurative salvation, but actual salvation. In the same way, Adam tasted of a tree and thereby lost Paradise.

This, too, was a physical event with spiritual consequences, changing man's condition.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Life Outside

Paradise

(Genesis 4:1-6:5)

IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER we examined the banishment of Adam from the point of view of Paradise; now we will look to see where he went. With Genesis chapter four begins earthly life as we know it now—but in many respects very different from our life now, as we shall see.

Unlike the first three chapters of Genesis, which have abundant Patristic commentaries, the later chapters have only a few. We will rely chiefly on the Genesis Commentaries of St. John Chrysostom and St. Ephraim the Syrian. In the West there are also the Commentaries of Blessed Augustine, which I have not seen, and a few others.

In the fourth and succeeding chapters we will be mainly following the Greek (Septuagint) text of Genesis, with a few variants from the King James Version, which is translated from the Hebrew.

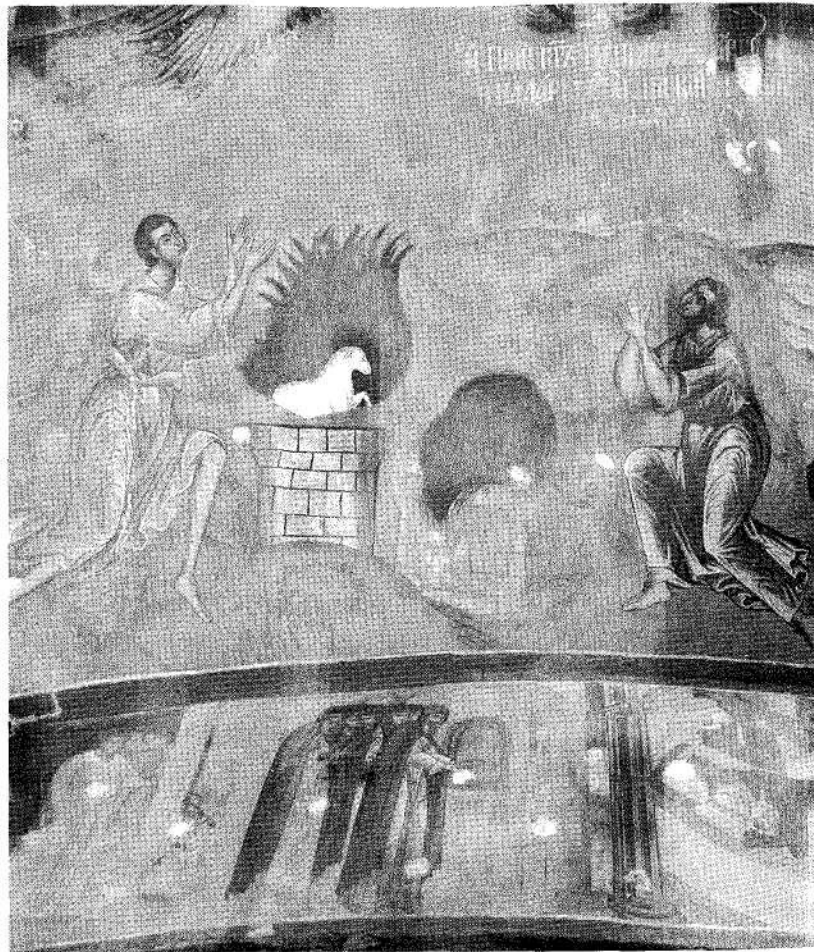
1. The Banishment of Adam

Chapter four begins with Adam in a state of banishment. To where was Adam banished? The Greek text of Genesis 3:24 reads: "The Lord God ... cast out Adam and caused him to dwell over against the Garden of Delight."

Since, as we have seen, Paradise is an actual place, so also the earth¹⁰ which Adam was banished was an actual place, near to Paradise. We saw in Genesis chapter 2 (v. 7-8) that Adam was created

out of the earth and then led into Paradise; so now he is banished to the place Where he was created. The Holy Fathers are surprisingly "geographical"

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Cain and Abel offering their respective sacrifices to God.
 "And God looked upon Abel and his gifts, but Cain and his
 sacrifices He regarded not" (Gen. 4:4-5).
Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.

St. Ephraim specifies that God's acceptance of Abel's gift was manifested by fire which came down from heaven to consume it, while Cain's offering remained without being consumed.⁷

* Two other places in Scripture speak of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, but they speak only generally: 1 John 3:12 and Hebrews 11:4.

LIFE OUTSIDE PARADISE



Cain, instigated by a demon,
slaying Abel. *Russian fresco
of the sixteenth century.*

But here again God's mercy is shown. Just as He came to Adam after he sinned and asked him, "Where art thou?" giving him a chance to repent, so now He comes to Cain with the same opportunity:

4:6-7 And the Lord God said to Cain, Why art thou become very sorrowful and why is thy countenance fallen? Hast thou not sinned if thou hast brought it rightly, but not rightly divided it? Be still, to thee shall be his submission, and thou shalt rule over him.

St. John Chrysostom says of these verses:

Behold what an unutterable condescension of concern! God saw that Cain was possessed, so to speak, by the passion of envy; but see how, in His goodness, He applies to him a corresponding treatment so as to raise him immediately and not allow him to drown.... [God says to him,] Since you have sinned, "Be still," calm your thoughts, be delivered from the shock of the waves which besiege your soul; calm your agitation lest to your earlier sin you add another more serious.... God already knew in advance that (Cain) would rise up against his brother, and by these words He warns him.... He desires to meek the rage and fierceness of Cain and restrain him from rising up against his brother. Seeing the movements of his mind and knowing the cruelty of his murderous intent, God wishes before-

hand to soften his heart and calm his mind, and for this purpose He subjects his brother to him and does not take away his authority over him. But even after such care and after such treatment Cain received no benefit. Such is the difference in the inward dispositions (of Cain and Abel); such is the power of evil!⁸

We see the same thing today, as indeed throughout the history of mankind: God chastises only after giving men abundant opportunity to repent and change their ways.

4:8 And Cain said to Abel his brother, Let us go out into the plain; and it came to pass that when they were in the plain Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

In the early chapters of Genesis we see the beginnings of everything that is to be repeated later in human history. Here we see the first murder—and it is a fratricide, the killing of one's own brother.*

But here again, as with Adam after his sin in Paradise, God shows first His concern that the guilty should *repent*, and then shows His mercy even when there is no repentance.

4:9-16 And the Lord God said to Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not, am I my brother's keeper? And the Lord said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brothers blood cries to me out of the ground. And now thou art cursed from the earth which has opened her mouth to receive thy brothers blood from thy hand. When thou tilust the earth, then it shall not continue to give its strength to thee: thou shalt be groaning and trembling on the earth. And Cain said to the Lord Ood, My crime is too great for me to be forgiven. Lfthou easiest me out this any from the face of the earth, and Ishall be hidden from thy presence, an&

——* In Luke 11:50-51, Christ speaks of the murder of righteous Abel: "That t e blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may

required of this generation: from the blood of Abel [the son of Adam] unto the of Zacharias [the father of St. John the Baptist]." By affirming that the ^{mur(Jer o,} Abel occurred "from the foundation of the world," the words of Christ again co ^ diet the modern evolutionary idea that there were billions of years of earnt hi before the appearance of man.—ED.



Adam and Abel. *Russian icons of the seventeenth century.*

GENESIS, CREATION AND EARLY MAN

might be assigned him such as the crime deserves. But Cain, instead of repentance, is filled with dissatisfaction, and to the All-knowing One Who asked of his brother in order to draw Cain to Himself, he answers with anger: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"⁹

St. John Chrysostom notes the difference between the curse pronounced on Adam and that pronounced on Cain:

How far this sin (of Cain) was greater than the transgression of the first-created (Adam) may be seen in the difference in curses. There (the Lord) said: "Cursed is the ground in thy labors" (Gen. 3:18) and poured out the curse on the earth, showing care precisely for the man; but here ... since it is an unforgivable crime, he himself (the performer of it) is subjected to the curse: "Thou art cursed from the earth." He (Cain) acted almost like the serpent who served as the implement of the

devil's plan; just as the former, through deception, introduced death, so the latter, having deceived his brother and led him out to the field, armed his hand against him and performed murder. Therefore, just as the Lord said to the serpent: "Thou art cursed above all the brutes of the earth" (Gen. 3:15), so also was it to Cain, because he acted similarly.¹⁰

After this, Cain finally did admit his guilt; but it was too late. St. John Chrysostom says:

He did confess (his sin), and confessed it with great precision. But there was no benefit from this at all, because he confessed at the wrong time. He should have done this at the right time, when he could have inclined the Judge to mercy.¹¹

One should add to this that his confession is more an admission fact than an indication of repentance; he regretted, but did not repent of his sin—a very common occurrence among men up to this day

And so Cain went off to live in the land of Nod, a lower territory, but still not far from Eden. At this time in human history man's geographical distribution is still very limited. From this time forth,

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Noah receiving the command of God and calling the animals into the Ark.

Contemporary Greek icon by George Nikolacopoulos.

with Noah. The lion would not eat the lamb because Noah was a righteous man. With a righteous man, the laws of nature change.

A big objection of rationalists is the *universality* of the Flood: Many people say, "There are accounts of Babylonian floods in about 3000 B.C. It must have been a local flood in the Babylonian area. There *couldn't* have been a flood over the whole earth!"* But why not? God made the whole earth; God can destroy the whole earth. Why shouldn't there be a flood over the whole earth? From the way it is described in the Scripture, it is quite clear that this is what is meant. The Flood described in the next verses, when "all the fountains of the abyss were broken up and the floodgates of heaven were opened" (we discussed this breaking of the firmament and the release of water above it

* This is the claim both of "Christian evolutionists" and of most "old-earth/progressive creationists."—ED.

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flesh, as God commanded Noah. And the Lord God shut the Ark outside of him. And the Flood was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

As we have said, this was not just rain. Everything was coming down from the firmament, and everything was coming up from underneath, reducing the earth to the same state it was on the First Day of Creation—chaos.

7:17–24 And the water abounded greatly and bore up the Ark, and it was lifted on high from off the earth. And the water prevailed and abounded exceedingly upon the earth, and the Ark was borne upon the water. And the water prevailed exceedingly upon the earth, and covered all the high mountains which were under heaven. Fifteen cubits upwards was the water raised, and it covered all the high mountains. And there died all flesh that moved upon the earth, of flying creatures and cattle, and of wild beasts, and every reptile moving upon the earth, and every man. And all things which have the breath of life, and whatever was on the dry land, died. And God blotted out every offspring which was upon the face of the earth, both man and beast, and reptiles, and birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth, and Noah was left alone, and those with him in the Ark. And the water was raised over the earth an hundred and fifty days.*

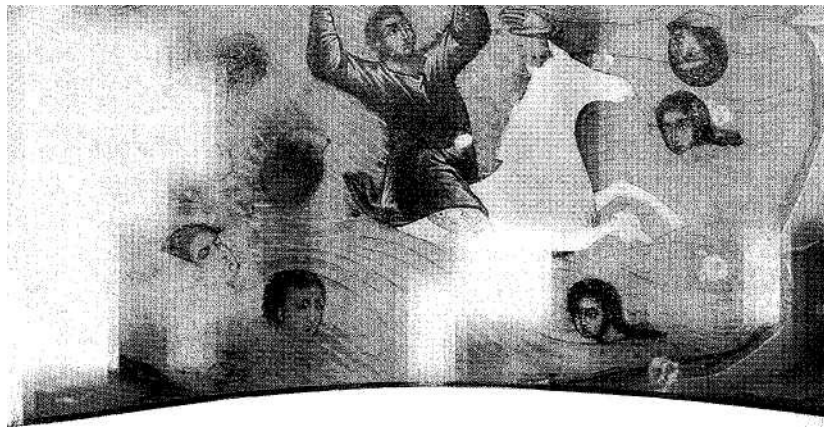
Noah was six hundred years old at the time of the Flood; therefore God gave mankind only one hundred years and seven days, not one hundred and twenty years to repent as He had decreed. This is because, as St. John Chrysostom says, men had become unworthy of more time, being unmoved even when seeing the Ark and its animals miraculously assembled in it.⁴ It was clear enough by then that people were not repenting.

The Flood covered even the highest mountains with fifteen cubits (twenty-two and a half feet) of water. St. John Chrysostom says of this:

Fifteen cubits upwards was the water raised above the mountains. Not without reason does the Scripture reveal this to us, but so that we might know that those who drowned were not only men and cattle and four-footed beasts and reptiles, but also the birds of the heav-

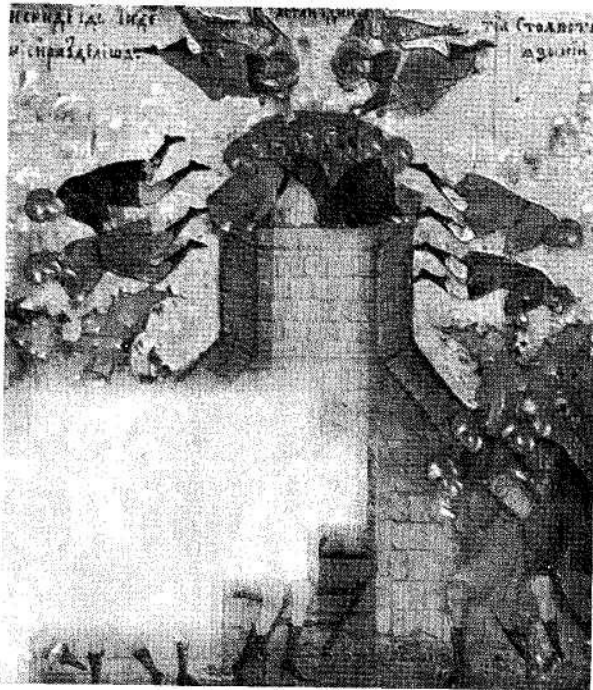
* I.e., fifteen cubits above the top of the mountains.

■ -V ■■



The Flood. *Russian
fresco of the sixteenth century.*

THE DISPERSION OF THE PEOPLES



The Tower of Babel
and the confusion of
tongues.
*Detail of a Russian icon
of the seventeenth
century.*

11:5 *And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men built.*

Of course, this does not mean that He did not “see” before; it emphasizes that He was looking very carefully to make sure what was going on. He does not chastise without knowing.

11:6 *And the Lord said, Behold, there is one race, and one lip of all, and they have begun to do this, and now nothing shall fail from them of all that they may have undertaken to do.*

In other words, they have continued to be proud, and have undertaken this tremendous project against God.

11:7 *Coming down let us there confound their tongue, that they may not understand each the voice of his neighbor.*

When God says, “Come,” to whom is He speaking? It is the

The Tower of Babel and the
confusion of tongues.
*Russian fresco of the sixteenth
century.*



A BRIEF CRITIQUE OF THE EVOLUTIONARY MODEL

This idea, together with the idea which was now gaining sympathy—that species evolve one into the other—led to another idea. You put these two ideas together, you get the idea that most likely the world is not just a few thousand years old like the Christians seem to say, but that it must be very many thousands or millions of years old or even more. Thus arose the idea of the greater and greater age of the

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onic fish, salamander, turtle, chicken, pig, man, etc., demonstrating that they all look very much alike and saying that they gradually develop differently. You can see that man has so-called “gill-slits” in his embryo. Therefore, this is supposed to be a remembrance of his ancestry.* Ernst Haeckel, in his “theory of recapitulation” and “biogenetic law,” stated that “an individual organism in its development (ontogeny) tends to recapitulate the stages passed through by its ancestors (phylogeny).”³ Today this theory is no longer accepted by evolutionists. Scientists have found that the “gill-slits” are not gill-slits at all, they are just preparing for what is to be developed in the neck of the being. So this proof has been pretty well discarded. Again, the argument that similarity means proof, which in fact it does not.

4. Another proof, which used to be more powerful than it is now, is that of “*vestigial*” organs. Evolutionists claimed that there are organs, like the appendix in man, which seem to have no function and therefore must be left over from a previous stage of evolution. When a monkey or another of man’s ancestors used these organs more and more these “vestigial” organs are found to have a certain function. The appendix, for example, is found to have some kind of glandular function, so this argument is also losing weight.** And just because we do not know what a certain organ does, this does not mean it is left over from some lower form of life.

5. ~~Then there are the arguments from paleontology: the study of fossils.~~ Of course, the first seemingly convincing proof is the geological strata, as, for example, in the Grand Canyon where you see all the geological strata; and the lower you get the more primitive the creatures.

* That is, a proof that man evolved from aquatic animals with gills.—ED.

** “Practically all the so-called ‘vestigial’ organs, especially those in man, have been proved in recent years to have definite uses and not to be vestigial at all. At one time, evolutionists claimed there were about 180 such vestigial organs in man, but practically none are claimed now. Some of these were the thyroid gland, the coccyx, the pineal gland, the ear muscles, the tonsils and the appendix. These are now known to have useful, and often essential functions” (Henry Morris, *Scientific Creationism*, p. 76). For a detailed treatment of this subject, see “*Vestigial Organs*” are Fully Functional by Dr. Jerry Bergman and Dr. Howard W. Howe.—ED.

A BRIEF CRITIQUE OF THE EVOLUTIONARY MODEL

"CHRISTIAN EVOLUTIONISM"

2. The book of Genesis, he believes, must be "interpreted in a new way," symbolically. Specifically, the transgression of Adam was not a historical event, but simply "the symbol of the dawn of human con-

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The earth ... can cast me to my knees in expectation of what is maturing in her breast.... She has become for me, over and above herself, the body of him who is and of him who is coming.³⁶

Evolution, for Teilhard, is a process which involves the "building of a cosmic body of Christ in which *all things* are united with God."

A faithful son of the Roman Catholic church, Teilhard expresses his vision of the union of God and the world in terms of Latin theology, offering a "new development" in Catholic thought in his statement of the "*Transubstantiation of the earth*:"*

As our humanity assimilates the material world, and as the Host [i.e., the Roman Catholic Host] assimilates our humanity, the eucharistic transformation goes beyond and completes the transubstantiation of the bread on the altar. Step by step it irresistibly invades the universe.... The sacramental Species are formed by the totality of the world, and the duration of the creation is the time needed for its consecration.³⁸

In this process of evolution, the "Body of Christ" is being formed for the world—not the Christ of Orthodoxy, but the "universal Christ," "Super-Christ," which Teilhard defines as "a synthesis of Christ and the universe."³⁹ This "evolving Christ" will bring about the uniting of all religions:

A general convergence of religions upon a universal Christ who fundamentally satisfies them all: this seems to me the only possible conversion of the world, and the only form in which a religion of the future can be conceived.⁴⁰

Christianity for him is not the unique Truth, but only "an evolving phylum of evolution,"⁴¹ subject to change and transformation like everything else in the "evolving" world. Even like recent

* Teilhard wrote about this while in China in 1926–7, after having seen the Great Wall of China in the Gobi Desert.



Detail of the icon "The Symbol of the Faith," showing Adam and Eve being out of Paradise, Cain slaying Abel, and Adam and Eve lamenting Abel's death
Russian icon of the second half of the seventeenth century, now located at Kolomenskoye Museum, Moscow

THE PATRISTIC DOCTRINE OF CREATION

There are very many books in the English language which discuss the question of evolution from a *scientific* point of view. Perhaps you do not know that *many scientists deny the fact of evolution* (meaning the derivation of all existing creatures by transformation from other creatures), and very many scientists state that *it is impossible to know by science whether evolution is true or not, because there is no evidence whatever that can conclusively prove or disprove it*. If you wish, in another letter I can discuss with you the "scientific evidence" for evolution. I assure

GENESIS, CREATION AND EARLY MAN

Clearly, St. Basil is warning us to beware of "explaining away" things in Genesis which are difficult for our common sense to understand; *it is very easy for the "enlightened" modern man to do this, even if he is an Orthodox Christian*. Let us therefore try all the harder to understand the sacred Scripture *as the Fathers understand it*, and not according to our modern "wisdom." And let us not be satisfied with the views of one Holy Father; let us examine the views of other Holy Fathers as well.

One of the standard Patristic commentaries on the book of Genesis is that of St. Ephraim the Syrian. His views are all the more important for us in that he was an "Easterner" and knew the Hebrew language well. Modern scholars tell us that "Easterners" are given to "allegorical" interpretations, and that the book of Genesis likewise must be understood in this way. But let us see what St. Ephraim says in his commentary on Genesis:

No one should think that the Creation of Six Days is an allegory; it is likewise impermissible to say that what seems, according to the account, to have been created in the course of six days, was created in a single instant, and likewise that certain names presented in this account either signify nothing, or signify something else. On the contrary, one must know that just as the heaven and the earth which were created in the beginning are actually the heaven and the earth and not something else understood under the names of heaven and earth, so also *everything else that is spoken of as being created and brought into order after the creation of heaven and earth is not empty names*, but the very essence of the created natures corresponds to the force of these names.¹⁵

These are still, of course, general principles; let us look now at several specific applications by St. Ephraim of these principles.

Although both the light and the clouds were created *in the twinkling of an eye*, still both the day and the night of the First Day continued *for twelve hours each*.¹⁶

Again:

THE PATRISTIC DOCTRINE OF CREATION

tion.”⁵⁰ What does the Orthodox Christian say when a modern unbeliever, under the influence of modern naturalistic philosophy, insists that such “incorruption” is “impossible,” and demands that Christians believe only what can be proved or observed by science? Does he not hold to his faith, which is a revealed knowledge, *in spite of “science” and its philosophy*? Does he not indeed tell this pseudoscientist that *he cannot possibly know or understand this fact of incorruption, inasmuch as the works of God are above nature*? Then why should we hesitate to believe the truth about the creation before Adam’s fall, if we become convinced that the Holy Fathers indeed teach us that it is something quite beyond the competence of science to investigate or know? One who accepts the evolutionary philosophy of the creation before Adam’s transgression, and thus rejects the Patristic teaching, only prepares the way in his own soul, and in the souls of others, to accept an evolutionary or other pseudoscientific view of many other Orthodox doctrines also. We hear today many Orthodox priests who tell us, “Our faith in Christ does not depend on how we interpret Genesis. You can believe as you wish.” But how can it be that our negligence in understanding one part of God’s revelation (which, by the way, is indeed closely bound up with Christ, the Second Adam, Who became incarnate *in order to restore us to our original state*) will not lead to negligence in understanding the whole doctrine of the Orthodox Church? It is not for nothing that St. John Chrysostom closely binds together *the correct and strict interpretation of Scripture (specifically Genesis) and the correct dogmas which are essential for our SALVATION*. Speaking of those who interpret the book of Genesis allegorically, he says:

Let us not pay heed to these people, let us stop up our hearing against them, and let us believe the Divine Scripture, and following what is said in it, let us strive to preserve in our souls sound dogmas, and at the same time to lead also a right life, so that our life would both testify of the dogmas, and the dogmas would give firmness to our life.... If we live well but will be negligent over right dogmas, we can acquire nothing for our salvation. If we wish to be delivered from Gehenna and receive the Kingdom, we must be adorned both

and belonging to the Church could from this draw the
conclusion

that their teaching comes from God?⁵⁵

From secular knowledge, St. Gregory writes,

*we absolutely forbid to expect any precision whatever in the knowledge of ' Divine things; for it is not possible to draw from it any certain teaching on the subject of God. For "God hath made it foolish."*⁵⁶

And this knowledge can also be harmful and fight against true theol-ogy:

*The power of this reason which has been made foolish and nonexist-ent enters into battle against those who accept the traditions in simplic-ity ofheart; it despises the writings of the spirit, after the example of men who have treated them carelessly and have set up the creation against the Creator?*⁷

There could hardly be a better account than this of what modern "Christian evolutionists" have tried to do by thinking themselves wiser

GENESIS, CREATION AND EARLY MAN

Adam and the first-created world—as much as is useful for us to know—is accessible only in God's revelation and in the Divine vision of the Saints.

* * *

All that I have said in this letter, derived strictly from the Holy Fathers, will come as a surprise to many Orthodox Christians. Those who have read some of the Holy Fathers will perhaps wonder why they “haven’t heard it before.” The answer is simple: if they have read many of the Holy Fathers, they *have* encountered the Orthodox doctrine of Adam and the creation; *but they have been interpreting the Patristic texts hitherto through the eyes of modern science and philosophy, and therefore they have been blinded to the true Patristic teaching.* It is also true that the doctrine of the *body* of Adam and the *material* nature of the first-created world is taught most clearly and explicitly in the later Fathers of exalted spiritual life such as St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory the Sinaite, and the writings of these Fathers are not widely read even today in Greek or Russian, and hardly any of them exist at all in other languages. (In fact, several of the passages I have quoted from St. Gregory the Sinaite have been mistranslated in the English *Philokalia*.)

I was very interested to read in your letter that you set forth the correct Patristic teaching that “The creation of God, even the angelic nature, has always been, in comparison with God, something material. Angels are incorporeal in comparison with us, biological men. But in comparison with God they are also material and bodily creatures.” This teaching, which is set forth most clearly in the ascetic Fathers such as St. Macarius the Great and St. Gregory the Sinaite, helps us to understand the “spiritual body” with which we shall be clothed in the future age, which is in some way of the dust, earthly, but has no moisture or coarseness, as St. Gregory the Sinaite teaches; and it also helps us to understand that *third* state of our body, that which first-created Adam had before his transgression. Likewise, this doctrine is essential in our understanding of the activity of spiritual beings, angels and demons, even in the present corruptible world. The great Russian Orthodox Father of the nineteenth century, Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, devotes an entire volume of his collected works (volume 3) to this subject, and to comparing the authentic Orthodox Patristic doctrine with

GENESIS, CREATION AND EARLY MAN

..... This particular group is very good because they do not try to push the Bible. They know they could not get into public schools if they did, and therefore they have books (like *Scientific Creationism*) that present the material purely from the scientific point of view. And they present it not simply as anti-evolutionists. Instead, they present two models. Just like what we were saying about the Copernican model

GENESIS, CREATION AND EARLY MAN

book. The whole outline of it now becomes clear to me. It should be called something positive (no evolution in the title), such as "Genesis, Creation and Early Man: An Orthodox View," and the first and main part should be simply an Orthodox interpretation (according to St. John Chrysostom, St. Ephraim, etc.) of the first chapters of Genesis, discussing "problems" raised by modern men in the course of the discussion. Then, as the secondary thought (less than half the book), a discussion of the whole question of evolution....

If we can carry it through, it should be a pioneering work which will make this question at least discussible among Orthodox Christians, many of whom are concerned but just don't know where to begin to think it through. What do you think? Any ideas or discussions? I will be working on the whole first part for the summer course, and maybe you and I could look over and organize the rest of it sometime this summer. Then it will be timely to print it, especially since the subject will be somewhat in the air with my and Kalomiros' talks.

Rereading Kalomiros' letters, I see that there is something quite basic at stake.... It is obvious that Kalomiros has no intention whatever to humble himself before the mind of the Fathers. He "knows better" than they, and therefore he easily categorizes as "absurd" opinions which they held because he himself has thought it out better, with the aid of modern science. In this case he is broader than the Fathers; in most cases, perhaps, our Greeks are narrower—but it is their own wisdom that they trust and which they wish to impose on others. Our key is—sticking to the wisdom of the Church, trusting our own Fathers and the Holy Fathers who lived before. People are ready to hear this.

that by creation *ex nihilo* God "makes room" for something which is wholly outside of Himself; that, indeed, He sets up the "outside" or nothingness alongside His plenitude. The result is a subject which is entirely "other," infinitely removed from Him, "not by place but by nature," as it is expressed by St. John Damascene.*

The creation is not a kind of spreading out or infinite diffusion of the Godhead.... "The Good diffusing itself by itself" of neoplatonism is not the God of St. Paul, Who "callesth those things which be not as though they were" (Rom. 4:17).⁶²

According to the neoplatonic idea, since Absolute Being is ultimately impersonal, it has no Personal will. Therefore, the production of beings cannot be an act of free will, but is rather a *natural* diffusion that occurs by virtue of some necessity of the Divine Nature. In other words, it is the *nature* of the Godhead to diffuse itself into the realm of form and appearances; there is no "choice" involved.

In the Christian revelation, on the other hand, since God is Personal, he creates by a *free act of will*. Vladimir Lossky writes:

The creation is a work of will and not of nature.... In the act of creation God was under no necessity of any kind whatever. There is, in fact, nothing in the Divine Nature which could be the necessary cause of the production of creatures: creation might just as well not exist. God could equally well not have created; creation is a free act of His will, and this free act is the sole foundation of the existence of all beings....

Creation, which is thus a free act of the will, and not (like the shining forth of the Divine energies) a natural outpouring, is an act proper to a God Who is Personal, to the Trinity Whose common will belongs to the Divine Nature.⁶³

In the Orthodox Christian vision, then, God creates not out of ne-

* St. Gregory Palamas writes that "every created nature is far removed from and completely foreign to the Divine Nature" (*The Philokalia*, vol. 4, p. 382), even though God creates and sustains the creation through His Divine grace (energies).

APPENDIX TWO

Outlines of Proposed Studies

EDITOR'S NOTE: *These two outlines were written by Fr. Seraphim at different times and represent separate attempts to summarize the points he wanted to cover. The first is dated September 1978; the second is undated.*

1. Evolution

I. Introduction: approaches, methodology.

A. Evolution is a question that is controversial because of:

1. The *implication* for morality, worldview, etc., of one view or other.
2. The inherent complexity of the subject, and its vastness.

B. The main difficulty:

1. The reconciliation of the evolutionary theory's *physical* and *metaphysical* aspects.
2. Extremes:
 - a) Projection of physical theories onto the metaphysical dimension of beginnings. Many scientists have not properly appreciated the limitation of science in this realm, which can say nothing whatever of *beginnings*, which are not observable or repeatable or predictable, but are *miraculous* by their very nature.
 - b) Some fundamentalists have erred in the opposite direction, trying to dictate to physical science on the basis of *personal interpretation* of God's revelation.
 - c) *Respect for truth* in both physical (i.e., scientific) and metaphysical (i.e., religious revelation) realms is indis-

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Times,” in *The Orthodox Word*, nos. 200–1, p. 142.

72. Fr. Seraphim Rose, quoted in Monk Damascene Christensen, *Not of This World*, p. 44.

73. Malachi Martin, *Hostage to the Devil*, p. 124.

74. *Ibid.*, pp. 126–27.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 130–31.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 386.

78. *Ibid.*, pp. 390–91.

79. Teilhard de Chardin, *The Heart of the Matter*, p. 61.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

81. Wolfgang Smith, *Teilhardism and the New Religion*, p. 231.

82. Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, p. 189.

83. Fr. John Meyendorff, “Teilhard de Chardin: A Preparatory Note” (in Russian), in *Messenger of the Russian Student Christian Movement, Paris*, no. 95–96, 1970, p. 32.

84. Wolfgang Smith, *Teilhardism and the New Religion*, p. 211.

85. Eugene (Fr. Seraphim) Rose, Letter to Gleb D. Podmoshensky, Jan. 2/15, 1962, quoted in Monk Damascene Christensen, *Not of This World*, p. 187.

86. Cf. Stephen Jay Gould, “The Verdict on Creationism,” *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, July 19, 1987, p. 34.

87. Hugh Ross, “Genesis One, Dinosaurs, and Cavemen.”

88. Cf. St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 1:14; Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 89.

89. Cf. Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical*

Theology of the Eastern Church, pp. 98–99.

Appendix One: NOTES ON SCIENCE, EVOLUTION AND CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY

1. St. Symeon the New Theologian, Homily 38, Russian edition, vol. 2, p. 319. [New English translation by Fr. Seraphim in *The First-Created Man*, pp. 82–83.]

2. St. Basil the Great, *Hexaemeron* 9:1, pp. 135–36.

3. St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 1:2, p. 167 [Fathers of the Church series].

4. St. John Chrysostom, Homily “On the Cross and the Thief” 1:2.

5. St. Isaac the Syrian, Homily 19, Russian edition, pp. 85 [Homily 29, English edition, p. 143].

Appendix Four: THE FAITH OF RADIOMETRIC DATING

1. John Woodmorappe, “Radiometric Geochronology Reappraised,” in *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, vol. 16, September 1979, pp. 102–29, 147. [See also John Woodmorappe’s 1999 book, *The Mythology of Modern Dating Methods*.]

2. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

3. Joan C. Engels, “Effects of Sample Purity on Discordant Mineral Ages Found in K-Ar Dating,” *Journal of Geology*, vol. 79, September 1971, p. 609.

4. Marvin L. Lubenow, *Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils*, pp. 247–66.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

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