

LIFE OUTSIDE PARADISE

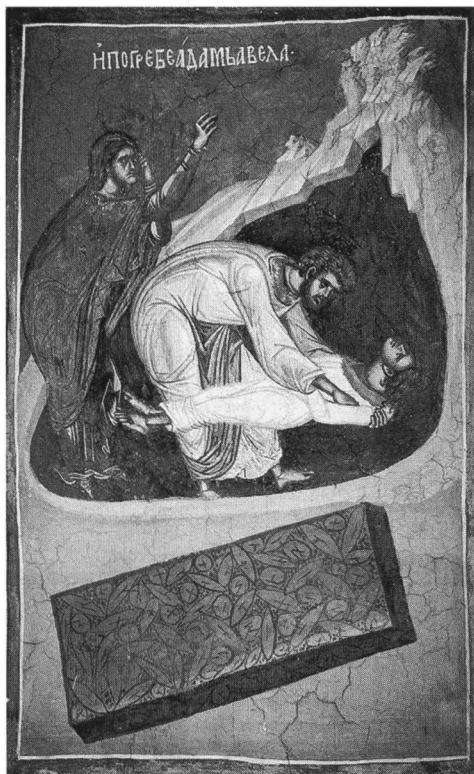


The Lord God saying to Cain, "Where is Abel thy brother?"
and Adam and Eve lamenting the slain Abel.

Fresco from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.

And he said, I know not, am I my brother's keeper? And the Lord said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood cries to Me out of the ground. And now thou art cursed from the earth which has opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest 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 God, My crime is too great for me to be forgiven. If thou castest me out this day from the face of the earth, and I shall be hidden from Thy presence, and I shall be groaning and trembling upon the earth, then it will be that any one that finds me shall slay me. And the Lord God said to him, Not so, any one that slays Cain shall suffer sevenfold vengeance; and the Lord God set a mark upon Cain that no one that found him might slay him. So Cain went forth from the presence of God and dwelt in the land of Nod over against Eden.

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Adam and Eve placing Abel's body in the tomb.

Fresco from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.

Here St. Ephraim says:

God appears to him without anger, so that if he repents, the prayer pronounced by his lips might wash away the sin of murder performed by his hands, but if he does not repent, then a heavy punishment 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?”¹⁰

St. John Chrysostom notes the difference between the curse pronounced on Adam and that pronounced on Cain:

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Cain building a city, called Enoch.
Fresco from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.

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 earth in thy labors” (Gen. 3:17) 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. 3:14), so also was it to Cain, because he acted similarly.¹¹

After this, Cain finally did admit his guilt; but it was too late. St. John Chrysostom says:

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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.¹²

One should add to this that his confession is more an admission of 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, as St. Ephraim states, there is no intermarriage between the offspring of Cain and those of the other children of Adam.¹³ The mark was placed on Cain to prevent revenge from being taken against him by these his relatives.¹⁴ And so there are two parallel lines of humanity: as it were images of the true followers of God and apostates from Him, or as Blessed Augustine later described it, the City of God and the City of Man.

4:17–22 And Cain knew his wife, and having conceived she bore Enoch; and he built a city; and he named the city after the name of his son, Enoch. And to Enoch was born Gaidad; and Gaidad begot Maleleel; and Maleleel begot Methusalah; and Methusalah begot Lamech. And Lamech took to himself two wives; the name of the one was Ada, and the name of the second Sella. And Ada bore Jobel; he was the father of those that dwell in tents, feeding cattle. And the name of his brother was Jubal; he it was who invented the psaltery and harp. And Sella also bore Thobel; he was a smith, a manufacturer both of brass and iron; and the sister of Thobel was Noëma.

From where did the wife of Cain come? She came from among the daughters of Adam. Adam is the one from whom everyone comes. The book of Genesis mentions as his children only Cain, Abel and Seth, but they were only the first ones; there were many others. Later, in Genesis 5:4–5, we read that Adam lived seven hundred years after begetting Seth, during which time “he begot sons and daughters.” Adam

was given the command to increase and multiply, and he lived for nine hundred and thirty years. Therefore, there must have been hundreds of children.

This leads to a second question: “How is it that Cain could marry his own sister? Isn’t this against the laws of the Orthodox Church?” Of course, this was at the beginning of time, so they had a different law; they were not living under the law we have now.* In those days people lived to be nine hundred years old. Obviously

* “You see,” explained St. John Chrysostom, “since it was in the beginning and the human race had to increase from then on, it was permissible to marry their own sisters” (*Homilies on Genesis* 20.1, FC 82, p. 37 [20.3]). Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus discussed this in more detail, elucidating God’s intentions: “Whom did Cain marry? His sister, of course. At that time, this was not an offense, no law forbidding it, especially since there was no other way to provide for the increase of the human race. God willed that all the nations of humanity be brought into being from one man and one woman: first, so that springing from one couple, they would perceive that they all possessed the same basic nature; second, so that growing from one root, they would be joined in harmony. If even after the God of the universe arranged things like this, they dare to commit countless murders, what would they stop at if they thought themselves descended from different parents? Therefore, He formed one man from the earth, created one woman from him, and filled the whole world with their offspring. To achieve this goal, He allowed intercourse of brother and sister in the beginning, but when the race had increased, he made this kind of marriage unlawful (cf. Lev. 18:9). Hence, in the Ark along with Noah and his sons he saved also the wives of his sons, so that the boys could be married to their cousins” (*Questions on Genesis* 43, LEC 1, p. 93). (See also St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 39.6, trans. Frank Williams, vol. 1, p. 259.)

The challenge “Where did Cain get his wife?” has often been raised by unbelievers in order to cast doubt on the historicity of Holy Scripture. His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of Serbia (1914–2009) answered this challenge by quoting the teaching of St. John Chrysostom and Blessed Theodoret cited above. “There is no doubt,” Patriarch Pavle wrote, “that God could have created a wife for Cain in the same way that he created Adam from earth and Eve from Adam, but He did not do that. Instead, He allowed that Cain and Seth take their sisters as wives” (Patriarch Pavle, *Clarifying Some Questions about Our Faith*, vol. 1 [in Serbian], p. 16). It is noteworthy that, in upholding the Scriptural-Patristic teaching that Adam and Eve were specially created by God and that all the people in the world are descended from them, Patriarch Pavle left no room for an evolutionary interpretation of human origins.—ED.

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humanity was quite different from the way we know it today, even physically.*

In Genesis 4:17–22 we see the beginnings of civilization as we know it: the first city, the first crafts, the first arts. It is obvious that what is given here is no more than a hint of all that went on then, but this is already enough to give us a picture quite different from that presented by the evolutionary view of man's origins. In the Biblical view, what one might call "advanced" characteristics of civilization come at the very beginning, and the first city is already founded by the son of the first man. Nothing is said of the population of the world in the generations of Adam, but it is obvious that, with the long life of the early Patriarchs and the command given them by God to increase and multiply, within a few generations there must have been many thousands if not millions of people.

(Rationalist Biblical scholars, seeing the beginnings of man in primitive, stone-age cave-dwellers, deny the very existence of Cain and Abel as historical persons. To them it is all a moral tale.)

Lamech is the first man of whom it is said that he had two wives. Apparently this custom, which appears more commonly after the Flood, was a rarity in the days of the first Patriarchs.

4:23–24 And Lamech said to his wives, Ada and Sella, Hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech, consider my words, because I have slain a man

* The reason why union between siblings and cousins did not entail the risk of producing deformed offspring at the beginning of human history, but became increasingly hazardous later on, can be explained by the accumulation of genetic mistakes (recessive mutations) within the human genome over many generations. In mankind's current condition of genetic deterioration, the more closely related two people are, the more likely it is that they will have similar mistakes in their genes. Thus, if siblings or cousins have children together, recessive mutations are more likely to "pair" together and result in deformities.

There also appears to be a link between the accumulation of mistakes in the human genome and a reduction of life expectancy. Inbred children have a considerably reduced life expectancy, since inbreeding exposes acquired mistakes within the genome which have not yet had time to "come to the surface" in the human race as a whole. See Dr. J. C. Sanford, *Genetic Entropy & the Mystery of the Genome*, pp. 150–51, and Ken Ham, general ed., *The New Answers Book*, pp. 71–74.—ED.

Lamech in the presence of his wives, Ada and Sella, repenting of his sin of murder.
Fresco from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.



to my sorrow and a youth to my grief. Because vengeance has been exacted seven times on Cain's behalf, on Lamech's it shall be seventy times seven.

This passage has been interpreted in various ways, but the simplest explanation is that of St. John Chrysostom, who says that it indicates the voice of conscience in Lamech, who openly confessed his sin and declared himself worthy of greater punishment than Cain (for he had already seen Cain's punishment for the crime of murder).¹⁵

4:25–26 *And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore a son, and called his name Seth, saying, For God has raised up to me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew. And Seth had a son, and he called his name Enosh: he hoped to call on the name of the Lord God.*

Here the text returns to the main line from Adam (through whom the Savior's genealogy will be traced). Seth means “substitute.”

Verse 26 is different in Hebrew: “Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.” In either case it indicates apparently the beginning

of more formal worship of God, bound up with the name of Enosh;* this is also why the descendants of Seth are called in chapter 6 the “sons of God.”

3. The Genealogy from Adam through Seth to Noah

5:1–21 This is the genealogy of men in the day in which God made Adam; in the image of God He made him: male and female He made them, and blessed them; and He called his name Adam, in the day in which He made them. And Adam lived two hundred and thirty years, and begot a son after his own form, and after his own image, and he called his name Seth. And the days of Adam, which he lived after his begetting Seth, were seven hundred years; and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Adam which he lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died. Now Seth lived two hundred and five years, and begot Enosh. And Seth lived after his begetting Enosh, seven hundred and seven years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died. And Enosh lived an hundred and ninety years, and begot Cainan. And Enosh lived after his begetting Cainan, seven hundred and fifteen years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, and he died. And Cainan lived an hundred and seventy years, and he begot Maleleel. And Cainan lived after his begetting Maleleel, seven hundred and forty years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died. And Maleleel lived an hundred and sixty and five years, and he begot Jared. And Maleleel lived after his begetting Jared, seven hundred and thirty years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Maleleel were eight hundred and ninety and five years, and he died. And Jared lived an hundred and sixty and two years, and begot Enoch: and Jared lived after his

* St. Cyril of Jerusalem counts Enosh among the “righteous men and prophets” of the Old Testament, upon whom the Holy Spirit came down (*Catechetical Lectures* 16.27, NPNF 2 7, p. 122). St. Gregory Palamas says of him: “Enosh lived in a way that pleased God more than anyone else in his day” (*Homily* 57.6, trans. Christopher Veniamin, p. 470).—ED.

begetting Enoch, eight hundred years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty and two years, and he died. And Enoch lived an hundred and sixty and five years, and begat Methusalah.

This passage has several questions for us.

1. All the early Patriarchs lived nine hundred years or so, something fantastic to us who attain eighty or ninety years with great difficulty, which has been the case with mankind since before the times of David the Psalmist. Here there is a temptation for rationalist criticism to “reinterpret” the text. But all the Holy Fathers accept it just as it is written:^{*} men at that time, in the first centuries after the creation, were really very different physically from us.^{**} In chapter 3

* For example, St. Irenaeus writes: “[In order to learn] that bodies did continue in existence for a lengthened period, as long as it was God’s good pleasure that they should flourish, let [these heretics] read the Scriptures, and they will find that our predecessors advanced beyond seven hundred, eight hundred, and nine hundred years of age; and that their bodies kept pace with the protracted length of their days, and participated in life as long as God willed that they should live” (*Against Heresies* 5.5.1, ANF 1, p. 530).—ED.

** As mentioned above (p. 304n), reduction of life expectancy over many generations can be linked to an accumulation of genetic mistakes. As Dr. J. C. Sanford, a professor of genetics at Cornell University, has written: “If the genome is deteriorating, our species is not evolving. There appears to be a close parallel between the aging of a species and the aging of an individual. Both seem to involve the progressive accumulation of mutations. Mutations accumulate both within our reproductive cell lines and our body cell lines. Either way, the misspellings accumulate until a threshold is reached when things rapidly start to fall apart. This results in a distinct upper range for life-span” (Sanford, *Genetic Entropy*, p. 150).

Dr. Sanford has also shown that the Biblical record of declining life-spans after Noah “clearly reveals an exponential decay curve. This curve can only be described as biological.... This unexpected trend in the Biblical data is amazing. We are forced to conclude that the writer of Genesis either faithfully recorded an exponential decay of human life-spans or fabricated the data using sophisticated mathematical modeling.... The most rational conclusion is that the data are real, and that human life expectancy was once hundreds of years, but has progressively declined to current values. The most obvious explanation for such declining life-spans, in light of all the above discussions, would be genetic deterioration due to mutation” (*ibid.*, pp. 151–52).—ED.

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At left: Righteous Seth. At right: Seth's son Righteous Enosh.
Frescos from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.

we discussed a little of the climate of the world before the Flood, when there was no rainbow because of the firmament of vapor encircling the earth, giving a moderate climate and filtering out harmful radiation. Life was really quite different then (even Paradise was still visible, as we have seen), and if we put off our prejudices derived from pictures of crude stone-age cave-dwellers, there is no reason for us not to accept this fact.

2. The second question concerns the genealogy itself: why was this so important as to be recorded? Because the evolutionary theory requires some hundreds of thousands of years for the history of mankind, rationalist critics are forced to reinterpret this genealogy, stating either that there are gaps of thousands of years in it, or else that at least some of the Patriarchs were not real people at all, but simply names signifying vast epochs. If so, then of course there is no genealogy here at all.

But the Holy Fathers are unanimous in stating that this list of names is precisely a genealogy, and it is important not merely as preserving



Adam.

*Fresco by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration
of the Savior, Novgorod, Russia, 1378.*



Abel (detail).



Seth (detail).

*Frescos by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration
of the Savior, Novgorod, Russia, 1378.*



Above: Enosh, the son of Seth.
*Fresco by Master Dionysius, Russia,
ca. 1500.*



At left: Jared, a descendant of
Enosh.
Russian icon of the sixteenth century.



Enoch, the son of Jared (detail).
*Fresco by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration
of the Savior, Novgorod, Russia, 1378.*

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details of the early history of mankind, but above all because it is the genealogy of *Christ*. The whole genealogy of Christ is given in Luke, chapter 3* (Matthew, chapter 1 carries it only back to Abraham), and the Fathers are very careful to harmonize any seeming inconsistencies in the names (for example, St. Gregory the Theologian in his Homily on this subject) so as to preserve it as a precise genealogy. We have to choose: to be with the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers, or with the modern rationalist critics who take their wisdom from the speculations (not the facts) of modern scientists.

3. From the number of years indicated in this passage (and later passages in Genesis), it is possible to calculate the age of mankind. According to the numbers in the Septuagint text of the Old Testament, we are now in the year 7490 from the creation of Adam.** The Hebrew text has somewhat different numbers, giving a total age of mankind over a thousand years less. The Fathers were never troubled over this difference (Blessed Augustine, for example, explains it in *The City of God* as a matter of secondary importance),*** but they accepted without question both the great age of the early Patriarchs and the approximate age of mankind as some four to five thousand years at the

* On the genealogy of Christ given by St. Luke (Luke 3:23–38), see pp. 630–31, 631nn, 661, 672 below.—ED.

** I.e., in 1982, during the second segment of Fr. Seraphim's Genesis course.—ED.

*** Discussing at length what he calls “that discrepancy of numbers which is found to exist between our own [Septuagint] and the Hebrew text,” Blessed Augustine points out that this discrepancy “does not touch the longevity of the ancients”—the veracity of which he upholds and defends (*City of God* 15.9–15, NPNF 1 2, pp. 291–97; here, 15.14, p. 295; see also p. 387 below).

Elsewhere in *The City of God*, written in A.D. 413–426, Blessed Augustine argues against those chronologies, such as the Egyptian, which assign a greater age to the world than does the Biblical chronology: “Let us omit the conjectures of men who know not what they say, when they speak of the nature and origin of the human race.... They are deceived by those highly mendacious documents which profess to give the history of many thousands of years, though reckoning by the sacred writings we find that not 6,000 years have passed.” Augustine goes on to say that the ancient Greek chronology “does not exceed the true account of the duration of the world as it is given in our documents [i.e., the Scriptures], which are truly sacred” (*City of God* 12.10, p. 232).—ED.

birth of Christ (actually, just over 5,500 according to the Septuagint text).*

4. Beginning with Genesis chapter 5 we follow the history of what can already be called a “chosen people”: a people dedicated to God, handing down the traditions of true worship and piety, and preparing ultimately to give birth to the promised Messiah. Thus, little is said of the descendants of Cain; they are not the chosen people. The descendants of Seth are, and even they eventually become corrupt and are destroyed, save for one man (Noah) and his sons.

* The earliest extant Christian writings on the age of the world according to the Biblical chronology are by St. Theophilus (ca. 115–181), the sixth bishop of Antioch from the Apostles, in his apologetic work *To Autolycus* 3.24–30 (ANF 2, pp. 118–21); by St. Hippolytus of Rome (ca. 170–236), a disciple of St. Irenaeus, in his *Chronicle* (ed. Adolf Bauer, pp. 194–200); and by Julius Africanus (ca. 160–ca. 240), in his *Five Books of Chronography* (ANF 6, pp. 130–38). All of these early Christian writers, following the Septuagint version of the Old Testament, determined the age of the world to have been approximately 5,500 years at the birth of Christ.

The common Byzantine Christian reckoning, also derived from the Septuagint, placed the date of creation at 5,509 B.C. This date underwent minor revisions before being finalized in the seventh century A.D., and served as the starting point of the Calendar of the Byzantine Empire and the Eastern Orthodox Church, known as the Imperial Creation Era of Constantinople. The Creation Era was referenced in Canon 3 of the Quinisext Council held in Constantinople in 692, which the Orthodox Church considers as ecumenical, its canons being added to the acts of the Fifth and Sixth Councils (*The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, NPNF 2 14, p. 362). The Eastern Church avoided the use of the Christian Era (B.C.–A.D.), since the date of Christ's birth was debated in Constantinople as late as the fourteenth century (see E. J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World*, p. 73 ; E. G. Richards, *Mapping Time*, p. 107; V. Grumel, *La Chronologie*, p. 62; and Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, p. 108). When Russia received Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium, she inherited the Imperial Creation Era. The creation of the world was used as the starting point of the calendar of the Russian Empire until the Westernizing reforms of Peter I at the beginning of the eighteenth century (see Nicholas Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, p. 244), and it still forms the basis of traditional Orthodox calendars up to today.

Fr. Seraphim writes that “even the most mystical Fathers” accepted without question the common understanding of the Church that the world was created “more or less” in 5,500 B.C. See pp. 459, 642, 642n, 663 below.—ED.

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5:22–24 And Enoch was well-pleasing to God after his begetting Methusalah, two hundred years, and he begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty and five years. And Enoch was well-pleasing to God, and was not found, because God translated him.

Of Enoch St. Paul says precisely: “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God” (Heb. 11:5).

According to Patristic tradition, Enoch, who so pleased God that he did not die but was translated, will return at the end of the world, together with Elias (Elijah) who was taken up alive “by a whirlwind as though into heaven” (IV Kingdoms [II Kings] 2:1, 11, LXX),* to

* St. Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 5.5.1) and St. Athanasius (*Defense of the Nicene Definition* 3.6) wrote that Enoch was translated to Paradise, and St. Ephraim expressed this idea conjecturally in two places (*Commentary on Genesis* 5.2.1; *Nisibene Hymns* 36.7). St. Gregory Palamas (*Homily* 53.31) rejects the idea that Enoch was translated into heaven (i.e., the Heavenly Kingdom), and cites the words of Christ in this regard: “No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man Who is in heaven” (John 3:13). Elsewhere, speaking of such pre-Christ translations (Elijah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah), St. Gregory says: “The ascension of each of those mentioned was just a sort of movement lifting them up from the ground without taking them out of the area surrounding the earth” (*Homily* 21.2, trans. Christopher Veniamin, p. 171).

Other Holy Fathers who speak of Enoch’s translation (e.g., St. Cyprian of Carthage, *On Mortality* 23; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 3.6; St. Gregory the Theologian, *Orations* 28.18, 41.4, 43.70; St. Ambrose, *Isaac, or the Soul* 1.1; idem, *On the Decease of His Brother Satyrus* 1.30; St. John Cassian, *Conferences* 3.7) do not venture to explain precisely where he went. St. John Chrysostom says it is best to leave as a mystery what happened to Enoch after he was translated: “If someone were anxious to be meddlesome and ask, ‘Where did He take him? Has he continued to live until the present?’ let that person learn not to follow human reasoning or to pry into God’s doings but to believe what is said. In other words, when God reveals anything, we shouldn’t question what is said but rather treat with the highest regard the words spoken by God, even if they do not correspond to the things that lie before us plain to see. I mean, the fact that God took him away to another place Sacred Scripture has told us, as well as the fact that God took him while living without his having experienced death.... But where he took him, or what kind of life he lives now, these further details were not given” (*Homilies on*

preach the Second Coming of Christ; they will die as martyrs at that time, being resurrected after three and a half days (Apoc. chap. 11).*

5:25–32 And Methusalah lived an hundred and sixty and seven years, and begot Lamech. And Methusalah lived after his begetting Lamech eight hundred and two years, and begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Methusalah which he lived, were nine hundred and sixty and nine years, and he died. And Lamech lived an hundred and eighty and eight years, and begot a son. And he called his name Noah, saying, this one will cause us to cease from our works, and from the toils of our hands, and from the earth, which the Lord God has cursed. And Lamech lived after his begetting Noah, five hundred and sixty and five years, and begot sons and daughters. And all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and fifty-three years, and he died. And Noah was five hundred years old, and he begot three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.

These verses contain the genealogy of mankind down to Noah—the whole of humanity down to the Flood, which occurred about two thousand years from the creation.

Lamech prophesied, giving his son the name Noah, which means “rest,” that in his days there would be an end to the sins of humanity—the Flood.

Genesis 21.4, PG 53.180–81, FC 82, pp. 60–61 [21.13–14]*; see also *idem*, *Homilies on Hebrews* 22.5, NPNF 1 14, p. 467). In like manner Blessed Theodoret, responding to the question of where Enoch went, counsels his readers, “We should not pry into secrets but be grateful for what is written” (*Questions on Genesis* 45, LEC 1, p. 95).—ED.

* The identification of the “two witnesses” mentioned in Apocalypse 11:3–12 with Enoch and Elias is found in the writings of St. Hippolytus (*On Christ and Antichrist* 43; *Commentary on Daniel* 4.35), Tertullian (*A Treatise on the Soul* 50), Lactantius (*The Manner in Which the Persecutors Died* 2), Blessed Augustine (*Letter* 193), Oecumenius (*Commentary on the Apocalypse* 11.3–6), Archbishop Andrew of Caesarea (*Commentary on the Apocalypse* 30), St. Bede the Venerable (*Explanation of the Apocalypse* 4), and St. John Damascene (*On the Orthodox Faith* 4.26).—ED.



The “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” (detail).

*Fresco from Decani Monastery,
Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.*

4. The Corruption of Mankind

6:1–4 *And it came to pass when men began to be numerous upon the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God, having seen the daughters of men that they were beautiful, took to themselves wives of all whom they chose. And the Lord God said, My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men forever, because they are flesh, but their days shall be an hundred and twenty years.*

In the Patristic understanding, the “sons of God” were the offspring of Seth, the chosen people who were to preserve themselves in virtue. They were living in a higher place, along the boundary of Para-

dise. They were called “sons of God” because through them Christ was to come.

The “daughters of men” were the offspring of Cain. They were the forbidden people, the outcasts. The sons of God were supposed to keep themselves pure, and were not supposed to marry into the line of Cain. (Later on, this same idea was related to the Jews, who were supposed to keep themselves separate from everyone else.) The sons of God were to keep themselves separate so that they could become progenitors of the Savior.

St. Ephraim states that a preponderance of daughters were born to the offspring of Cain, indicating the dying out of Cain’s race and their desire to marry the sons of Seth so as to preserve their race.¹⁶ The sons of God, being moved by carnal lust, departed from the command of God that they should be separate from all those who were of Cain. They fell into the trap, and the whole of mankind became corrupt—became “flesh” or fleshly.* St. Paul says: “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8).

The “hundred and twenty years” refer not to the life-span of man, but to the time given for repentance before the Flood—again indicating God’s mercifulness.**

Some have speculated that the “sons of God” were heavenly beings or angels. The Holy Fathers were aware of this interpretation and they

* St. Ephraim explains that “the daughters of Cain adorned themselves and became a snare to the eyes of the sons of Seth.... The entire tribe of Seth ... was stirred to a frenzy over them.... Because the sons of Seth were going in to the daughters of Cain, they turned away from their first wives whom they had previously taken. Then these wives, too, disdained their own continence and now, because of their husbands, quickly began to abandon their modesty which up until that time they had preserved for their husbands’ sake. It is because of this wantonness that assailed both the men and the women, that Scripture says, ‘all flesh had corrupted its way’ (Gen. 6:13)” (*Commentary on Genesis* 6.3.1–3, FC 91, p. 135).—ED.

** St. Ephraim writes: “If they repent during this time they will be saved from the wrath that is about to come upon them. But if they do not repent, by their deeds they will call down [the wrath] upon themselves. Grace granted one hundred and twenty years for repentance to a generation that, according to Justice, was not worthy of repentance” (*Commentary on Genesis* 6.4.1, FC 91, p. 136).—ED.

AN ORTHODOX PATRISTIC COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

refuted it, saying that angels cannot beget men.* Ancient speculations about angels mating with men, and modern speculations of outer-space beings, are of course empty tales based on idle fantasies.

6:5 Now the giants were upon the earth in those days; and after that when the sons of God were wont to go in to the daughters of men, they bore children to them, those were the giants of old, the men of renown.

By “giants” here we do not need to understand enormous men. According to St. Ephraim, the offspring of Seth, the chosen race, were tall

* The identification of the “sons of God” as angels or heavenly beings was based in part on the apocryphal book of Enoch. A common rabbinical interpretation of the first and second centuries A.D., it can be found in the Jewish writers Flavius Josephus (*The Antiquities of the Jews* 1.3) and Philo of Alexandria (*The Giants*), as well as in some Gnostic writings (e.g., the Valentinian Exposition). Some Holy Fathers and Christian writers of the second and third centuries A.D. accepted this interpretation: St. Justin Martyr (*Apology* 1.5), Athenagoras of Athens (*A Plea for the Christians* 24–25), St. Irenaeus of Lyons (*Against Heresies* 4.36.4; *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 18), Clement of Alexandria (*The Instructor* 3.2), Tertullian (*On Idolatry* 9; *On the Veiling of Virgins* 7; *On the Apparel of Women* 1.2), St. Cyprian of Carthage (*On the Dress of Virgins* 14), and Lactantius (*Divine Institutes* 2.15).

The first extant Christian reference to the “sons of God” as the descendants of Seth is in the *Five Books of Chronography* by the third-century Christian writer Julius Africanus (ca. 160–ca. 240) (Fragment 2, in ANF 6, p. 131). With the rejection of the canonicity of the book of Enoch at the Church Council of Laodicea in 364, the idea that the “sons of God” were angels began to pass away, and the view that they were the purely human descendants of Seth began to prevail. Except for St. Ambrose of Milan (*On Noah* 4.8), the Holy Fathers who wrote on this subject after the Council of Laodicea held that the “sons of God” were Sethites. These include: St. Ephraim the Syrian (*Commentary on Genesis* 6.3; *Hymns on the Nativity* 1.48; *Hymns on Faith* 46.9; *Hymns against Heresies* 19.1–8; *Hymns on Paradise* 1.11), St. John Chrysostom (*Homilies on Genesis* 22.2–3 [22.6–8]), St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Gaphyra on Genesis* 2.2), Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus (*Questions on Genesis* 47), Blessed Augustine (*City of God* 15.23), St. John Cassian (*Conferences* 8.20–21), and St. Gregory Palamas (*Topics of Natural and Theological Science* 62; *Homily* 57.5).

From the standpoint of Orthodox Christian faith, we can say that the “Sethite” interpretation prevailed in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit because it is the true one, whereas the identification of the “sons of God” as angels runs counter to Orthodox doctrine. For further discussion concerning this matter of Scriptural interpretation, see pp. 412–13, 412n, 413n below.—ED.

LIFE OUTSIDE PARADISE

and full in stature, while the offspring of Cain, the cursed one, were small.* When these two races mixed, the tallness of the Sethites prevailed. The “giant” stature of the men—the descendants of Seth—before the Flood is apparently one of the attributes of humanity that was lost with the new climactic conditions of the post-Flood world.

Perhaps these “giants” with their mighty deeds of strength (manifest perhaps in wars with the offspring of Cain) were the origin of the “gods” of later legend in Greece and other lands.

* St. Ephraim explains how this came to be: “The house of Cain, because the earth had been cursed so as not to give them its strength, produced small harvests, deprived of its strength, just as it is today that some seeds, fruits, and grasses give strength and some do not. Because, at that time, they were cursed and sons of the cursed and were dwelling in the land of curses, they would gather and eat produce that lacked nutrition, and those who ate these were without strength just like the food that they ate. As for the Sethites, on the other hand, because they were the descendants of the blessed [Seth] and were dwelling in the land along the boundary of the fence of Paradise, their produce was abundant and full of strength. So too were the bodies of those that ate that produce strong and powerful” (*Commentary on Genesis* 6.5.1, FC 91, p. 136).—ED.



Righteous Noah.
*Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan,
Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos,
1545–1546.*

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Flood

(Genesis 6:6–8:22)

6:6–8 And the Lord God having seen that the wicked actions of men were multiplied upon the earth, and that every one in his heart was intently brooding over evil continually, then God laid it to heart [Hebrew: repented] that He had made man upon the earth, and He pondered it deeply. And God said, I will blot out man whom I have made from the face of the earth, even man with cattle, and reptiles with flying creatures of the sky, for I am grieved that I have made them.

Here the narrative emphasizes the universality of evil, affecting old and young alike (much as in our own days).

God, of course, does not “repent” that he made man—this is an adaptation to our earthly understanding.¹ He simply resolves to punish men and make a new beginning with his righteous man, Noah, who is to become like a new Adam.

Just as the whole of creation was made for man and is to be renewed with him at the end of this world, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, so too the creation perishes together with the unrighteous men of Noah’s time.*

* St. Ambrose observes: “What transgression could the irrational creatures have ever committed? But since they had been created for the sake of man, after that for whom they had been created was wiped out, it was logical that they were destroyed too, because there was no one who could profit from them. This is also clear in a deeper sense. Man is a mind endowed with reason. Man is defined as a living, mortal and rational being. When he who is the principal element, disappears, every aspect of sensible life also disappears” (*On Noah* 4.10, ACCS: Old Testament 1, p. 128). St. John Chrysostom says the same: “You see, since human beings, for whom these creatures had been created, were due to perish and to disappear from sight, it was appropriate that they, too, should be affected by the punishment with them” (*Homilies on Genesis* 23.1, FC 82, p. 89 [23.3]).—ED.

6:9–11 But Noah found grace before the Lord God. And these are the generations of Noah. Noah was a just man; being perfect in his generation, Noah was well-pleasing to God. And Noah begot three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.

The Fathers emphasize how great was the virtue of Noah to be so perfect in the midst of a corrupt generation, and therefore how possible it is for us to be virtuous even when living in such corrupt times as our own.*

In noting that Noah had only three children (while Adam and others of the Patriarchs possibly had hundreds), the Fathers point to the chastity of Noah, who abstained even from the lawful marriage bed.**

6:12–14 The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with iniquity. And the Lord God saw the earth, and it was corrupted; because all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And the Lord God said to Noah, A period of all men is come before Me; because the earth has been filled with iniquity by them, and, behold, I destroy them and the earth.

Here St. John Chrysostom emphasizes how God speaks to Noah face to face about this plan for mankind. He as it were says to Noah: “Men have performed so much evil that their impiety has poured out and covered the whole earth. Therefore I will destroy both them and the earth. Since they themselves have already destroyed themselves beforehand by their iniquities, I will bring complete perdition and exterminate them and the earth, so that the earth might be cleansed and delivered from the defilement of so many sins.”²

* St. John Chrysostom devoted an entire homily to the righteousness of Noah: *Homilies on Genesis* 23, FC 82, pp. 87–103. On the same theme, see also St. Chrysostom’s *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John* 71.3, NPNF 1 14, p. 262.—ED.

** Citing Genesis 5:32—“And Noah was five hundred years old, and he begot three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth”—St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: “During this entire time Noah was an example to his sons by his virtue, for he had preserved his virginity for five hundred years among those of whom it was said, ‘All flesh had corrupted its way’ (Gen. 6:13)” (*Commentary on Genesis* 6.1.1, FC 91, p. 134). Elsewhere, in his *Hymns*, St. Ephraim expresses the same thought in a poetic manner: “For Noah overcame the waves of lust, which had drowned in his generation the sons of Seth” (*Nisibine Hymns* 1.4, NPNF 2 13, p. 167).—ED.

THE FLOOD

Now God commands Noah to make an Ark:

6:15–17 Make therefore for thyself an Ark of square timber. Thou shalt make the Ark in compartments, and thou shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And thus shalt thou make the Ark; three hundred cubits the length of the Ark, and fifty cubits the breadth, and thirty cubits the height of it. Thou shalt narrow the Ark in making it, and in a cubit above thou shalt finish it, and the door of the Ark thou shalt make on the side; with lower, second, and third stories thou shalt make it.

A cubit is supposed to be the distance from the elbow to the end of the hand, roughly eighteen inches. Therefore the Ark, according to this, was approximately 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.*

This shows that it was a very unusual type of structure, apparently like a big boat—a three-dimensional, rectangular boat—whose sole purpose was to keep Noah and his children and the animals floating through the course of the Flood. The idea is that there is going to be a flood which will obliterate *everything*, and only those who are left in the Ark will be delivered.

Of course, one can imagine how long it would take for Noah to build the Ark, living in the midst of a corrupt generation. All the people were settled in a fairly close area, so probably the whole world knew about it. One can imagine, too, their response when Noah started building a boat four hundred fifty feet long and saying, “Beware, there’s going to be a big flood.” They probably took their neighbors down, pointed out these “crazy” people, and laughed at them; and their children probably came and threw rocks. The righteous were obeying the will of God, and people were laughing.

So it must have been a very strange command for a righteous man to receive. It shows he was in close contact with God. Like Abraham who was later prepared even to kill his own son because he knew God had spoken to him, so Noah who was righteous, speaking directly to God, obeyed the command he was given. The very building of such an

* These calculations are according to the “common cubit.” According to the “royal cubit” used in ancient architecture, the Ark would have been up to 515 feet long. See Tim Lovet, “Which Cubit for Noah’s Ark?,” *Journal of Creation*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2006), pp. 71–77.—ED.



Above: Noah's sons preparing to build the Ark.

At left: Noah and his sons building the Ark.

Frescos from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.



THE FLOOD

Coating the Ark
with pitch.
*Fresco from Decani
Monastery, Kosovo,
Serbia, 1338–1347.*



immense structure—which required a good part of that hundred and twenty years these people were given to repent—was to serve as a visible warning to mankind of impending disaster.*

6:18–19 *And behold I bring a flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven, and whatsoever things are upon the earth shall die. And I will establish My covenant with thee, and thou shall enter into the Ark, and thy sons and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.*

God reveals what He is to do with mankind, and establishes a covenant with Noah—a constantly recurring theme throughout sacred history: God makes an agreement with His chosen ones. God does His

* Christ spoke of the Flood of Noah's time when warning of His own Second Coming: "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark, and knew not until the Flood came and took them away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:37–39; see also Luke 17:26–27).—ED.

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Noah receiving the command of God and calling the animals into the Ark.

Contemporary Greek icon by George Nikolacopoulos.

will on earth not by His *fiat*, not by simply saying that is the way it has to be, but by finding a righteous man who will obey Him. God arranges that *men* will do His work on earth.

The sons of Noah were included in the Ark, says St. John Chrysostom, not because they were as virtuous as Noah (although they did avoid the evils of their time) but for the sake of Noah, just as St. Paul's companions were saved with him when he was shipwrecked (Acts 27:22–24).³

6:20–23 *And of all cattle and of all reptiles and of all wild beasts, even of all flesh, thou shalt bring by pairs of all, into the Ark, that thou mayest feed them with thyself: male and female they shall be. Of all winged birds after their kind and of all cattle after their kind, and of all reptiles creeping upon the earth after their kind, pairs of all shall come in to thee, male and female to be fed with thee. And thou shalt take to thyself of all kinds of food which ye eat, and thou shalt gather them to thyself, and it*

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shall be for thee and them to eat. And Noah did all things whatever the Lord God commanded him, so did he.

Here Noah is to put food in the Ark: vegetable food, with which the animals also were to be fed. It was to be stored up in great compartments in the Ark.

Again, one can imagine the mockery to which his contemporaries must have subjected him for such a seemingly insane project—and yet Noah obeyed God without question: truly a righteous man for whom the things of God come first and the opinions of man last. This is an inspiring example for us in our own corrupt days.

7:1–3 And the Lord God said to Noah, Enter thou and all thy family into the Ark, for thee have I seen righteous before Me in this generation. And of the clean cattle take in to thee sevens, male and female, and of the unclean cattle pairs male and female. And of clean flying creatures of the sky sevens, male and female, and of all unclean flying creatures pairs, male and female, to maintain seed on all the earth.

St. John Chrysostom asks the question how Noah knew the difference between “clean” and “unclean” animals before the law of Moses, when this distinction was made; and he answers: from the wisdom of his own nature implanted by God.⁴

And why were there to be seven pairs of clean animals, and two pairs of everything else? St. John Chrysostom tells the obvious answer: so that Noah could offer sacrifice when the Flood was over, without destroying any of the pairs. This is indeed what he did (Gen. 8:20). He also had to have animals to eat because, right after the Flood, God gives the command to eat meat.

Perhaps one reason for eating meat was that, after the Flood, when the windows of heaven were opened, apparently a whole new atmospheric condition prevailed. Also, as the Fathers suggest, man had by this time become lower, more fallen.*

* Blessed Theodoret suggests that one of the reasons why God allowed man to eat meat after the Flood was to make people less inclined to worship animals, “since only the worst fools will worship what they eat” (*Questions on Genesis* 55, LEC 1, p. 117).—ED.

Рече гдѣкнаю и ми чты: И вел дѣлъ твои иконы хъ.

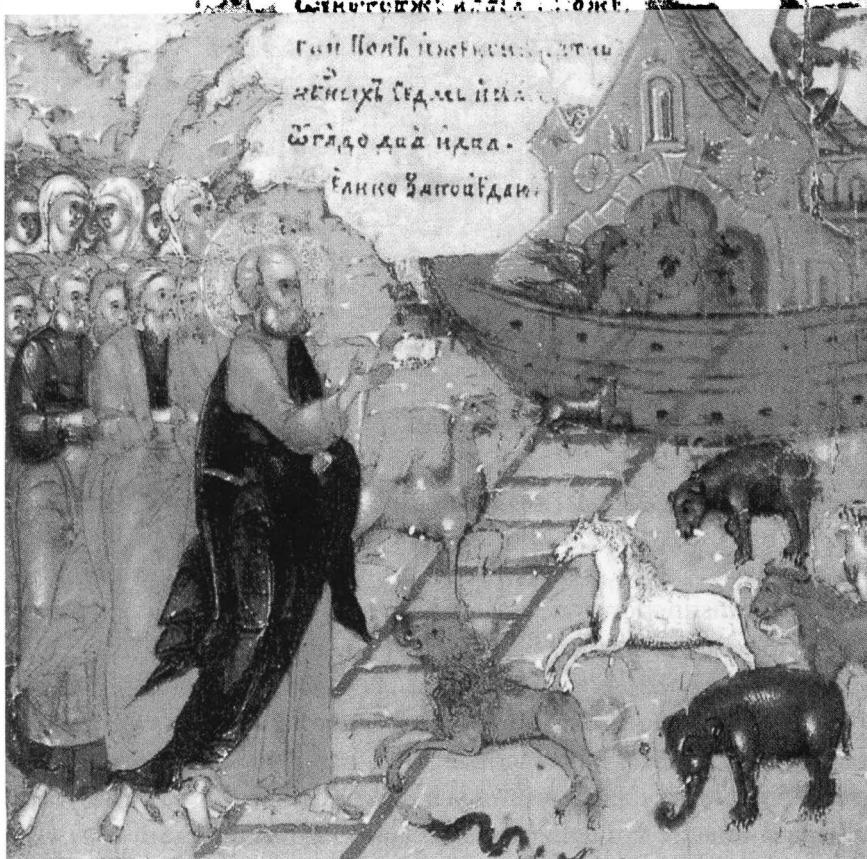
Синигетикъ и азъ. . . .

Годъ Покрова Пресвятой Богородицы.

Женскіхъ седалъ икона.

Штадо дѣлъ икона.

Елико Успенскаго.



Noah calling the animals into the Ark.

Detail of a Russian icon of the seventeenth century.

THE FLOOD



Noah (detail).
Fresco by Theophanes the Greek in the Church of the Transfiguration, Novgorod, Russia, 1378.

7:4–9 *For yet seven days having passed, I bring rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will blot out every offspring which I have made from the face of all the earth. And Noah did all things whatever the Lord God commanded him. And Noah was six hundred years old when the Flood of water was upon the earth. And then went in Noah and his sons and his wife, and his sons' wives with him into the Ark, because of the water of the Flood. And of clean flying creatures and of unclean flying creatures, and of clean cattle and of unclean cattle, and of all things that creep upon the earth, pairs went in to Noah into the Ark, male and female, as God commanded Noah.*

Modern rationalist critics, of course, have great problems with the whole story of Noah and the Ark. Could there have really been a vessel large enough to hold two of each type of creature (of course, excluding fish, insects and other creatures that might be able to survive on their

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own), and how could they have been gathered together from all over the world?*

Concerning the size of the Ark (which as we have said was roughly 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high), one modern estimate has found that such a vessel, divided into several floors as the text states, could easily hold two of every kind of animal alive today, with room to spare.**

Some rationalists object that the animals on other continents, for example America, could not have come to the Ark. However, if the Flood was really a worldwide catastrophe such as Genesis describes it in the verses that follow, we have no way of knowing what the earth looked like before it—the continents we know were formed by the Flood itself and geological processes that have operated since then. Perhaps there was only *one* continent then; we don't know.

How did the animals come? Of course, God sent them. The text does not describe Noah capturing and forcing them on board the Ark; they simply “went in.”*** The Fathers understand this quite simply and realistically. St. Ephraim writes:

On this very day there begin to come from the east elephants, from the south apes and peacocks, other animals assemble from the west,

* Such questions were raised by unbelievers even in ancient times. Blessed Augustine addresses them in *The City of God*, where, among other things, he points out that “it was not needful to preserve in the Ark the animals that can live in the water, whether the fishes that live submerged in it, or the sea-birds that swim on its surface” (*City of God* 15.27, NPNF 1 2, p. 307).—ED.

** In light of what has been said earlier on the difference between the created “kinds” described in the Bible (Gen. chap. 1) and the modern idea of “species” (see pp. 181–85, 181n, 184n above), it may be noted that the Ark needed only to carry animals representing the broader category of “kinds.” Also, large animals could have been represented on the Ark as juveniles rather than adults of full size.

The most thorough research into the question of how the Ark could have carried two of each “kind” has been conducted by John Woodmorappe; see his book *Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study* (1996).—ED.

*** The Greeks have the tradition of the semantron, the wooden board that is beaten when calling people to Matins, which is like Noah going out and calling all the animals to the Ark.—AUTH.

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and still others hastened to come from the north. The lions left their thickets, fierce beasts came out of their dens, the deer and wild asses came out of their wildernesses, the animals of the mountains assembled from the mountains. The contemporaries of Noah flocked together to such a new spectacle, but not for repentance, but to enjoy seeing how before their eyes there entered into the Ark lions, and right after them, without fear, the oxen hastened, seeking shelter together with them, how wolves and sheep entered together, falcons and sparrows, eagles and doves.⁵

In other words, it must have been quite a spectacular event. People looking at it would marvel: what's going on? The thought did not occur to them that something supernatural was occurring, which might move them to repentance.

Rationalist scholars, of course, would reject this account as full of miracles; but why shouldn't there be miracles here, as there are in all of God's dealings with righteous men? Noah is like a second Adam, in whose presence the wild beasts become meek and obedient.

For the same reason, the animals did not attack each other. Just as Adam was a righteous man and therefore the animals were at peace with one another around him, so too with Noah. In Orthodoxy, there is the concept of a *prepodobny*: a saint who has become like unto the first-created Adam. In the presence of such a righteous person, animals which are natural enemies become in harmony. We see this in numerous Lives of Saints, right up to very recent times. St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. Paul of Ochnora in Russia, and St. Herman in America, are a few examples.* The Holy Fathers say that is exactly what happened 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:

* See *Animals and Man: A State of Blessedness* by Dr. Joanne Stefanatos (1992), p. 239 above, and p. 478 below.—ED.

** St. John Chrysostom writes: "Along with everybody else, I too am amazed at the just man's [Noah's] virtue, and the Lord's goodness and love beyond all telling when I think of how he managed to live among the wild animals, namely, lions, panthers, bears, and the other fierce and untamed animals. Call to mind in this connection, I

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 in chapter 3), is a cosmic catastrophe of enormous proportions. At the same time, undoubtedly, there was volcanic activity, underground water was coming out, and all kinds of spectacular things were happening, which would account for the fact that there are high mountains now. The Flood was not necessarily over Mount Everest at thirty thousand feet; Mount Everest could have arisen after that. Before the Flood, it could have been that the mountains were fairly low, perhaps some few thousand feet high instead of thirty thousand feet high.**

The Scripture describes the waters of the Flood as being twenty-

ask you, dearly beloved, the esteem enjoyed by the first-formed human being before the fall, and consider God’s goodness: after his [Adam’s] transgression undermined the authority given him, the good Lord by contrast found another man capable of correcting that original image by preserving the imprint of virtue and demonstrating strict obedience to law. So He placed him once more in his pristine position of esteem, as if to teach us through this procedure the extent of the authority Adam had before the fall. Accordingly, the good man’s virtue profited from God’s loving kindness to restore the former control, and once more the wild animals recognized their subordination” (*Homilies on Genesis* 25.5, FC 82, p. 136 [25.16]).—ED.

* This is the claim both of “Christian evolutionists” and of most “old-earth/progressive creationists.”—ED.

** Commenting on 2 Peter 2:5—“And [God] spared not the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people”—St. Bede the Venerable writes on the change in the earth’s topography that occurred as a result of the Flood: “The world inhabited by those who existed before the Flood is the very same world in which the human race now lives, but it is nonetheless properly said to be the ‘ancient world,’ as if it were another, because, as is found written in the following parts of the Epistle, ‘the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished’ (2 Pet. 3:6), namely, both the heavens that existed formerly (cf. 2 Pet. 3:5) (that is, all the spaces of this present stormy atmosphere) were destroyed by the height of the increasing waters

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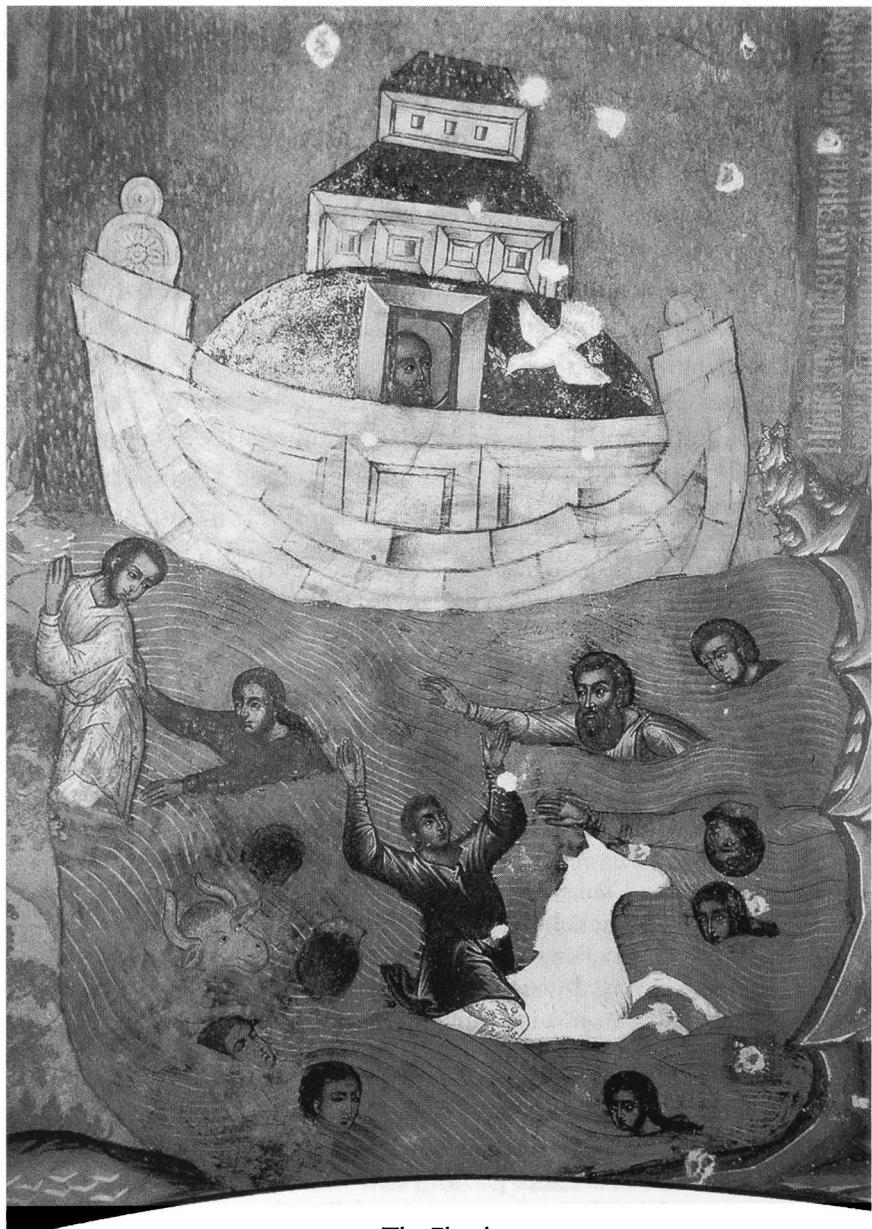
two and a half feet above the highest mountain. If it was only a local flood, how could you have flood waters that high in the area of Babylonia, without having water covering the whole earth? And if it was only a local flood, why didn't God simply tell Noah to leave the area ahead of time? Why did He have him build this Ark? Noah could have gone away from the Flood area, as Lot fled Sodom.

Furthermore, at the end of the Flood, God promises He will never again allow such a universal catastrophe (Gen. 9:11). Of course, after that there have been many severe local floods, but never a universal flood.*

In Roman Catholic books, some modern scholars say, "There must have been other people left in other parts of the world. Noah was just a symbol of this stage of mankind." But if the Flood was not universal,

and the land, too, was changed to another appearance by the destructive waters. For although some mountains and valleys are believed to have been in existence from the beginning, yet they were not the same size as they are now seen to be throughout the entire world. Perhaps this could be denied, except that even now we see the appearance of the land changed every year by the eroding waters. This action is believed to have been all the greater then in proportion to the stronger and longer-lasting force of the waters that surged up over and washed away the land" (*Commentary on 2 Peter*, CCSL 121.270, in *Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles*, trans. Dom David Hurst, p. 137*; see also p. 147).—ED.

* As has been well known since the compilations made by secular historians Richard Andree, Hermann Usener, and James George Frazer, accounts of a great Deluge are to be found in ancient cultures all over the world, on all the continents. In the majority of these Flood stories, the Deluge results from the sins of a fallen humanity, the old world is submerged under the waters, only a few people and animals are saved, and a new world comes into being (cf. Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. 1, pp. 62–63). Among the most fascinating Flood stories are those of the Australian Aboriginal peoples, which are replete with striking similarities to the Genesis account (see Howard Coates, "Australian Aboriginal Flood Stories," and "Aboriginal Flood Legend," *Creation*, vol. 4 [1981], no. 3, and vol. 5 [1982], no. 1). The almost universal dissemination of parallel Flood stories points to the fact that the Flood did occur and that the common ancestor of all modern peoples is Noah. Of all these stories, the Genesis account is the most detailed and systematic. The second-century Church writer St. Theophilus of Antioch, in acknowledging the various Flood accounts of the ancient Greeks, affirmed that only the Biblical account is accurate in all its details, "relating no fable" (*To Autolycus* 3.18, ANF 2, p. 116).—ED.



The Flood.
Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.

THE FLOOD

or at least if there were human survivors of it apart from Noah and his family, there is no point or meaning to this Biblical account of it. The whole point here is the totally new beginning of mankind that occurs with it.*

In recent years creation scientists have made fruitful geological investigations that do indeed point to a universal Flood some five

* Besides the verses of Genesis already quoted, the explicit, repeated statements in Genesis 7:21–23 about all of the earth's people, animals and birds dying in the Flood, with Noah and those with him on the Ark being left alone, make it clear that the destruction caused by the Flood was global, not local. In the New Testament, the universal nature of the Flood was affirmed by the Apostle Peter (2 Pet. 2:5, 3:6). St. Peter even predicted that, in the last times, people who ridicule the belief in Christ's Second Coming will at the same time be "willingly ignorant" that the whole world was destroyed by water: "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (2 Pet. 3:3–6).

Following the unequivocal words of Holy Scripture, the Holy Fathers who wrote about the Flood spoke of it as a universal catastrophe; none referred to it as a regional event. In the second century, St. Theophilus of Antioch specifically refuted Plato's idea that the Flood "extended not over the whole earth, but only over the plains, and that those who fled to the highest hills saved themselves" (*To Autolycus* 3.18–19, ANF 2, p. 116). For other Patristic testimony on the Flood as a cause of universal destruction, see, for example, St. Justin Martyr, *Apology* 2.7; St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.29.2; idem, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 19; St. Gregory the Theologian, *Orations* 28.17; St. Ambrose, *On the Duties of the Clergy* 3.18.108; St. Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies* 4.22, 9.6; St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 1.39.7; St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 25.2 (25.10), 25.6 (25.20) (see pp. 339–40 below); idem, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew* 6.9, 20.6; idem, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* 37.4; Blessed Augustine, *City of God* 13.24, 15.27; St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Gaphyra on Genesis* 2.31; St. Bede the Venerable, *Commentary on 1 Peter* 3:20; idem, *Homilies on the Gospels* 1.14; St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Ethical Discourses* 2.4; St. Gregory Palamas, *Homilies* 4.6, 6.16; and Blessed Theophylact, *Commentary on 1 Peter* 3:20.

In addition to affirming that all the people and animals in the world except those in the Ark perished in the Flood, the Fathers refer in many places to Noah as the new progenitor of the human race, the father of a new world; see references on p. 347nn below.—ED.

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thousand or so years ago (see John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood*).*

7:10 *And it came to pass after the seven days that the water of the Flood came upon the earth.*

During the seven days they are all getting into the Ark, adjusting themselves, finding their quarters, getting the people in charge of feeding set up, and dealing with other practical problems.

St. John Chrysostom describes this as a terrible experience: the smell of all the animals, with no windows looking out. Noah was supposed to take the food which was suitable for himself and feed it to the animals during that time. Undoubtedly it was a time of fasting and prayer and labor. They probably did not eat full meals.

Then the Flood is described:

7:11–17 *In the six hundredth year of the life of Noah, in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month,** on this day all the fountains of the abyss were broken up, and the floodgates of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. On that very day entered Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, the sons of Noah, and the wife of Noah, and the three wives of his sons with him into the Ark. And all the wild beasts after their kind, and all cattle after their kind, and every reptile moving itself on the earth after its kind, and every flying bird after its kind, went in to Noah into the Ark, pairs, male and female of all flesh in which is the breath of life. And they that entered went in male and female of all 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.

* An updated presentation of the same material may be found in the two-volume source book *Earth's Catastrophic Past* by Andrew A. Snelling (2009).—ED.

** According to the Orthodox Christian Calendar, which begins on September 1, we calculate this as the twenty-seventh of October.—AUTH.

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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.⁶ 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 heavens and all the beasts and other irrational creatures which dwelt in the mountains.⁷

Again he says:

Behold how the Scripture once and twice and many times informs us that there occurred a universal destruction, that not a single

* I.e., fifteen cubits above the top of the mountains.—AUTH.

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Noah emerging from the Ark.
Fresco from the Christian catacombs in Rome, third century.

creature was saved, but all drowned in the water—both men and animals.⁸

If people were so wicked then, did they all perish spiritually in the Flood? Were all of them condemned eternally for their sins or not?

In the Scriptures we are told specifically about those who were living at the time of Noah. In 1 Peter 3:18–20, the Apostle Peter describes how Christ descended to hades, and whom He saw there: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison [that is, in hades], which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” This

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“salvation by water,” says St. Peter, is an image of Baptism.* The Ark is an image of the Church, of being saved from the wicked world.**

This quote of St. Peter says distinctly that Christ went to preach to those who had perished in the time of Noah. Therefore, they had a chance to believe in Christ, although physically they had all died. After death, they had the excuse that Noah was not Christ or God Himself,

* St. Justin Martyr draws out both this and other typological connections between the Flood account and the salvation wrought by Christ: “Righteous Noah, along with the other mortals at the deluge, i.e., with his own wife, his three sons and their wives, being eight in number, were a symbol of the eighth day, wherein Christ appeared when He rose from the dead, for ever the first in power. For Christ, being ‘the firstborn of every creature’ (Col. 1:15), became again the chief of another race regenerated by Himself through water, and faith, and wood, containing the mystery of the Cross; even as Noah was saved by wood when he rode over the waters with his household” (*Dialogue with Trypho* 138, ANF 1, p. 268). St. Ambrose, too, calls forth Noah’s “salvation by water” as an image of Baptism, and the wood of the Ark as a prefiguration of the Cross (*On the Mysteries* 3.10–11, NPNF 2 10, p. 318). According to St. Symeon the New Theologian, “The Ark was a type of the Theotokos [Mother of God] and Noah of Christ, and the men with Noah were a first-fruit of the portion of the Jews, of those who would believe in Christ, while the wild beasts and the animals and birds and reptiles constituted a type of the Gentiles” (*Ethical Discourses* 2.4, PPS 14, p. 99). St. Gregory Palamas, who also presents Noah as a type of Christ, points out yet more parallels between the Old and New Testaments: “See how Noah clearly foreshadows Him Who was later to be born of the Virgin, for whose sake the election was made. For Noah was shown to be the savior, not of all the race of men in general, but of his own household, all of whom were saved through him. In the same way Christ, too, is the Savior of the race of men, not of all men in general, but of all His own household, that is of His Church; not, however, of the disobedient. Furthermore, the name Noah can be translated to mean ‘rest’ (cf. Gen. 5:29). But who is true ‘rest’ except the Virgin’s Son, Who says, ‘Come unto Me through repentance, all ye who labor and are heavy laden with sins, and I will give you rest’ (cf. Matt. 11:28), bestowing freedom, ease and eternal life upon you” (*Homily* 57.9, trans. Christopher Veniamin, pp. 471–72). On the typological connection between Noah and Christ, see also St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Hymns on the Nativity* 1.22–23; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 17.10; St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 32.6–8; Blessed Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of St. John* 9.11; St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra on Genesis* 2.32, 2.36; and St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily* 57.10.—ED.

** On the Ark as a type of the Church, see St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 17.10; Blessed Augustine, *Letters* 108, 164; St. Bede the Venerable, *Homilies on the Gospels* 1.12.—ED.

and now they had the chance to accept Christ. That, however, was up to each individual soul. Undoubtedly, some who had died in the Flood accepted Christ's preaching in hades, and some did not. Once one's heart grows hard, one does not accept Christ even though one knows that one should, that this is one's last chance. Pride gets in the way.*

8:1–3 And God remembered Noah, and all the wild beasts, and all the cattle, and all the birds, and all the reptiles that creep, as many as were with him in the Ark. And God brought a wind upon the earth, and the water stayed. And the fountains of the deep were closed up, and the flood-gates of heaven, and the rain from heaven was withheld. And the water subsided and went off the earth, and after an hundred and fifty days the water was diminished.

"And God remembered Noah" does not mean that He had forgotten him in the meantime. It means that God kept him in mind to save him. Such expressions are anthropomorphic, so that we can understand.⁹

The Flood was a hundred and fifty days going up—almost half a year! All that time, Noah was in the Ark without any ventilation or sunshine. The whole sky was covered with darkness. Then the water went down for a hundred and fifty days. Altogether, the earth was covered with water for a year. At that time the land was rising up, tremendous underground reservoirs were being filled, and the whole geography that we now know was being formed.

* St. Cyril of Alexandria writes of how Christ delivered from hell some but not all of those who had died before His coming: "Going in His soul, [Christ] preached to those who were in hell, appearing to them as one soul to other souls ... so that He might save all those who would believe in Him. For both those who were alive on earth during the time of His incarnation and those who were in hell had a chance to acknowledge Him.... While Christ was able to preach to all those who were alive at the time of His appearing and those who believed in Him were blessed, so too was He able to liberate those in hell who believed and acknowledged Him, by His descent there. However, the souls of those who practiced idolatry and outrageous ungodliness, as well as those who were blinded by fleshly lusts, did not have the power to see Him, and they were not delivered" (*Catena on 1 Peter 3:18–20*, ACCS: New Testament 11, pp. 107–8).—ED.

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8:3 And the Ark rested in the seventh month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.

It came finally to rest on the mountains of Ararat, that is, the region of Ararat. There are several peaks, but there are two main peaks of Ararat. It came to rest in the seventh month, the twenty-seventh day, exactly five months after it had begun to rain.

8:4–5 And the water continued to decrease until the tenth month. And in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the heads of the mountains were seen.

That is, the Ark had already come to rest upon the high peak. Then the other peaks began to be seen.

8:6–7 And it came to pass after forty days, Noah opened the window of the Ark which he had made. And he sent forth a raven; and it went forth and returned not until the water was dried from off the earth.

This does not mean that it returned; it means that it never did come back.

8:8–14 And he sent a dove after it to see if the water had ceased from off the earth. And the dove, not having found rest for her feet, returned to him into the Ark, because the water was on all the face of the earth. And he stretched out his hand and took her, and brought her to himself into the Ark. And having waited yet seven other days, he again sent forth the dove from the Ark. And the dove returned to him in the evening, and had a leaf of olive, a sprig in her mouth; and Noah knew that the water had ceased from off the earth. And having waited yet seven other days, he again sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him again any more. And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year of the life of Noah, in the first month, on the first day of the month, the water subsided from off the earth. And Noah opened the covering of the Ark which he had made, and he saw that the water had subsided from the face of the earth. And in the second month the earth was dried, on the twenty-seventh day of the month.

Thus Noah was in the Ark for one year in all.

Noah sent out birds to scout around. First he sent the raven, which

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The raven feeding on the corpses
of animals and people.
*Fresco from Decani Monastery,
Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.*

did not return because (according to St. John Chrysostom) it found the corpses of animals and people to eat.^{10*} It was still not safe to go out: the highest elevations were spoiled with these corpses on them.

Then Noah sent the dove. The first time the dove went out, she found no trees or vegetables to eat. The mountains were still covered with slime. The second time the dove found a branch, meaning that the trees were now out of the water and were beginning to grow, but still not enough to support life. The third time the dove did not return

* St. Ambrose writes that “the raven is the figure of sin, which goes forth [from you] and does not return, if righteousness is preserved in you inwardly and outwardly” (*On the Mysteries* 3.11, SC 25bis.160–62, NPNF 2 10, p. 318*). St. Bede the Venerable draws out another instructive image, saying that the raven “scorned to return to the Ark, signifying those who, although they have been cleansed by the waters of Baptism, nevertheless neglect putting off the very black dress of their old selves by living more faultlessly” (*Homilies on the Gospels* 1.12, trans. L. T. Martin and D. Hurst, vol. 1, p. 122).—ED.

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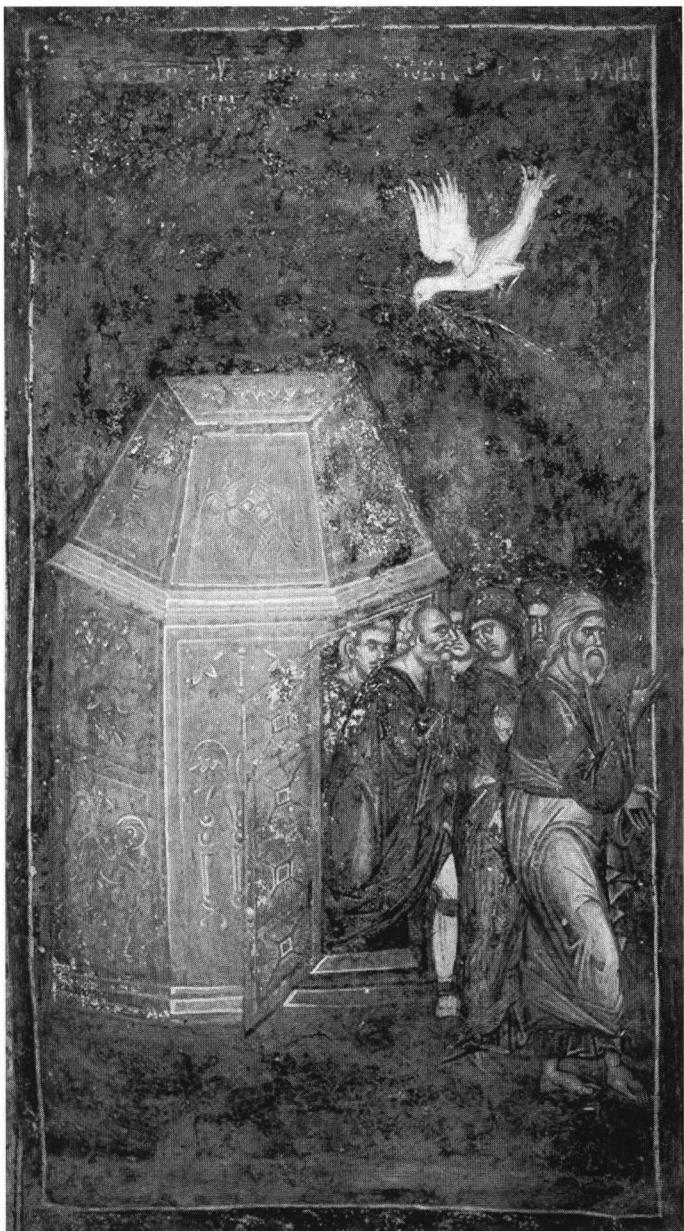


The dove bearing the olive branch.
Fresco from the Christian catacombs in Rome, third century.

because she now found suitable living conditions. Therefore, Noah knew it was now time to come out.*

8:15–19 *And the Lord God spoke to Noah, saying, Come out from the Ark, thou and thy wife and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. And all the wild beasts as many as are with thee, and all flesh both of birds and*

* The Holy Fathers saw the dove sent by Noah as a foreshadowing of the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ at His Baptism (cf. Matt. 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22). Thus, St. Bede the Venerable writes: "The olive branch with green leaves is the grace of the Holy Spirit, rich in the words of life, the fullness of which rests upon Christ.... And by a most beautiful conjunction, the figure is in agreement with the fulfillment: a corporeal dove brought the olive branch to the Ark which was washed by the waters of the Flood; the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a corporeal dove upon the Lord when He was baptized in the waters of the Jordan" (*Homilies on the Gospels* 1.12, vol. 1, pp. 122–23). On Noah's dove as a type of the Holy Spirit, see also St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 17.10; and St. Ambrose of Milan, *Letter* 41.21, *On the Mysteries* 4.24.—ED.



Noah and his family coming out of the Ark, with the dove
bearing the olive branch.

Fresco from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.

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beasts, and every reptile moving upon the earth, bring forth with thee: and increase ye and multiply upon the earth. And Noah came forth, and his wife and his sons, and his sons' wives with him. And all the wild beasts and all the cattle and every bird, and every reptile creeping upon the earth after their kind, came forth out of the Ark.

Here we see in Noah the image of Adam.* He is the only one left, together with his family; he is to begin mankind over again.** He is given the same command that Adam was given: “Increase and multiply.” He becomes the father of all living after the Flood.

Notice how Noah—even though he knew it was probably safe to go out since the dove did not come back—waited until God spoke. The whole time he was patiently waiting on God.***

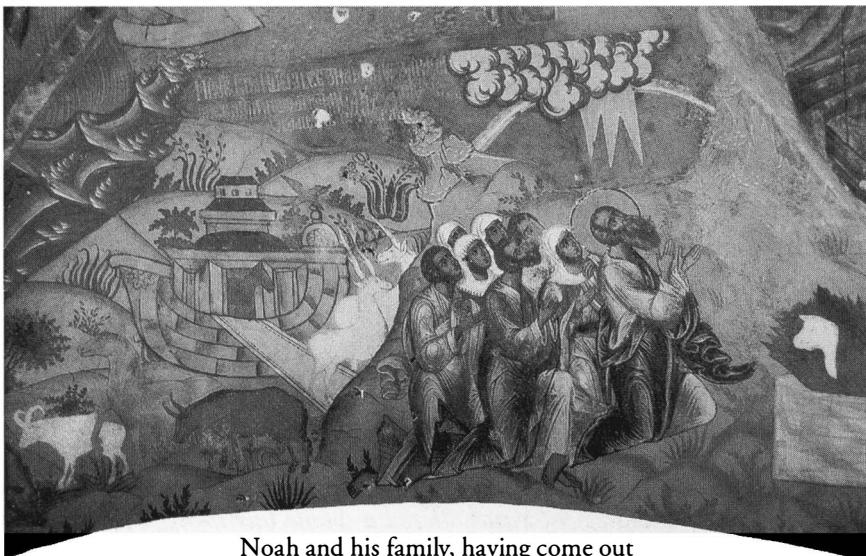
8:20–22 And Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of all clean beasts, and of all clean birds, and offered a whole burnt-offering upon the altar. And the Lord God smelled a smell of sweetness, and the Lord God

* Blessed Theodoret writes: “Since [Noah] was the seed of the race, the root of human nature, and a second Adam, God gave him the blessing which the first Adam had received immediately after his creation: ‘Increase, multiply ...’” (*Questions on Genesis* 53, LEC 1, p. 113).—ED.

** Although people commonly say that they are “related” to some people but not to others, all human beings are interrelated through Noah, who lived less than five thousand years ago according to the Biblical reckoning. Thus, St. John Chrysostom writes, “For of Adam we all sprung, and none can be more a relation than another, both as regards Adam and as regards Noah” (*Homilies on Romans* 19, NPNF 1 6, p. 494). On the fact that the whole human race derives from Noah, see also St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 19, 119; Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 6.10; St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration* 18: *On the Death of His Father* 17; St. Ambrose, *On the Duties of the Clergy* 1.25.121; idem, *Paradise* 3; St. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 39.4; St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 26.5 (26.16); idem, *Homilies on 1 Corinthians* 34.7; Blessed Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis* 9.19; Blessed Theodoret, *Letter* 181: *To Abundius, Bishop of Como*; St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Ethical Discourses* 2.7; and St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily* 22.7.—ED.

*** St. Ambrose writes of Noah’s temperance during and after the Flood: “How brave he was to overcome the Flood! How temperate to endure it! When he had entered the Ark, with what moderation he passed the time! When he sent forth the raven and the dove, when he received them on their return, when he took the opportunity of leaving the Ark, with what moderation did he make use of these occasions!” (*On the Duties of the Clergy* 1.25.121, NPNF 2 10, p. 21).—ED.

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Noah and his family, having come out
of the Ark, offer a whole burnt-offering upon the altar.

Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.

having considered, said, I will not any more curse the earth, because of the works of men, because the imagination of man is intently bent upon evil things from his youth, I will not therefore any more smite all living flesh as I have done. All the days of the earth, seed and harvest, cold and heat, summer and spring, shall not cease by day or night.

So we see that, first of all, Noah offers sacrifice, knowing like Abel in his heart that this is fitting to do in thanksgiving, after having been delivered. He offers the clean animals—both birds and beasts, such as doves and sheep.

Also, we see how God's mercy is shown. God sees that men will continue to be evil, and that is why He allows meat to be eaten, in accordance with the lower condition of post-Flood humanity. He promises, however, never again to curse the earth (as He did to Adam) or destroy mankind. The normal life of the fallen earth will continue to the end.

In the Flood, everything was killed; but at the end of the world, there will be a renewal of the earth. In fact, people living then will not even die. What we call the "end of the world," therefore, will not be the same as destroying it. It will be a transfiguration of the whole world.

CHAPTER NINE

The Dispersion of the Peoples

(Genesis 9:1–11:26)

1. Noah and God's New Covenant

9:1–2 *God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and have dominion over it. And the dread and the fear of you shall be upon all the wild beasts of the earth, on all the birds of the sky, and on all things moving upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; I have placed them under your power.*

Noah is now given authority over creation such as was given to Adam at the very beginning (cf. Gen. 1:28).¹

9:3 *And every moving thing that lives shall be to you for food.*

This is the first time God gives the command allowing people to eat meat.

9:3–7 *I have given all things to you as the green herbs. But flesh with blood of life ye shall not eat. For your blood of your lives will I require at the hand of all wild beasts, and I will require the life of man at the hand of his brother man. He that sheds man's blood, instead of that blood shall his own be shed, for in the image of God I made man. But do ye increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and have dominion over it.*

God has given the same commandment to Noah that He gave to Adam: to increase and multiply. He has given food as He gave to Adam, except that now He has also allowed meat to be eaten (corresponding to the new conditions of man after the Flood). And just like Adam was given one fasting commandment to keep—not to eat of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil—so Noah is given one command: not to eat blood. The blood belongs to God, the meat to man. That is why, according to Jewish food rules, you have to slaughter the animal with a sharp weapon, and not strangle it so that the blood remains inside. It is symbolical: the blood that comes out is offered to God.²

The commandment regarding blood, says St. John Chrysostom, was given to Noah to act against man's inclination to murder, to make him meek, even while allowing him to eat meat (which requires killing).³

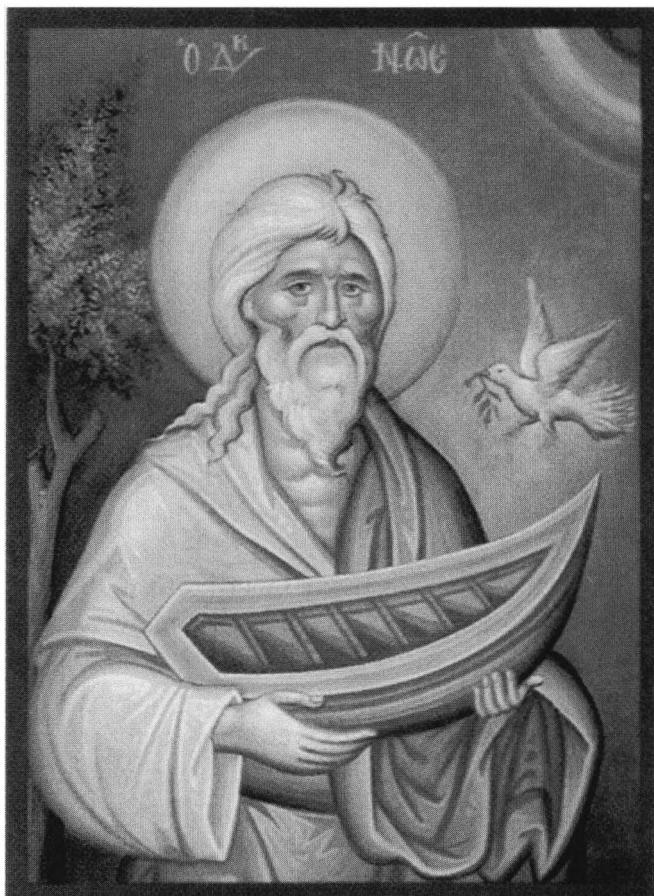
Blood is, at it were, a symbol of life—and that belongs to God. This particular teaching was still in force in the Acts of the Apostles. In the teachings of the Apostles described in Acts, the one dietary command given to Gentile converts to Christianity was that they not eat strangled animals, from which the blood was not let out (cf. Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).

9:8–17 And God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, And behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you, and with every living creature with you, of birds and of beasts, and with all the wild beasts of the earth, as many as are with you, of all that come out of the Ark. And I will establish my covenant with you, and all flesh shall not any more die by the water of the flood, and there shall no more be a flood of water to destroy all the earth. And the Lord God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant which I set between Me and you, and between every living creature which is with you for perpetual generations. I set my bow [rainbow] in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall be when I gather clouds upon the earth, that My bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you, and between every living soul in all flesh, and there shall no longer be water for a deluge, so as to blot out all flesh. And My bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look to remember the everlasting covenant between Me and the earth, and between every living soul in all flesh, which is upon the earth. And God said to Noah, This is the sign of the covenant, which I have made between Me and all flesh, which is upon the earth.

THE DISPERSION OF THE PEOPLES

Noah with the dove and the sign of the rainbow in the sky.

Contemporary icon by T. Clark.



Here God makes a covenant with mankind through Noah, just as years later He makes a covenant with Abraham, and still later with Moses.

The rainbow is an appropriate reminder that the rain is not perpetual, since it occurs only when the sun breaks through the clouds. It is very likely that rainbows were not seen before the Flood, since the sun did not shine directly then: there was a cloud layer across the firmament, causing a greenhouse effect over the earth. The rainbow, therefore, became another part of the new conditions of the world after the Flood, when there was no more cloud covering.

9:18–19 *Now the sons of Noah which came out of the Ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. And Ham was the father of Canaan. These three are the sons of Noah; of these were men scattered over all the earth.*

This reemphasizes that Noah is like a new Adam. From him come all men after the Flood.

Ham is mentioned as the “father of Canaan” because, according to St. John Chrysostom,⁴ Ham did not restrain his passion in the Ark but conceived a child when he should have been refraining like his father and brothers. In the Ark, the people were in a state of prayer and fasting. Men abstained from their wives, except for Ham.* This sin against the law of prayer and fasting already reveals Ham’s character.

9:20–21 *And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard. And he drank of the wine, and was drunk, and was naked in his house.*

Why did Noah, a righteous man, get drunk? Perhaps, as St. Ephraim suggests, it was because he had not drunk wine for many years; he had been a year in the Ark, and it takes several years to plant the vines and get grapes with which to make wine.⁵ Or else, as St. John Chrysostom suggests, wine was actually not even drunk before the Flood. Noah was the first to cultivate vineyards. Therefore, he would not have known the power of wine; he drank it to see what it was like, and it overwhelmed him.⁶** If this was the case, wine-drinking goes together with meat-eating as one of the new conditions of the post-Flood world.

* St. John Damascene writes of the chastity that was supposed to be maintained by the people in the Ark: “When Noah was ordered to enter the Ark and was entrusted with the safeguarding of the seed of the earth, he was given this command, which reads: ‘Come into the Ark, you, your sons, your wife and your sons’ wives’ (cf. Gen. 6:19). He separated them from their wives, so that with the help of chastity they might escape the ocean’s depths and that worldwide destruction” (*On the Orthodox Faith* 4.25, FC 37, pp. 394–95).

According to St. Ephraim, not only the people but also the animals in the Ark were separated in order that they would preserve chastity (*Commentary on Genesis* 6.12.2, FC 91, p. 142).—Ed.

** The same explanation was brought forth by Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus, in *Questions on Genesis* 56, LEC 1, p. 117.—Ed.



Noah cultivating vineyards.
Fresco from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.

9:22–25 And Ham the father of Canaan saw the nakedness of his father, and he went out and told his two brothers without. And Shem and Japheth, having taken a garment, put it on both their backs and went backwards, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their face was backward and they saw not the nakedness of their father. And Noah recovered from the wine, and knew all that his younger son had done to him. And he said, Cursed be the servant Canaan, a slave shall he be to his brethren.

Verse 22 again calls Ham “the father of Canaan” to remind us of his uncontrolled nature.

What was this sin of Ham? The sin was not so much that he saw his father naked, because then they were not nearly as fastidious about that kind of thing as we are now. Rather, his sin lay in the fact that he saw him in a shameful condition—drunk, all sprawled out—and therefore he *mocked* his father; he stared at the spectacle and went out and spread tales about his father’s sin.

In English, a “ham” is an actor who makes a big show of himself. In Russian, the word “ham” means something much worse. It refers to someone absolutely shameful, without any manners, politeness or decency (like the Soviets in modern times).

The sin of Ham was the sin of being totally shameless. His brothers, on the contrary, came in with respect, covered up their father, and thus covered up the whole thing before it could be spread about. Thus Ham, the second son, now became the *youngest*.

But why was Canaan cursed instead of Ham his father? St. John Chrysostom says it was because Ham once received God’s blessing,^{7*} and now the curse must be on his offspring, which hurts him, too.^{**} Moreover, Canaan probably also sinned. St. Ephraim suggests that it was actually Canaan, as a small boy, who went in and was the first to see Noah. He went out and told his father, so he himself was partly guilty.⁸

* Cf. Genesis 9:1: “God blessed Noah and his sons.”—ED.

** St. John Chrysostom explains: “You know well, of course, how in many cases fathers have begged to endure punishment in place of their children, and how seeing their children bearing punishment proves a more grievous form of chastisement than being subject to it themselves” (*Homilies on Genesis* 29.6, FC 82, p. 213 [29.21]).—ED.



Noah becoming drunk, and Shem and Japheth covering his nakedness.
Fresco from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.

Now we will see the difference between the three sons of Noah.

9:26–27 And he [Noah] said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem, and Canaan shall be his bond servant. May God make room for Japheth, and let him dwell in the habitations of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.

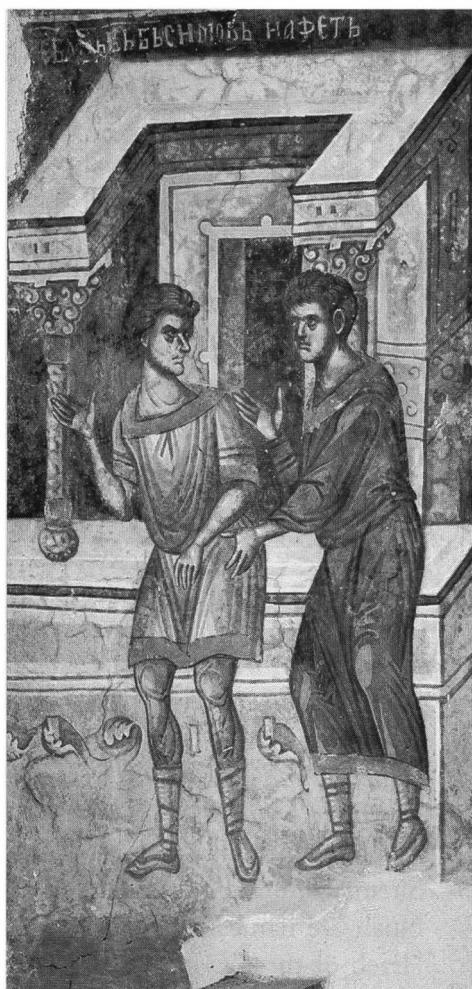
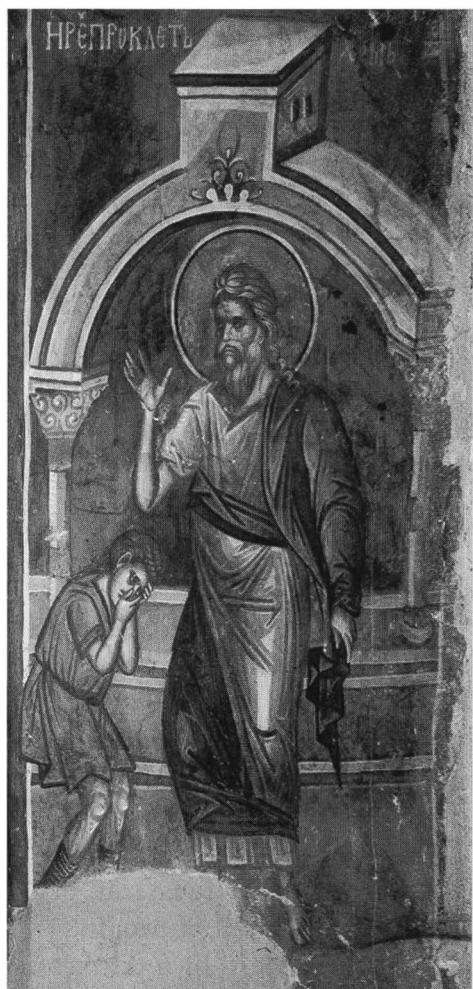
Here Noah is making a prophecy, as all the Patriarchs did when they blessed their sons. He prophesies about these three sons from whom the whole population of the earth will come.

Shem is the blessed one, the ancestor of the Semitic tribes, especially the chosen people, the Jews. Japheth is the ancestor of Gentiles, who later accept the word of salvation which Christ revealed first of all to the Jews; they come to dwell in salvation (“the habitations of Shem”) after the coming of Christ and the teaching of the Apostles.⁹

Canaan and the offspring of Ham are to be the bond servants—but they are also given salvation.* The Holy Fathers make a special point that, no matter who your ancestors are, you can still be saved. For example, in Genesis chapter 10 one of Ham’s descendants founded Nineveh, which pleased God by its repentance in the times of the Prophet Jonah. St. John Chrysostom says of this: “Notice how the impiety of one’s ancestors does not entirely put our nature into disorder.”¹⁰ It does not make any difference if one’s ancestor is cursed. Any individual or people can repent and seek God’s grace, especially after

* St. Ephraim says that Noah’s prophecy regarding the descendants of Canaan was fulfilled in the time of Joshua the son of Nun: “And God dwelt in the tent of Abraham, the descendant of Shem, and Canaan became their slave when, in the days of Joshua the son of Nun, the Israelites destroyed the dwelling-places of Canaan and pressed their leaders into bondage (cf. Josh. 17:13)” (*Commentary on Genesis* 7.4.1, FC 91, p. 146).

Blessed Theodoret offers the same interpretation: “Since Israel was destined to descend from Shem and take possession of Palestine, which the descendants of Canaan had long occupied, he [Noah] presented the prophecy as a curse so as both to foretell the future and discourage subsequent generations from sinning against their parents” (*Questions on Genesis* 58, LEC 1, p. 121). Both Blessed Theodoret (*ibid.*) and St. John Chrysostom (*Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew* 8.5) state that Noah’s prophecy about the servitude of Canaan was fulfilled in the Gibeonites—Gibeon being a Canaanite city north of Jerusalem that was conquered by Joshua (Josh. 9:3–27).—ED.



Noah cursing Canaan the son of Ham (left), and blessing Shem and Japheth (right).
Frescos from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.

the coming of Christ. But even before Christ, the Ninevites, even though they were offspring of Canaan who was cursed, still came to repentance.

In the Gospel we read of the Canaanite woman who obtained grace; her daughter was healed through her faith. Christ said to her, “O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt” (Matt. 15:28). She was a direct offspring of Canaan, who was cursed. This shows that salvation is given to everyone.

9:28–29 And Noah lived after the Flood three hundred and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

Noah, the second progenitor of the human race, lived slightly longer than Adam.

2. The Generations of Noah

*10:1–4 Now these are the generations of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, Japheth; and sons were born to them after the Flood. The sons of Japheth: Gomer, and Magog, and Madoi, and Jovan, and Elishah, and Thobel, and Mosoch, and Thiras. And the sons of Gomer: Aschanaz, and Riphath, and Thorgama. And the sons of Jovan: Elishah, and Tarshish, Cetians, Rhodians.**

The tenth chapter goes into the generations of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Japheth. Seventy-two offspring of the three sons of Noah are named, from whom come the different kinds of people.** “Each of these nations,” says St. Ephraim, “dwelt in its own distinct place, with its own people, and spoke its own tongue.”¹¹ Some of these

* We have replaced some of the names in this Septuagint translation with variant spellings from the King James Version, in those cases where the latter are more familiar to English readers.—ED.

** Dr. William F. Albright, a leading twentieth-century authority on the archeology of the Near East, has said concerning the Table of Nations in the tenth chapter of Genesis: “It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature, without a remote parallel, even among the Greeks, where we find the closest approach to a distribution of peoples in genealogical framework” (“Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands,” article appended to Robert Young’s *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, p. 25).—ED.



Shem.
Russian icon of the sixteenth century.

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kinds of people we can now identify fairly well; others are more difficult to identify.*

10:5 *From these were the islands of the Gentiles divided in their land, each according to his tongue, in their tribes and in their nations.*

This is a reference to what will occur after the fall of the Tower of Babel. Out of all the seventy-two basic types of people, there will be a dispersion of humanity throughout all the earth.

“Islands of the Gentiles” refers not necessarily to literal islands, but to the fact that the Gentiles formed separate peoples who were like islands of humanity.

10:6–20 *And the sons of Ham: Cush, and Mizraim, Phud, and Canaan. And the sons of Cush: Saba, and Evila, and Sabatha, and Rhegma, and Sabathaca. And the sons of Rhegma: Saba, and Dadan. And Cush begot Nimrod: he began to be a giant upon the earth. He was a great hunter before the Lord God; therefore they say, As Nimrod the giant hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babylon, and Oreh, and Archad, and Chalanne, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land came Ashur, and built Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth, and Chalach. And Dase between Nineveh and Chalach: this is the great city. And Mizraim begot the Ludiim, and the Nephthalim, and the Enemetiim, and the Labiim, and the Patrosoniim, and the Chasmoniim (whence came forth Phylistiim) and the Gaphthoriim. And Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and the Hettite, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite, and the Evite, and the Arukite, and the Sinite, and the Aradian, and the Samarean, and the Amathite; and after this the tribes of the Canaanites*

* One of the first attempts to assign known ethnicities to the names listed in Genesis chapter 10 was by the Roman-Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (*Antiquities of the Jews* 1.6, written ca. A.D. 94). The first extant attempt by a Christian writer is that of St. Hippolytus of Rome (*Chronicle* 24–228, ca. 234); his version is similar to Josephus’ but also contains many differences. St. Epiphanius of Salamis (*Panarion* 39.8, ca. 375) and other later writers followed St. Hippolytus’ identifications. Blessed Jerome (*Hebrew Questions on Genesis* 10.2–29, ca. 390) rendered a listing that was closer to Josephus’, but still with some notable variations. St. Isidore of Seville (*Etyomologies* 9.2, ca. 600) repeated most of the identifications made by Blessed Jerome.—ED.

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were dispersed. And the boundaries of the Canaanites were from Sidon till one comes to Gerara and Gaza, till one comes to Sodom and Gomorrah, Adama and Seboim, as far as Dasa. These were the sons of Ham in their tribes according to their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations.

Here are named the offspring of Ham. Many of these are tribes the Hebrews later fought; but they include the Ninevites, who as we have said repented when the Prophet Jonah preached to them.

10:21 *And to Shem himself also were children born, the father of all the sons of Heber, the brother of Japheth the elder.*

Shem is the ancestor of Heber. Heber is where we get the name Hebrew.

10:22–32 *Sons of Shem, Elam, and Ashur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram, and Cainan. And sons of Aram, Uz, and Ul, and Gater, and Mosoch. And Arphaxad begot Cainan, and Cainan begot Sala. And Sala begot Heber. And to Heber were born two sons, the name of one, Peleg, because in his days the earth was divided, and the name of his brother Jektan. And Jektan begot Elmodad, and Saleth, and Sarmoth, and Jarach, and Odorrah, and Aibel, and Decla, and Eval, and Abimael, and Saba, and Uphir, and Evila, and Jobab, all these were the sons of Jektan. And their dwelling was from Masse, till one comes to Saphera, a mountain of the east. These were the sons of Shem in their tribes, according to their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations. These are the tribes of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, according to their nations: of them were the islands of the Gentiles scattered over the earth after the Flood.*

The islands of people shall now begin to lead their own individual lives.

Of the seventy-two different peoples named, fourteen are of Japheth, thirty-one are of Ham, and twenty-seven are of Shem.

3. The Tower of Babel

11:1–2 *And all the earth was one lip, and there was one language to all. And it came to pass as they moved from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.*

Evidently this was *before* all the descendants mentioned in chapter 10, when mankind was not yet so dispersed.* The sons began to beget their offspring, but apparently mankind was still fairly concentrated in that area. They still had one language and were one in *mind*. Shinar is the plain of Babylon, of the Tigris and Euphrates.

11:3–4 And a man said to his neighbor, Come, let us make bricks and bake them with fire. And the brick was to them for stone, and their mortar was bitumen. And they said, Come, let us build for ourselves a city and tower, whose top shall be to heaven, and let us make to ourselves a name, before we are scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth.

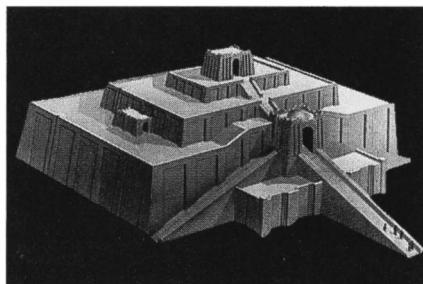
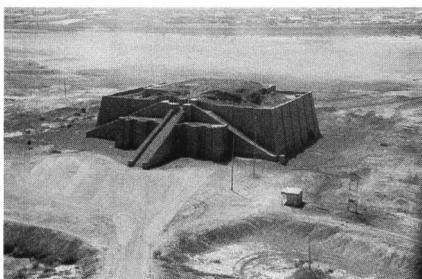
They already knew the prophecy that man would be scattered over all the face of the earth. They made one more attempt to make a great name for themselves: a great tremendous project, which would prove that we are supreme beings. This is repeated throughout history—the empire of Alexander the Great, the Communist regime, Hitler's Thousand-Year Reich, etc. The sin behind this is pride.

Such towers are known in Babylonian-Assyrian history, and some still survive. They are called ziggurats: temples with a shrine on top. These are a symbol that, as St. John Chrysostom says, man did not want to stay within the limits that God had given him.** He wanted to make himself a god: self-deification. In our modern times, an image of this can be found in our skyscrapers. The idea is to build some-

* As Blessed Augustine explains, when the Genesis narrative says that the descendants of Shem, Japheth and Ham had their own languages and “scattered over the earth” (Gen. 10:5, 20, 31–32), it is referring to the time after the dispersion from Babylon, whereas the subsequent section (Gen. 11:1–9) “goes back to tell how it came about that the one language common to all men was broken up into many tongues” (*Christian Instruction* 3.36.53, FC 2, pp. 163–64).—ED.

** Commenting on Genesis 11:2, St. John Chrysostom writes: “Notice how the human race, instead of managing to keep to their own boundaries, always longs for more and reaches out for greater things. This is what the human race has lost in particular, not being prepared to recognize the limitations of their own condition, but always lustng after more and entertaining ambitions beyond their capacity” (*Homilies on Genesis* 30.2, FC 82, pp. 222–23 [30.5]).—ED.

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The partially restored Ziggurat of Ur in present-day southern Iraq, one of the thirty-two ziggurats that have been found in the Mesopotamian area.
At left: photograph taken in 2009. At right: an artist's reconstruction.

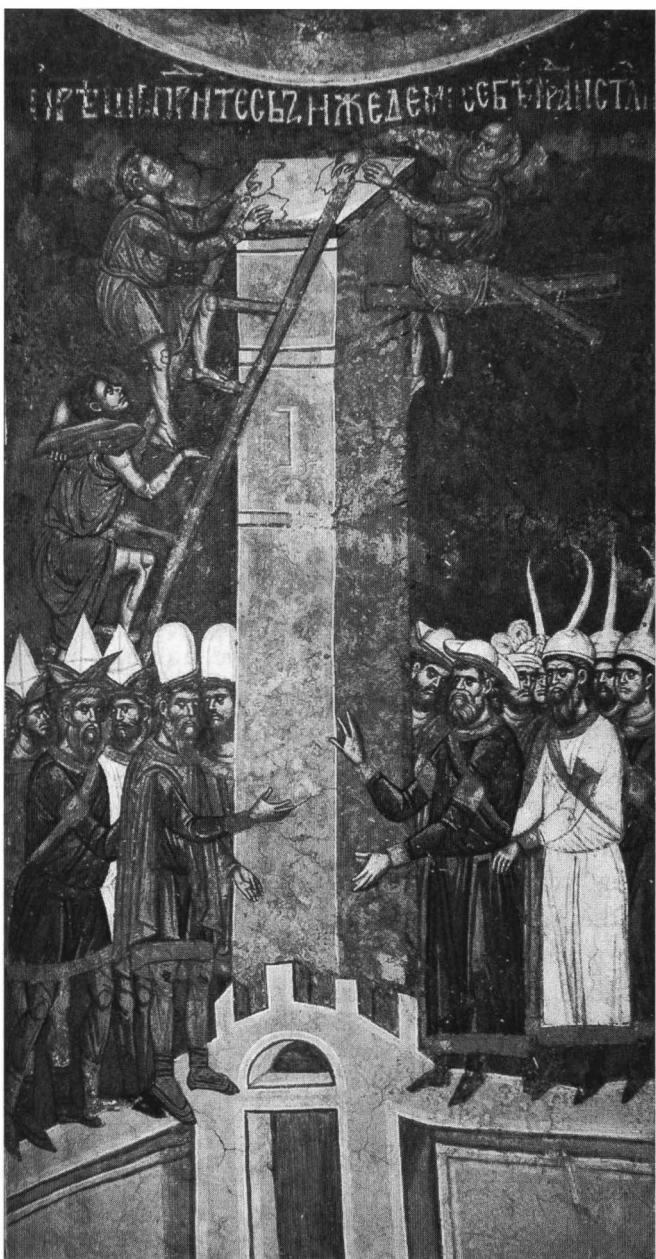
thing higher than anyone has ever built before. You can go to the top, and the climate is totally different from down below. It can be raining down below, and you can be on top above the clouds, in the sunshine.

In chapter 11 we see that, within five hundred years after the Flood, mankind had again become corrupt and proud. It says men were of one tongue, one voice. They all agreed on one thing: that they would become great.

It is like mankind today. There are a few exceptions—people who do not agree with what is going on—but for the most part, men are either agreeing with what is going on or else they are being dragged along with this great project to build Paradise on earth: the Communist society, or a comfortable reign of earthly values; but God is forgotten. Mankind is doing it again. And if man does that, what is God going to do? He promised that He will not destroy the earth like He did before; therefore, He will find various other ways to stop man: plagues, disasters, earthquakes, volcanoes. In this case, He confounds their tongues.

11:5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men built.

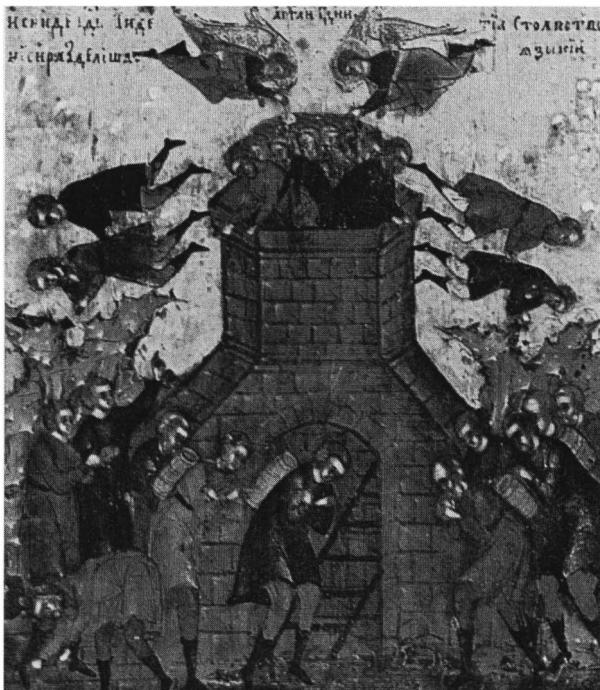
Of course, this does not mean that He did not “see” before; it



Building the Tower of Babel.
Fresco from Decani Monastery, Kosovo, Serbia, 1338–1347.

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The Tower of Babel
and the confusion of
tongues.
*Detail of a Russian icon
of the seventeenth
century.*



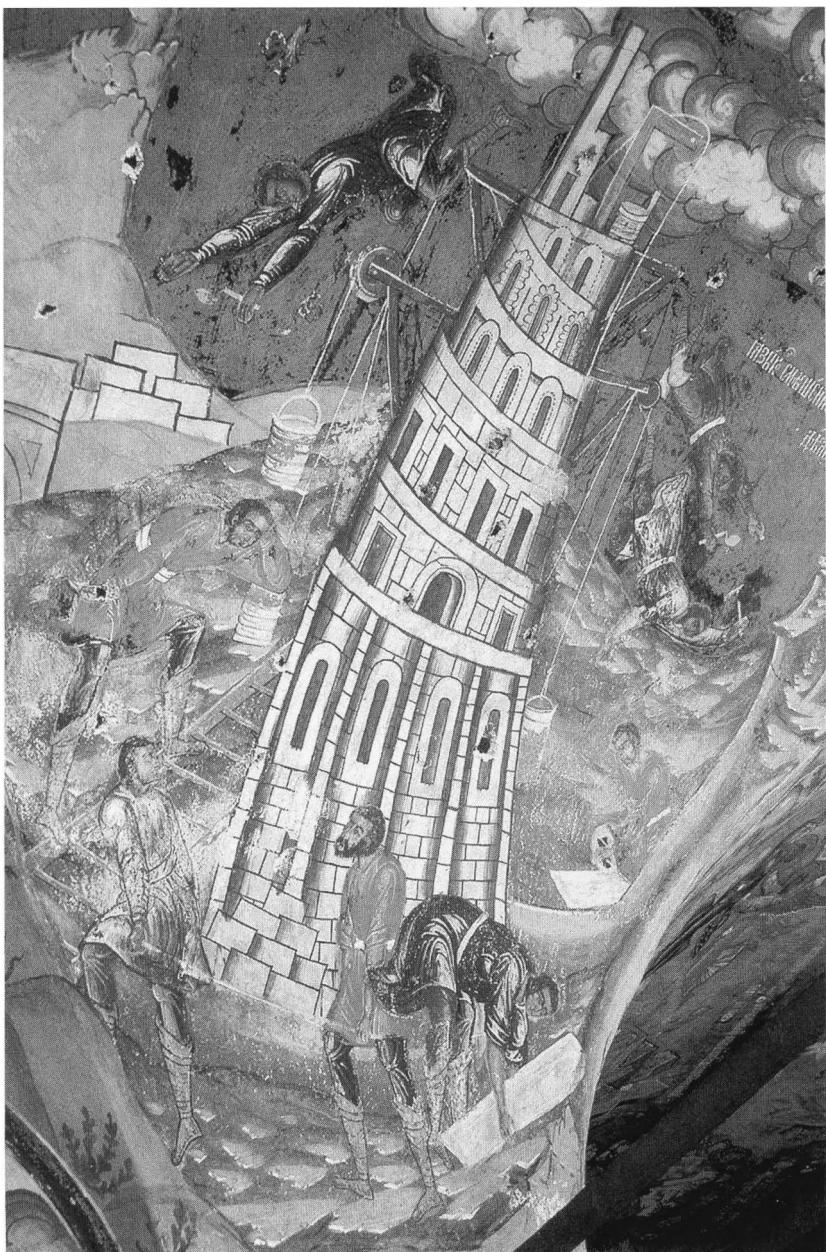
emphasizes that He was looking very carefully at what was going on. He does not chastise without knowing.*

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 *Come, and having gone down let Us there confound their tongue, that they may not understand each the voice of his neighbor.*

* St. John Chrysostom comments: "And the Lord came down,' the text says—not for us to think in human fashion, but so that in this way we might be instructed never to condemn our brother idly nor convict him on hearsay" (*Homilies on Genesis* 30.3, FC 82, pp. 226–27 [30.10]).—ED.



The Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues.
Russian fresco of the sixteenth century.

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When God says here, “Come,” to whom is He speaking? It is the same as in the beginning, when He created man, saying, “Let Us make man.” It is God talking to God in the Holy Trinity.

11:8 And the Lord scattered them thence over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city and the tower.

St. John Chrysostom says about this:

If now, taking advantage of such oneness of ideas and language, men have fallen into such wildness, what might they not do that is worse with the passage of time?... Nothing will be able to restrain their efforts; on the contrary, they will strive to fulfill all their intentions, if they do not immediately endure punishment for their brazen undertakings.¹²

That is why one expects *soon* this kind of thing to happen to the world today. Men are more and more inclined towards evil, and to tremendous projects of pride which leave God completely out.

11:9 On this account, its name was called Confusion, because there the Lord confounded the languages of all the earth, and thence the Lord scattered them upon the face of all the earth.

The name of the city was Babylon, which means “Confusion.”

This is the real beginning of the world as we know it: scattered over the face of the earth, each its own nation and language.

11:10–26 And these are the generations of Shem: and Shem was an hundred years old when he begot Arphaxad, the second year after the Flood. And Shem lived, after he had begotten Arphaxad, five hundred years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Arphaxad lived an hundred and thirty-five years, and begot Cainan. And Arphaxad lived after he had begotten Cainan, four hundred years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Cainan lived an hundred and thirty years and begot Sala; and Cainan lived after he had begotten Sala, three hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Sala lived an hundred and thirty years, and begot Heber. And Sala lived after he had

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begotten Heber, three hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Heber lived an hundred and thirty-four years, and begot Peleg. And Heber lived after he had begotten Peleg two hundred and seventy years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Peleg lived an hundred and thirty years, and begot Ragau. And Peleg lived after he had begotten Ragau, two hundred and nine years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Ragau lived an hundred thirty and two years, and begot Seruch. And Ragau lived after he had begotten Seruch, two hundred and seven years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Seruch lived an hundred and thirty years, and begot Nachor. And Seruch lived after he had begotten Nachor, two hundred years, and begot sons and daughters, and died. And Nachor lived an hundred and seventy-nine years, and begot Tharrha. And Nachor lived after he had begotten Tharrha, an hundred and twenty-five years, and begot sons and daughters, and he died. And Tharrha lived seventy years, and begot Abram, and Nachor, and Haran.

These are the offspring of Shem, down to Abraham—the new chosen one, whose descendants were to be a great nation.



Patriarch Abraham.
Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan, Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos, 1545–1546.

CHAPTER TEN

Questions and Answers

EDITOR'S NOTE: This chapter has been compiled from tape-recorded question-and-answer sessions from Fr. Seraphim's entire course on Genesis, both the 1981 and the 1982 segments. Section titles have been added by the editor.

1. The Age of the Earth

STUDENT: According to Biblical chronology, the earth is about 7,500 years old. But according to the evolutionists, and even history as it is taught in high schools, the earth is billions of years old. How do you explain this?

FR. SERAPHIM: We have a few books on the subject which I will show you. There are a number of people in the last ten or twenty years who have begun to make a counterattack against people who are extremely sure about this theory. There is a group in San Diego called the Institute for Creation Research, and another up in Michigan called the Creation Research Society. They have come out with some quite scientific books, which go into this question: on what basis do people make their assumptions about these millions and billions of years? It turns out that there is a lot more hypothesis than fact in this theory.

There is a book by an evolutionist called *Growth of a Prehistoric Time Scale Based on Organic Evolution*,¹ in which the author [William B. N. Berry] admits that to interpret the millions and billions of years, it has to be assumed that the fossilized creatures in the lower levels of rocks are the evolutionary ancestors of those in the higher levels. But it

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often happens that these layers are in the wrong order according to evolutionary theory: the layers with more primitive organisms are on top.

Therefore, it's like in the times of Copernicus. Then there was the Ptolemaic interpretation of the movement of the heavenly bodies, that the sun, planets and stars all go around the earth. The question arose: why don't the planets correspond to the stars? Some of the ancients said it is because they are on different spheres. That is, the stars are further away and the planets are closer; therefore, the planets appear to go faster. But then why do the planets sometimes go forward, and sometimes backwards? In order to explain how they moved, the Ptolemaic astronomers had to say that they go around each other somehow in a very complex movement of cycles and epicycles as they swing around the earth. Some are going backwards, others are performing figure eights. It became so complex to follow the movements of these planets according to this Ptolemaic model that Copernicus got the idea that maybe they were all wrong—maybe the earth and the planets were going around the sun. He began making calculations on the basis of this idea, and his theory was much simpler. Finally we came to accept that theory as the true one.

Like the Ptolemaic astronomers, evolutionists who study strata containing fossils often find that they are upside down, in the wrong order, or too close together according to evolutionary ideas. They call these "disconformities," "paraconformities" or "pseudoconformities."* They have to make allowances for the fact that everything is in the wrong order. If you ask them how they know what is the right order, they will admit that the only reason they know the right order is that they know evolution is true.** You see there is something funny about it. They are supposed to prove the theory, and to prove the theory they

* See, for example, Ariel A. Roth, "'Flat Gaps' in Sedimentary Rock Layers Challenge Long Geologic Ages," *Journal of Creation*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2009).—ED.

** The role of evolutionary theory in interpreting strata is well established in uniformitarian geology. In the words of German paleontologist Otto Schindewolf: "The only chronometric scale applicable in geologic history for the stratigraphic classification of rocks and for dating geologic events exactly is furnished by the fossils. Owing to the irreversibility of evolution, they offer an unambiguous time scale for

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have to start with the theory. Therefore it's not as factual as it's presented.

The scientific creationists, as they call themselves, have some interesting books about evidences of how old the earth is. It just depends on what kind of evidence you're using. It's a very hypothetical question. It's not nearly as definite as the book of Genesis.

2. Carbon-14 Dating

STUDENT: What about the carbon-14 dating system?

FR. SERAPHIM: Carbon dating is only used on organic substances. The half-life of carbon-14 is 5,700 years, so obviously this method can't go back too far. Some people think you can go back 20,000 years or more with it, but this involves so much guesswork that it cannot be accurate. Even people who defend it say that it is fairly reliable back to about 3,000 years ago, but if it goes back further than that it becomes more and more unreliable. The system is based on a whole set of assumptions.*

According to the scientists, the most reliable dating system is not radiocarbon, but tree-ring dating [dendrochronology]. They were recently able to test a whole series of things, comparing radiocarbon dates with tree-ring dates, and they found out that the radiocarbon dating method was off more than they thought. The tree-ring counts have tended to give greater ages by several centuries than radiocarbon ages.

Other radiometric dating methods are used to get older ages of

relative age determinations and for worldwide correlation of rocks" ("Comments on Some Stratigraphic Terms," *American Journal of Science*, vol. 255 [June 1957], p. 394). More recently, this principle has been reiterated in the North American Stratigraphic Code: "Biological remains contained in, or forming, strata are uniquely important in stratigraphic practice. First, they provide the means of defining and recognizing material units based on fossil content.... Second, the irreversibility of organic evolution makes it possible to partition enclosing strata temporally" (North American Commission on Stratigraphic Nomenclature, "North American Stratigraphic Code," *AAPG Bulletin*, vol. 89, no. 11 [Nov. 2005], pp. 1557–58).

For critical analysis by Russian and American geologists of modern stratigraphy's reliance on evolutionary theory, see pp. 523n, 530n, 866–68, 878–80 below.—ED.

* On carbon-14 dating, see also pp. 530–31, 531nn, 862, 894 below.—ED.

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millions and billions of years: the potassium-argon method, etc. There are all kinds of assumptions involved in these methods, also; you have to accept these assumptions before the systems “work.” All of them go on the assumption that there was no contamination over the centuries between one element and the other, and that there was none of the end elements [“daughter” components] present at the beginning. The evolutionists don’t know that; they assume it was all uniformitarian, from zero to what we know now. If that’s true and the rate has been uniform, then we can calculate the age of the fossils somewhat accurately; but if it’s not true, the whole system could be very far off. And there have been notorious mistakes. People have done radiometric tests on rock which has just formed recently, and they have come up with ages of many millions of years.*

3. Geological Strata

STUDENT: What about the different strata, like in the Grand Canyon, which are assumed to be deposited at a certain rate?

FR. SERAPHIM: There is a vast scientific question regarding these strata. The strata don’t have little signs that say, “I’m five million years old; I’m ten million years old.” There’s an excellent book on this subject, *The Genesis Flood*, by Henry Morris,² in which he interprets these strata in terms of a single universal catastrophe, that is, Noah’s Flood. It is presented scientifically. You can examine it and see whether it makes sense or not.**

I think more people should look at both of these sides of the picture and see which model makes more sense. There are many respects in which the evolutionary model about these strata has holes in it; in fact, the evolutionists themselves will probably tell you that. The question is: does the other model make more sense?

When it comes to something like these strata, of course, it is a scientific question. The deposition of the strata is obviously a scientific

* See pp. 529–32, 531–32nn, 862–71 below.—ED.

** The Grand Canyon is discussed specifically in *The Genesis Flood* on pp. 151–52. A more extensive and up-to-date treatment can be found in *Grand Canyon: Monument to Catastrophe* (1994), edited by geologist Steven A. Austin.—ED.

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process that occurred *in time*.* Therefore, it is different from the Six Days of Creation—it is a question of what happened *after* the Six Days. It is open to one's own scientific approach.

4. A Matter of Models

FR. SERAPHIM: Scientists have what are called *models*. Yesterday we discussed the Ptolemaic model—that the earth is the center of the universe, and that all the stars and planets go around the earth. Since, according to what one can observe, the planets move around the earth at different speeds than the stars, the Ptolemaic astronomers had to have theories about how they went back and forth and formed figure eights, etc. Like right now you can see that, for the last six months or so, Saturn and Jupiter have been in the sky together. If you were observing, you could see that at first one went forward, then they both went backward, then Saturn became fainter and Jupiter became

* Some of the most important research in this area has been done by French geologist Guy Berthault, first at the Institut de Mécanique des Fluides at Marseilles and later at the hydraulics laboratory of Colorado State University's Engineering Research Center. "Since 1985," writes Richard Milton, "Berthault has carried out a series of laboratory experiments involving pouring sediments into large tanks of moving water to study the internal structure of the strata, and how lamination takes place.... What Berthault found was that ... the sediments settled on the bottom more or less immediately, but the fine particles were separated from larger particles by current flow, giving the appearance of layers.... The results were published by the French Academy of Sciences in 1986 and 1988 and were presented to the National Congress of Sedimentologists at Brest in 1991.... The laboratory work has not been carried out in isolation but has been supplemented by field observations from natural disasters such as the Colorado 'Bijou Creek' flood of 1965, the formation of sediments following the Mount St. Helens eruption in 1980, and ocean drilling by the Glomar Challenger survey vessel in 1975.... According to Berthault, 'These experiments contradict the idea of the slow buildup of one layer followed by another. The time scale is reduced from hundreds of millions of years to one or more cataclysms producing almost instantaneous laminae' [Berthault, "Experiments on Lamination of Sediments," *Comptes-Rendus Académie des Sciences, Paris, Série II*, 303 (Dec. 3, 1986), pp. 1569–74; "Sedimentation of a Heterogranular Mixture," *ibid.*, Série II, 306 (Feb. 16, 1988), pp. 717–24]" (Milton, *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism*, pp. 77–78).—ED.

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brighter. According to the Copernican model, you can explain that this is because they are in different phases in their orbits as they go around the sun. From our point of view they seem to get closer together, when actually they are simply going around the sun. Another example is Venus. Right now Venus has become once more an evening star low on the horizon. A few months ago, it was a morning star—it was there already in the morning before the sun rose.

The Ptolemaic model was found to be lacking because it did not explain the facts as well as the Copernican model. Copernicus said that if we interpret the earth and the other planets as going around the sun, then all these motions make sense; that is, they are mathematically very simple to explain. Eventually that was accepted. Now, by calculating according to the Copernican model, we can send rocket ships quite close to Saturn and not miss; in fact, it is astonishingly accurate. So obviously it seems to be true that all the planets do indeed go around the sun, even though, according to our observation, the sun goes around the earth.

Therefore, it is very important what kind of models you have of things. In this course, we are going to study the Patristic model of the Six Days of Creation.

5. The Origin of the Heavenly Bodies (Patristic Cosmogony)

FR. SERAPHIM: The Genesis account of the Fourth Day of Creation is very difficult to fit into the usual ideas of the evolution of the universe, because the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers state quite certainly that the sun was created on that Day, *after* the earth and the plants and the trees were already there. Furthermore, the Fathers say that the sun, the moon and the stars (and all the black holes and whatever is out there) were all *created* on the Fourth Day in one instant. God waved His hand and the whole thing came into being, trillions of miles away. Of course, God is bigger than the universe, so why wouldn't He be able to do that? He has no problem.

This gives you a totally different outlook on the world. It is a whole *cosmogony*—the explanation of the beginning of things.

The modern evolutionary cosmogony, popularized by people like

Carl Sagan, holds that there was a point which had a “big bang,” and then everything developed from that without any God.* If you believe in that, it is natural to believe that the bigger body, the sun, came first, and that it somehow shot off the earth. There are all kinds of different theories about how it did that. Some think the sun was formed from a gas and dust cloud, and that its heat drove out the gas, leaving only the dust, which condensed and cooled down, forming the planets. Others think that the sun almost collided with a passing star, causing gasses to be torn off the solar surface, and that these gasses later formed into planets. These different theories are all speculation, because no one was around at that time, and those things are not happening now. They are perhaps in accordance with what we think *should* be true, because it seems the bigger bodies should be antecedent to the smaller bodies. But according to Genesis and the Holy Fathers, the earth—this small little thing, this speck in the universe—was first, and the tremendous sun came after it.

Nowadays atheist philosophers like to say that the relative size of the earth proves man is but a speck lost in the universe. They say, “The earth is so small, the universe is so big—so obviously the universe is more important than man, and God did not make everything for man.” But if you think in terms of what the Fathers say—that the sun was made after the earth had already been there—then it is clear that everything *was* made for man.

* The man acknowledged as “the father of the big bang” cosmogony was Abbé Georges Lemaître (1894–1966), a Belgian Jesuit priest and physicist. One day in 1931, while reading an article on the idea of a slow and gradual “heat death” of the universe, Lemaître came up with the idea that the universe originally exploded and then evolved out of a “primeval atom.” His “primeval atom” is the cosmogonic equivalent of Darwinism’s “primeval soup,” out of which life is supposed to have emerged and evolved. “The idea of evolution,” wrote Lemaître, “has played an important role in the development of astrophysics.... The evolution of the world can be compared to a display of fireworks that has just ended” (Lemaître, *The Primeval Atom*, pp. 87, 78). Lemaître’s evolutionary cosmogony was quickly embraced by his contemporary and fellow Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin (see Michael Heller, *Creative Tension: Essays on Science and Religion*, pp. 59–60).

On the big bang theory, see also pp. 901–5 below.—ED.

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STUDENT: In our galaxy there are so many other suns. Do the Holy Fathers say anything about those suns?

FR. SERAPHIM: No, because they knew less about the composition of the universe than we know now. And there is simply no practical reason to speak much about them, except to say that they are there and God created them. The only place we know man lives is right here.

STUDENT: Is there any conflict at all between the Orthodox understanding of the creation of the world and the fact that there is more than one sun?

FR. SERAPHIM: No, because there's only one sun for us.

STUDENT: The other suns are stars.

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes. For us they aren't suns. The sun is a particular thing which is the center of our life, which gives us light and warmth, around which we grow, and without which we can't live. The other stars aren't central to us like that. If there were other suns with other earths, it would make things more complicated. We have no information that such a thing is true.

The Scriptures and the Fathers always look upon things as seen from the earth. You can't place yourself in some hypothetical place, in some other galaxy, and look back on earth.* That's a totally abstract way of looking at things, since we aren't there but right here. We're told what we need to save our souls, and we're not told a single thing about any of these other suns, planets, etc. If it were useful for us to know that, God would have told us.

In fact, it is a very interesting thing: from all the space probes to other planets so far, it looks as though there have been deliberate indications to show to us that the earth is the place where life is. Other places are dead bodies.**

STUDENT: What about speculation concerning beings from other planets?

FR. SERAPHIM: People who look for beings on other planets get

* As do science-fiction writers. For Fr. Seraphim's discussion of science fiction, see his book *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, 5th ed., pp. 72–77.—ED.

** See pp. 901–2, 903n below for a list of resources on the sun, the moon, the planets, and other heavenly bodies as viewed according to the creation model.—ED.

bound up with a whole occult philosophy of life: that there are higher beings who are coming to rescue us and help us out; we just bow down to them and they will give us all the powers we need. Actually, all these myths about beings on other planets correspond to what we know about demons and how they operate. When you start speculating about them and get involved with ideas about higher races of extraterrestrials—it all comes down to demons. Besides angels, the only kind of intelligent beings we know of is demons.*

6. Creation Scientists

FR. SERAPHIM: There is a lot of literature nowadays concerning the question of creation and evolution. It has become quite a vital question especially in the last ten or twenty years.

Recently there was a very one-sided article in *Time* magazine which made fun of people who are against evolution; it made them look like cuckoos—imbeciles who were going back to the time before the Scopes Monkey Trial, and so forth.³ But if you read the literature of some of these creationist groups, it's very interesting. There is one group in San Diego called the Institute for Creation Research which puts out some very interesting books. One is called *Creation: Facts of Life*,^{4**} which goes into some of the scientific questions; another one is about fossils: *Evolution: The Fossils Say No!*.⁵ There is an excellent book called *Scientific Creationism*,⁶ which is meant as a textbook for high schools. There is a good, sober book on dinosaurs which is not heavy-handed at all. It doesn't mention anything about evolution, but just gives the story of dinosaurs.^{***} It's for people who want to read without having all kinds of scientific hypotheses forced upon them.

This particular group is very good because they do not try to push the Bible; they have books (like *Scientific Creationism*) that present the

* For a detailed discussion of UFOs by Fr. Seraphim, see *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, chap. 6.—ED.

** On the updated edition of this book (2006), see p. 891 below.—ED.

*** For a list of materials on dinosaurs from a creationist perspective, see pp. 895–900, 898nn below.—ED.

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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 versus the Ptolemaic model, they present the creationist model versus the evolutionist model, and then they ask the question: which model better explains facts? The book *Scientific Creationism* gives you a whole series of facts, then gives you the explanation according to the creationist model and according to the evolutionist model. They think that the creationist model makes more sense because the evolutionists have to make all kinds of “cycles” and “epicycles” to explain all kinds of embarrassing things.*

In 1960 the famous movie *Inherit the Wind*, about the Scopes Trial of 1925, greatly influenced how the general public regarded the creation/evolution debate. The movie depicted the famous atheist lawyer Clarence Darrow as a great hero because he stood for science, progress, the future of mankind, and so forth. It wasn’t quite so simple as all that.** But after the movie came out, many people who were dubious about evolution got rather scared because they didn’t want to be accused of being anti-progress and anti-science.

Nevertheless, during the last twenty years there have been some very interesting scientific treatises written on the subject, bringing up the many “proofs” of evolution which are questionable. These proofs are often presented in high school textbooks as truth and fact, but when you look closely you find that they aren’t facts. For example, they

* In the years since Fr. Seraphim gave this appraisal of creation science, the number of scientists making contributions in this field has increased considerably, and new creation science organizations have been established. See p. 73n above and pp. 680–82, 680n, 681n, 682n, 888 below.—ED.

** In fact, the movie (based on the play by Jerome Lawrence and Robert Edwin Lee) was a highly fictionalized account of the trial and the events surrounding it. In real life, the Scopes Trial was not a serious criminal prosecution but a mock trial used as a test case by the A.C.L.U. John T. Scopes was a volunteer defendant who was unsure if he had ever taught evolution, and who was never in danger of going to jail. See Phillip E. Johnson, *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*, pp. 24–32, and the video *Inherently Wind: A Hollywood History of the Scopes Trial*, with Dr. David Menton.—ED.

bring up the so-called fact that a human embryo recapitulates its evolutionary ancestry, that there are gill slits on the throat and so forth. However, if you read any evolutionary textbook now on embryology, it will say this is a myth. The “gill-slits” have nothing to do with evolution or recapitulation; that’s simply the way the embryo develops. In fact, the development of the brain, the nerves, the heart, etc., inside the embryo totally contradicts the way it should be if it is only recapitulating evolutionary ancestry.

There are a number of points about evolutionism which, even if you don’t want to believe right away in one or the other view, make you stop and question and think a little more about the evidence for and against. It is the same with radiometric dating systems and the evolutionary/uniformitarian interpretation of geological strata.

The Institute puts out a monthly newsletter called *Acts & Facts* which describes what they’re doing, and in every issue they have a little filler which deals with some aspect of evolution or creation. They have been having a great number of debates during the last five years at universities, which have been very well attended; sometimes thousands of students come. The creation scientists are very well prepared—they have read all the latest literature—while the evolutionist scientists often are so confident that they don’t particularly keep up with the latest events. Therefore, in the last issue of the magazine *Science*, which is very evolutionist, one article says that it has become so bad now—the evolutionist scientists are so ill-prepared and are teaching their students so poorly—that all you have to do is have a creationist scientist with three or four facts from the last five years, and he will spin circles around the evolutionists. So the evolutionists have been waking up and saying that they have been neglecting their duty to raise up their offspring in the right spirit. They are trying to educate them better now to get back to the original principles of evolution.

7. Various Evolutionary Ideas

FR. SERAPHIM: There is so much interpretation involved in evolutionary theory that if you ask evolutionists to explain how evolution occurs, they cannot agree on an answer. They used to say it happens by

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natural selection coupled with mutation: small changes which, after a certain number of generations, finally result in a new kind of creature. But it so happens that mutations are so universally harmful that you can't explain any kind of upward progress by mutations. Right now there's a big debate going on over whether to throw out Darwinian gradualism altogether and have some other theory. The latest idea they have gone back to—an idea devised forty years ago—is called the “hopeful monster” theory. The prominent geneticist Richard Goldschmidt [of the University of California at Berkeley] came up with this idea because he saw that the accumulation of natural selection and mutation could not produce complex structures.* You cannot explain, for example, the eye by a series of gradual changes, because either you have an eye or you don't have an eye. The organism that suddenly gets a retina or some other part of an eye will have no use for it. It has to mate with a creature with the same characteristic, and then that characteristic must be preserved until it develops into a higher form and finally the whole eye develops. This simply can't happen; it doesn't make any sense. You have to have the eye *all of a sudden* come into existence.** Therefore, Goldschmidt proposed that evolution occurs in jumps—large-scale mutations resulting in a “hopeful monster” that is able to survive and reproduce.

Goldschmidt invoked this theory to explain the origin of birds. A bird wing is a tremendous thing. If a reptile simply has a bone sticking out of its back, it is not very well adapted to survive. It must have two whole wings which work, and there must be a female and male with

* This theory was rejected by Darwinists when Goldschmidt first propounded it in 1940, but in 1977 it was rehabilitated in qualified form by paleontologist and evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard University in his article “The Return of Hopeful Monsters” (*Natural History*, vol. 86, no. 6 [June–July, 1977], pp. 22–30; reprinted in Gould, *The Panda’s Thumb*, pp. 186–93).—ED.

** In his book *The Blind Watchmaker* (1985), neo-Darwinian apologist Richard Dawkins has tried to explain the evolution of an eye. Dawkins’ arguments have been refuted on the evidence of biochemistry by Michael Behe in his seminal book *Darwin’s Black Box* (1996), pp. 15–22, 36–39. As Phillip E. Johnson comments, “To move from Dawkins to Behe is like moving from the children’s library to the laboratory” (Johnson, *Objections Sustained*, p. 54).—ED.

the same wings in order to reproduce them. Therefore, the “hopeful monster” idea proposed that a reptile laid an egg and out hatched a bird!* People now are seriously returning to this idea and trying to find a balance between it and Darwinism, because they realize that small changes cannot produce these tremendously complex structures.**

These ideas are for scientists to discuss, but it’s interesting for us to be aware of what they are discussing.

8. The Limits of Biological Change

FR. SERAPHIM: Whatever species is still around today comes down in an unbroken link from the same *kind* of creature in the past. There are many species that are no longer around; but until they became extinct they were the same kind of thing that they were from the beginning.

You can see great numbers of changes within each kind of creature. For example, the dachshund, the German shepherd, and so on, all come from the same kind, but they’re all dogs, and they can mate and reproduce. So too with the “races” of men: although they look quite different, they are all of the same kind.

Those who call themselves creationists do not say that there are no changes. There are lots of changes in nature, but they are all within certain limits. That’s what the whole debate over evolution and creation is all about: whether the limits are strictly defined according to “kinds”—which might not be quite the same as “species”—or whether everything comes from an original glob of organic matter which developed into all the different kinds of things. Everything we know now about the genetic code seems to be against the latter idea. An organism

* Goldschmidt cited with approval this reptile-to-bird scenario as first suggested in the mid-1930s by the influential paleontologist Otto Schindewolf.—ED.

** Another reason why Stephen Jay Gould wanted to rehabilitate the “hopeful monster” theory was to account for the lack of transitional forms in the fossil record. The revision of Goldschmidt’s theory proposed by Gould and fellow paleontologist Niles Eldredge—“punctuated equilibrium”—continues to be debated by evolutionists. See Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, pp. 32–44; Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, pp. 192–95; as well as pp. 53, 53n, 96–97 above.—ED.

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cannot “evolve” into something that is not in agreement with its genetic code.* Much of the debate between evolutionists now centers on *how* this could be possible. We have not found out how.**

9. “Human Evolution”

STUDENT: What do you think of the fossil men that have been discovered?

FR. SERAPHIM: Many theories have been coming out in recent years. The Leakeys in Africa have been making all kinds of discoveries each year. Of course, each person who is making discoveries wants his “man” to be the ancestor of all mankind; so he wants to overthrow all the previous ideas, come up with a new one, and claim he has found the “missing link.” So we always take with a grain of salt what these people say.

In 1959 Louis and Mary Leakey discovered a skull of an extinct ape, *Australopithecus* (“Southern Ape”), which was generally supposed to be the ape ancestor of all the fossil men—of *Homo erectus*, etc. The Leakeys later announced that they found *Homo erectus* fossils in the same bed as those of *Australopithecus*. This threw the whole scenario of human evolution back, because an evolutionary ancestor cannot be in the same bed as its descendant.***

Of course, these are all guesses. There are so many holes and diffi-

* I.e., that is outside the range of variation specified by the DNA for that particular organism.—ED.

** See appendix 3, “Biological Evidence and the Neo-Darwinian Paradigm,” below, especially pp. 843–50, 854–57.—ED.

*** Based on fossil finds by other researchers, the status of *Australopithecus* as an extinct ape had been established as early as 1954 through the comparative anatomy studies of zoologist Solly Zuckerman; see p. 837 below for more recent analysis. On the truly human status of *Homo erectus*, see pp. 470n, 837–38 below.

In the same bed that the Leakeys found *Australopithecus* and *Homo erectus*—Bed II of Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania—they found fossils that they placed in the taxon *Homo habilis* (M. D. Leakey, *Olduvai Gorge*, vol. 3, p. 272; A. J. Kelso, *Physical Anthropology*, p. 221). This taxon has been a source of controversy among paleoanthropologists, some of whom regard it as invalid. Evolutionist Ian Tattersall has gone so far as to call it “a wastebasket taxon, little more than a convenient recipient for a motley assortment of hominid fossils from the latest Pliocene and earliest Pleistocene” (Tattersall, “The Many Faces of *Homo habilis*,” p. 34). In any event,

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culties in the various theories, and there is so much that each evolutionist tries to push through his or her own claims.

There are even outright hoaxes. When I studied zoology in college in the 1950s, one of the proofs of the evolution of man was the “Piltdown Man.” From the 1890s onwards there had been a concerted search to find the missing link, which was expected to be half ape and half man. So in 1911 a very clever man in England named Charles Dawson took a human skull, combined it with the jawbone of an ape, and filed down the ape teeth. A year later Teilhard de Chardin discovered the missing canine tooth. With its very primitive jaw and very advanced skull, this “Piltdown Man” was taken to be an evolutionary ancestor of man. Some scientists did question it and had big discussions, but the vast majority accepted it.* Finally in the 1950s, some scientists tested it by means of the carbon-14 method of dating, which gives fairly accurate results back to 2,000–3,000 years. They found that one part was more ancient, one part was more modern, and so it was obviously two different creatures.** Therefore the whole thing was discredited.

STUDENT: What about the skulls they have found of Neanderthal Man?

many evolutionists have abandoned *Homo habilis* as an ancestor of modern humans, since according to the evolutionary chronology *Homo habilis* lived side-by-side with *Homo erectus* in the same lake basin for about a half-million years (F. Spoor, M. G. Leakey, et al., “Implications of New Early *Homo* Fossils from Ileret, East of Lake Turkana, Kenya,” *Nature*, vol. 448 [Aug. 9, 2007], pp. 688–91).

Interestingly, in reporting that fossils of *Australopithecus*, *Homo habilis*, and *Homo erectus* had been found in the same bed, Louis Leakey reported that at the bottom of a lower bed—Bed I of the Olduvai Gorge—he had found the remains of a circular stone structure (M. D. Leakey, *Olduvai Gorge*, vol. 3, p. 24; A. J. Kelso, *Physical Anthropology*, p. 221). The deliberate manufacture of such structures can only be attributed to true humans. Today, such shelters are constructed by the Okambambi tribesmen in southwest Africa and the Turkana tribesmen in Kenya.—ED.

* More than five hundred doctoral dissertations were written on Piltdown Man.—ED.

** In 1982, the year of Fr. Seraphim’s repose, the jawbone was conclusively found to be that of a female orangutan. (On Piltdown Man, see also pp. 469, 577, 577nn below.)—ED.

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FR. SERAPHIM: The Neanderthal Man is now accepted as *Homo sapiens*: same species as man, different variety—no more different from man than Englishmen are different from the Chinese.*

Actually, the fossil men are very few in number.** And, of course, everything is based on your interpretation: is it an ape or a man? It is not particularly simple to find something in between both of them. In any fossil that you see, either of “primitive” men or “advanced” apes, it does not say, “I am the ancestor of people today.” So you cannot tell whether it is an ancestor, a cousin, or not related at all. It’s your interpretation. So far there is actually no persuasive ancient man that really looks as though it is halfway between man and ape. There are different kinds of fossil men, some “primitive,” some with large skulls, some with small skulls; but they are no more different from each other than are the different men who live today. So the burden of proof in this, I think, is still upon those who want to prove that one comes from the other.

Of course, this whole question of whether one comes from the other raises a whole lot of questions in the text of Genesis—about the

* In the late 1980s some evolutionists suggested that Neanderthal Man once again be given his earlier designation, *Homo neanderthalensis*. However, even they admitted that Neanderthals were contemporary with modern humans and might have interbred with them. Today, evolutionists remain split on whether Neanderthal Man should be included within the species *Homo sapiens*, although a recent study of Neanderthal DNA (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany, 2010) indicates that Neanderthals did in fact interbreed with modern people groups. See Marvin L. Lubenow, *Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils* (2004), pp. 205–69; Paul Rincon, “Neanderthal Genes ‘Survive in Us,’” *BBC News*, May 6, 2010; and Richard E. Green et al., “A Draft Sequence of the Neanderthal Genome,” *Science*, vol. 328, no. 5979 (May 7, 2010), pp. 710–12.—ED.

** Richard Leakey has quoted fellow paleontologist David Pilbeam as saying: “If you brought in a smart scientist from another discipline and showed him the meagre evidence we’ve got he’d surely say, ‘Forget it; there isn’t enough to go on.’” Neither David nor others involved in the search for mankind can take this advice, of course, but we remain fully aware of the dangers of drawing conclusions from evidence that is so incomplete” (Richard E. Leakey, *The Making of Mankind* [1981], p. 43).—ED.

genealogies, for example. If man is millions of years old, you have to make some big epicycles to account for the genealogies of the Patriarchs. In fact, some say that Patriarchs aren't really people: they're really just names for vast ages.

10. The Limits of Scientific Inquiry

STUDENT: I'm not surprised when you say that ideas of human evolution are changing, as they find more things contributing to the theory of evolution. Ultimately, we will see the whole picture of evolution come to light.

FR. SERAPHIM: Well, it all depends on your presuppositions, because often those presuppositions are very strong.

STUDENT: What I'm saying is that generally what happens in science is that they are going along and they have a theory, and then they find that their suppositions are incorrect, as you said. And then they have to change their theory and there is a step, an improvement in knowledge, in science.

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes. And there are certain weak points in the theory of evolution itself as it is put forth now. Of course, we have to understand there are different meanings for that word. The evolution of a particular variety of finch or something—that's not what we are talking about. That's simply a change within a single nature. But evolution as a theory about the origin of the world—that's beyond the realm of science. That's speculation about the beginnings, just like the ancient Greek speculations about whether the world was infinite or always existed, etc.

In order to accept the evolutionary theory of origins as it is usually presented now, one has to accept that the Six Days of Creation are *not* a supernatural act, that is, an act that is different in kind from what is happening now. According to the interpretation of the Church, it is very distinct: there were Six Days of Creation in which God made the whole world, and He is not doing that any more. Therefore you cannot deduce what they were like. Maybe you can deduce back *almost* to that point, but you can't deduce what the actual beginning was. So I think in that respect scientists should be much less dogmatic in looking at and discussing the very beginning.

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The text of Genesis is quite clear that these six acts were quite outside of our sphere of knowledge today. We can't know about them at all, except as God Himself has chosen to reveal them. That is why I would say that scientists are off if they try to deduce the beginning from what is happening now. You can take the idea of uniformitarianism (i.e., that everything has happened at the same rate as it is happening now) up to a certain point—a few thousand years perhaps. Before that it is very dubious that everything has been happening at the same rate.

11. The Biblical Chronology

STUDENT: Do we know *exactly* how old the earth is from the Biblical chronologies?

FR. SERAPHIM: There actually are questions about this. The Greek (Septuagint) and the Hebrew (Masoretic) texts of Genesis are different. According to the Septuagint, the world is about 7,500 years old;* according to the Hebrew text, it's about 6,000 years old. It's an obvious discrepancy. How do we solve problems like that? The Fathers admit that there can be a little mistake that is handed down; there are simply miscopyings and so forth. In fact, Blessed Augustine has a whole chapter on this question.** Perhaps some scribes added or subtracted a hundred years here and there when they were copying the text. There's no particular Patristic teaching that we have to define the world as being exactly 7,490 years old. It could be a little more or a little less: it's not an important question.

But whether Adam lived either seven or eight thousand years ago, or whether he lived millions of years ago—that *is* an important question. That is a big subject that affects the whole text of Genesis. We have to understand who Adam was—whether he was a person or not,

* According to the traditional Orthodox Calendar established in Constantinople during the time of the Seven Ecumenical Councils (see p. 315n above), A.D. 2011 is the year 7518 from the creation of the world.—ED.

** See Blessed Augustine, *City of God* 15.9–15, NPNF 1 2, pp. 291–97, especially 15.13–14, pp. 293–95. See also p. 314, 314n above.—ED.

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and so forth. If he lived millions of years ago, there are a whole lot of questions that you have to ask about how tradition has interpreted mankind since that time.

12. The Preexistence of Souls, “Reincarnation,” and Evolution

STUDENT: Why did Origen believe that the soul came from the spiritual realm down into the body?

FR. SERAPHIM: He was under the influence of philosophies which said that matter is evil. People look around and see that sins come because of the flesh, and therefore the idea was developed, especially among the Manichaeans and similar teachers, that matter itself is evil and that the soul is a noble thing which is imprisoned in matter. From this they developed the idea that the soul has for aeons past been in some other realm.

STUDENT: Why were souls brought down into matter if matter is evil?

FR. SERAPHIM: According to Origen, it was because they sinned in that other realm.

This represents a dualistic view of the universe: there is one good aspect—the soul, and one evil aspect—matter, the body. The Christian view, on the other hand, sees the soul and the body together, with the knowledge that the body will actually be transformed. In fact, we will see in our study of Genesis that the body in the beginning was different from the way it was after the fall.

STUDENT: Was there any influence of Eastern ideas on Origen?

FR. SERAPHIM: Undoubtedly. People came from India to Alexandria, where Origen lived, and they taught there.

STUDENT: The idea of the preexistence of souls is similar to what Hinduism teaches on the transmigration of souls or “reincarnation.”

FR. SERAPHIM: Right.

STUDENT: And how is that related to evolution?

FR. SERAPHIM: The idea behind the cosmogony of evolution is that everything comes from a single filament: in the beginning there was one blob, and from that comes all living things: animals, insects,

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plants, etc. (Of course, there are immense difficulties in that theory because you have to show how within that original blob the genetic code and the means of translating it appeared simultaneously; then you have to show how the information was added to produce the genetic code for man and all the different creatures. This has never been done.)

The idea of “reincarnation” is similar in that, according to the ancient Buddhist, Hindu, Greek, and Roman understanding, it involved transmigration into different creatures: beasts, insects, and even plants. (In modern times people have changed that idea: they assume that in their “previous lives” they were human beings, because they don’t like the idea of having been a monkey or a tree or something. People like to think that they were Napoleon or Julius Caesar, but they don’t like to think that they were an oak beam in Rome someplace. They are flattering themselves.)

In general, we can say that this idea that everything is one—like one “Chain of Light” which can be divided into different kinds of beings—is not accepted at all by the Holy Fathers. They say that in the beginning all the different kinds of creatures were present, and that from them the seed produces the same kinds of creatures until the end of time.*

13. The Nature of Paradise

FR. SERAPHIM: Before we begin a new chapter, can anyone give a résumé of what the earthly Paradise was?**

STUDENT: It’s not the material world as we know it, but then again it is not in the noetic realm, but somewhere in between. It is a more rarefied physical place.

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes. And was it on the earth or in heaven?

STUDENT: Neither. I thought it was elevated above the earth.

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes, but actually in the beginning it was part of earth, even though it might have been in a higher place. And now?

* A more extensive treatment of reincarnation may be found in Fr. Seraphim's book *The Soul after Death*, 4th ed., pp. 121–27.—ED.

** Fr. Seraphim is here referring the students to his previous lecture, on Paradise, which is found in chapter 5 above.—ED.

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STUDENT: It's actually a place, but you can't get there in a worldly geographical way.

FR. SERAPHIM: Has anyone been there in the last few thousand years?

STUDENT: The thief on the cross [cf. Luke 23:43].

FR. SERAPHIM: That's right, but he didn't come back to tell us. Did anyone come back?

STUDENT: St. Andrew the Fool for Christ of Constantinople.

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes. Who else?

STUDENT: There was a cook in a monastery.

FR. SERAPHIM: Right, St. Euphrosynus the Cook.

STUDENT: Are there any mentioned in the book *The Soul after Death*?

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes, there are several mentioned there who came back to tell us. They always say, like St. Paul, that they can't really express what they saw [cf. 2 Cor. 12:2–4]. They do give some descriptions of Paradise (St. Andrew, for example, talks about the plants, a beautiful garden, and above that heaven itself), but this is so far outside of our normal experience that they can't talk about it very much. They saw the state in which we are to be in the age to come.

Paradise was a special place on this earth which was created, according to St. Ephraim, together with the plants on the Third Day. On the Sixth Day God placed man in it. It was originally a place of the earth, as if to show that man was meant to ascend from earth to heaven. It was not entirely material; it was of refined matter which we don't understand. But because of man's fall, it was as if this heavenly aspect of earth—a special part of the original earth—went up and out of our sight, though we are still able to get back to it. At the same time, after the fall, the original earth fell into corruption.

STUDENT: According to the Fathers, when was hell created? Was it created when the heavens were created, or when the earth was created?

FR. SERAPHIM: Hell wasn't really created, just like evil wasn't really created. Hell is simply the state and the place into which the fallen angels fell. In other words, in a sense, they made it themselves. The Scriptures speak of the place "prepared for the devil and his angels" [Matt.

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25:41], but they do not mention how it came into being. We aren't told in detail about the angels either, nor about their fall; there are just brief references here and there. It's obvious that it happened before the serpent appears in Genesis.

Any other questions? Is it difficult to understand this concept of something which is not exactly material, not exactly spiritual?

STUDENT: We're very used to thinking dualistically: material vs. spiritual.

FR. SERAPHIM: That's right. In the future age we will have bodies, but the bodies will be spiritual. It will be a realm similar to the original Paradise, although Paradise was evidently "cruder," that is, comparatively material. The future realm will be a spiritual dwelling, but at the same time there will be bodies in it.* What was the first example of such a body?

STUDENT: Christ resurrected.

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes—the resurrected body of Christ, which was able to go through closed doors and walls. He was able to give the appearance of eating although He did not need to eat; He had wounds that could be touched, and yet He looked so different that the disciples did not recognize Him when they saw Him. It is a very mysterious kind of state. Nonetheless, it is bound up with the body.

STUDENT: If Adam and Eve had not fallen, could Adam have advanced to the state of perfection without Christ?

FR. SERAPHIM: Theoretically, you could think like that. Whether Christ would have come anyway is a different question. God knew what He wanted to do beforehand, and He knew the way things would be. And the way things *were* was that Christ did come. But He would not have needed to come to redeem us if Adam had not sinned.**

Of course, this is all very deep and profound. Later I'll quote a few of the services which talk about these things. The theology of the Church is

* For further discussion of this subject, see pp. 761–74 below.—ED.

** Concerning this question, see the teaching of Sts. John Damascene, Maximus the Confessor, and Symeon the New Theologian on pp. 691, 702–3, 710–11, 763–65, 774 below.—ED.

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constantly given to us in the services because that is what keeps us in remembrance of where we came from and where we are going.

14. Free Will

STUDENT: When Adam fell, did he realize at that point that he had free will?

FR. SERAPHIM: Once he disobeyed, he realized he was naked, he saw that he was running away from God, and he began to make excuses. In other words, the whole path which is the consequence of sin was opened up to him. So he saw this depth in himself—that he was able to choose evil even though he really did not intend to.

STUDENT: So he wasn't really conscious of his free will until that point?

FR. SERAPHIM: Well, the Fathers say that, although he was adult in body and very exalted in mind, he was still very simple because he was untested. He was in a state of goodness without being tested by evil.

STUDENT: So did Adam know what he was doing when he fell?

FR. SERAPHIM: He knew one thing: that there was a commandment. But he was not tested in obeying the commandments yet, and in his simplicity he fell.

STUDENT: Before he partook of the apple, was Adam at all aware of what evil was?

FR. SERAPHIM: I think that when he observed there were temptations, that would have been for him the opening of the awareness of evil.* Had he not fallen, that awareness in itself could have been for him like tasting of the tree without falling. When he was mature and

* In his *Eight Homilies on Genesis*, St. John Chrysostom writes: “Adam knew that obedience was a good and disobedience an evil. But he learned more clearly later, when after having tasted of the tree he was cast out of Paradise and fell from that blessedness” (*Eight Homilies on Genesis* 7, SC 433.318, trans. R. C. Hill, p. 118*).

Elsewhere, in his *Homilies on Genesis*, St. John Chrysostom speaks at length on this question. He argues that Adam and Eve did have an understanding of good and evil prior to the fall, since Adam’s ability to name the animals and to prophesy about Eve showed that he had been endowed with “prophetic grace along with ... ineffable intelligence,” and since both he and Eve knew God’s command not to eat

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ready, he could have known the consequences of evil without falling into evil himself.

That, however, is *my* idea. The Fathers don't talk about that particular aspect [of the question], but they do say that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is something which is only for *mature* people.*

(None of the Holy Fathers say the fruit was an apple, by the way. Some people think it was a fig. It is a Western idea that it was an apple. We are not given particular information about that; it was just a tree with fruit.)

15. The Creation of Adam and Eve

STUDENT: Did God create one man and one woman? Or are Adam and Eve representative of a particular kind of person or group of persons?

of the tree lest they die. The knowledge they acquired at the fall was, specifically, an *experiential* awareness of sin and of shame. St. Chrysostom writes: "Because the transgression of the command happened to concern the tree, and from that event knowledge of sin then entered the scene, and shame as well—that was why the name ["the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"] was given. It is, after all, the way with Sacred Scripture to name places from the things that happen, wherever it is they happen. So on this basis Sacred Scripture also named the tree of the knowledge of good and evil since the transgression and observance of the command concerned the tree" (*Homilies on Genesis* 16.5, FC 74, pp. 218–19 [16.16–17]; see also 16.6 [16.18], pp. 219–20).

Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus sets forth the same interpretation. The tree of knowledge, he writes, received its name from "the sense of sin connected with it.... They [Adam and Eve] had no experience of sin, but afterwards, when they had partaken of the forbidden fruit, they suffered the pangs of conscience for breaking the commandment." Then, to the question, "So they did possess the knowledge of good and evil before partaking of the forbidden fruit?" Blessed Theodoret answers: "How could those endowed with reason and made in the divine image be unable to distinguish good and evil? How could the Depths of Righteousness impose a law on those who were naturally unprovided with this knowledge and unaware that it was good to keep the commandment and fatal to break it? So it follows that they had the knowledge, and what they lacked was the experience" (*Questions on Genesis* 27, LEC 1, p. 65; see also 26, pp. 63–65).—ED.

* See the quotations from Sts. Gregory the Theologian and John Damascene, and Fr. Seraphim's reflections on them, on pp. 230–34 above.—ED.

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FR. SERAPHIM: He created the whole human nature in one man—the first man, Adam—and out of his flesh took the first woman. From them comes the rest of mankind.

STUDENT: When God created Eve out of the rib of Adam, did He take those qualities that are particular to womankind from Adam, or did He endow her with other, complementary qualities?

FR. SERAPHIM: We aren't told. He gave her whatever quality He needed to give her, starting from the rib. The rib of a man does not produce a woman; therefore, it's a miracle. God took the part from Adam simply to show that the origin of mankind is one.

The whole of mankind is already present in the original man. Everyone produced after that—from this one man—has the same nature, the same image of God, which is seen in the soul.

STUDENT: Were the body and soul of man originally meant to be separate?

FR. SERAPHIM: No. If Adam had not died, we would not need to talk about body and soul, because the body would itself become refined and soul-like. In the end we would have the state of the spiritual body.

STUDENT: Did God breathe a soul into Eve, too?

FR. SERAPHIM: In whatever way He knows, He gave her the same thing He gave Adam. We are not told details like that. The whole thing is simply a miracle of God.

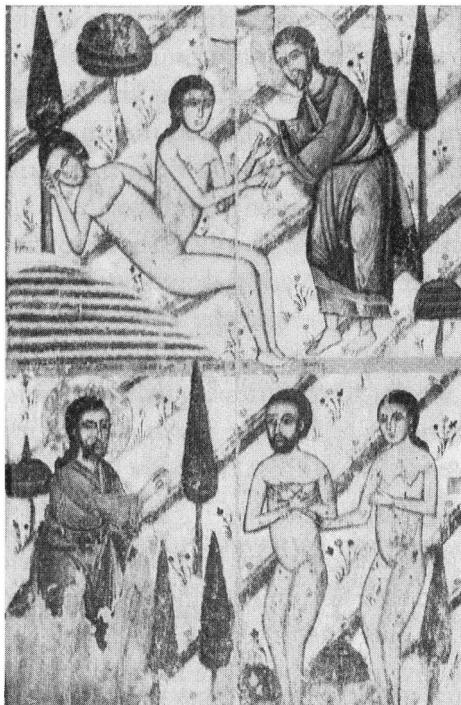
STUDENT: Why is Christ called the Second Adam?

FR. SERAPHIM: We are the offspring of Adam. Even if Adam had not fallen and the animal mode of reproduction had not been instituted, there would have been some means of generation from this one man. All men come from Adam, and therefore Adam is like humanity. Adam *ruined* the whole plan for mankind, but God was "smarter" because He had already "figured out" how to bring this plan about without Adam. Therefore, the One through Whom man's original nature is restored, through Whom we have the opportunity to be in Paradise once more, is called the Second Adam.

STUDENT: Doesn't St. Paul say something about how death came to all through one man?

FR. SERAPHIM: That's right, death came from one man and life

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The creation of Eve, and the blessing of Adam and Eve by God the Word.

*Icon from Troyan Monastery,
Bulgaria, nineteenth century.*

comes from One Man.* Because Adam tasted of the tree, our nature was changed. Therefore, when the Holy Fathers speak about the nature of man, sometimes they refer to the fallen, corrupted nature we have as a result of the fall; but sometimes they (for example, Abba Dorotheus) speak about the original nature of mankind, in order to give an image of what we are supposed to get back to.

The Roman Catholic idea, by the way, is different. They say that in the beginning man was “natural,” and that he had extra grace which made him supernatural; and then when he fell, he lost the grace and went back to the state he was made in. That is a whole different

* “For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17); “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” (1 Cor. 15:21–22). These passages of the Pauline Epistles are discussed on p. 272 above and pp. 690, 733–34, 751–52, 777 below.—ED.

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conception, and it fits in with evolution, because it sounds as though the whole creation was “natural” to begin with, and God didn’t create everything incorrupt. In the Roman Catholic view, Adam was not made immortal; he became immortal when God added grace to him. But in the Orthodox view, man was created immortal; his whole nature was different, and when he fell that nature was twisted and changed. We can still get back to the original state, of course, but only if the grace of God through Christ Himself raises us up.

STUDENT: But the state we’re striving for is not the state that Adam was in; it’s the state that Adam was *meant* to be in.

FR. SERAPHIM: Right. But the original state is an image of that other state, because it was close to it already.*

16. The Mind of Adam

STUDENT: The knowledge that Adam had was a revelation. He did not have accumulated knowledge like we have now. Is that right?

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes. When the animals came before him he did not know about them. He instantly gave whatever God placed in his mind.

STUDENT: It was all spiritual.

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes. It was a very exalted thing. We have an image of that when a clairvoyant elder looks at somebody for the first time, tells his name, tells his sin, and tells him what to do to save his soul. It’s exactly the same kind of thing. It’s *his* doing, but only through God’s grace. His mind is giving this startling information, but it’s only because he is in direct contact with God that he can do it.

STUDENT: Do the Holy Fathers teach that imagination is part of our fallen nature?

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes.

STUDENT: Imagination is so much a part of our thinking now.

FR. SERAPHIM: Right.

STUDENT: How did Adam think? What do the Fathers say his state of mind was?

FR. SERAPHIM: It was a state called sobriety: *nepsis* in Greek. In

* On this subject, see pp. 83–86, 85n above, pp. 465, 472–89 below, and appendix 1 below.—ED.

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other words, he looked at things and saw them the way they were. There was no “double thought.”* In fact, he not only looked at them and saw them the way they were, but he also named all the creatures as they came before him.

STUDENT: But I’ve heard people say that imagination has to do with our creative powers, which are a reflection of God’s creative powers. That’s a good thing; that’s how we make beautiful things....

FR. SERAPHIM: That depends upon what you mean by the word “imagination.” There are several aspects of it. One aspect is the creative faculty, which is part of our original nature.

STUDENT: And it was with that faculty that Adam named the creatures?

FR. SERAPHIM: Right. But in our fallen state this creative talent becomes mixed up with double-thinking: looking at things and imagining something else. So the word “imagination” does have two meanings, but in our fallen state it is always bound up with double-thinking.**

STUDENT: Why, according to the Holy Fathers, did imagination and double-thinking come in?

FR. SERAPHIM: That just seems to be a natural part of our fallen state. No longer do we look at things directly the way they are, for we are weak—we are, in a way, incapacitated. We look at things and don’t quite see the way they are. When we sober up, we do; but usually we are not in that state.

STUDENT: “Now we see through a glass, darkly” [1 Cor. 13:12].

FR. SERAPHIM: That’s right. Adam saw the whole creation clearly, both the creation below and the creation above. And, therefore, he was in full possession of the facts about everything, only he needed experience in order to be tested.

STUDENT: I read somewhere that imagination is used by people in their striving to regain that image of Paradise they lost.

* See the quotations of Sts. Gregory the Sinaite and Diadochus of Photiki regarding man’s original, “one-pointed” memory and perceptive faculty, pp. 697–98 below.—ED.

** On the Patristic teaching concerning man’s imagination vis-à-vis the fall, see pp. 698–99, 714 below.—ED.

FR. SERAPHIM: Well, you could say that, because it's obvious that man, once he fell, is striving for happiness. Even unbelievers and people who think they don't believe in God and wouldn't accept Paradise or anything like that—they are all striving for happiness. And of course, only in the Church do we receive the fullness of that happiness and find the way to it, which is through following Christ on the Cross. If you're just going to write poetry, you'll be very exalted for one day and the next day down in the dumps. You simply can't get beyond your nature that way. For you to get beyond your fallen nature, obviously Someone from above has to lift you up. The One Who made the nature Himself has to change you.

STUDENT: I'm interested to hear more about how Adam named the animals.

FR. SERAPHIM: Since Adam was originally in a state of *dispassion*, his mind was in an extremely exalted state when God brought the animals before him in Paradise in order for him to name them. Adam gave the animals names in accordance with their qualities. In other words, he had some kind of supernatural faculty; his mind was crystal-clear, so that he instantly saw what were the qualities of each creature and what name it should have. Of course, we have lost that language he spoke. We don't have that clarity of mind; it's totally beyond us.

St. Symeon the New Theologian says that Adam was "an immortal king over an incorrupt world, not only over Paradise, but also over the whole of creation which was under the heavens."⁷ Of course, Paradise was made for his dwelling. He had been created outside of Paradise, on the earth, and then led into Paradise, his home. The animals were not directly in Paradise; they were "brought" there. To us they would look like paradisal creatures, but they were actually outside the boundaries of Paradise and were brought into it when Adam named them.

When Adam fell, he went back to the earth from which he came. He was sent outside again to live on the earth by the sweat of his brow.

17. Paradise and Heaven

STUDENT: In the next life man will be in Paradise or in heaven. Are Paradise and heaven not the same, or are they the same?

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FR. SERAPHIM: From our point of view, who are so far away, it's all the same. If you get into one you should give thanks to God. But apparently there will be distinctions because there are "many mansions" [John 14:2], and different places; that is, some saints attain to great freedom, great familiarity with God, and others barely get in.

"The meek shall inherit the earth" [Ps. 36:11; cf. Matt. 5:5]. St. Symeon the New Theologian says this means the meek will inherit this very earth here.⁸ So apparently some will be on earth with the ability to go up higher; others will be on higher levels. The whole thing is not revealed to us; we're just given a glimpse. If we enter into that state, then we will see exactly what happens.

This whole creation—what was meant in the beginning—will be again. Whether the same particular beasts will be there (since each individual creature has a different "personality")—we aren't told. But the same creatures will be there. Apparently, even that very serpent will be there, only now we will be friendly with him. Even the scorpions and everything else ... if they can't harm you, then there's no terror in all these animals.

STUDENT: The righteous people who have died already, like the New Martyrs—are they in Paradise, in heaven, or in a place that is separate? What do the Fathers teach about this?

FR. SERAPHIM: All we have to go on is the visions of various people, like St. Salvius [of Albi] who died and went to heaven. Usually when it is specifically Paradise, green growing things are seen. But St. Salvius went to some other place where there were no green growing things but just multitudes of people in white: saints, martyrs. In other words, they are in heaven. St. Andrew the Fool for Christ, when he went to Paradise, didn't see people there, but he saw people in heaven.* We are not told in detail about things like that.**

* St. Salvius was a bishop in Gaul (France) in the sixth century. About St. Salvius and St. Andrew and their experience of heaven, see Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Soul after Death*, 4th ed., pp. 135–39.—ED.

** On the distinction between Paradise and heaven, see also pp. 221–23, 222n above.—ED.

18. The Devil

STUDENT: About the enmity between Adam and the serpent: You said that the devil was envious of Adam before Adam fell because of the favor that was bestowed upon him. But you also said Adam was inferior to the serpent.

FR. SERAPHIM: The devil is superior because he is an intellectual being. He is not subject to the body. The body is a lower element; therefore, he is superior. But man is going to get that which the devil lost, that is, Paradise and heaven. And that is why, to this day, the devil is just plain angry.

Even according to human psychology, you can figure out the devil. Just think: you had immortal life and you knew that you were damned to hell. Then there is this other being who is lower than you, who is not worth even spitting on, and he is going to get that which you lost. Of course, you are going to be terribly envious, because there is no repentance for you.* You are going to be trying every possible way to get him in the same state you are in.

STUDENT: You read in Genesis where it says the serpent will be bruising the heels [Gen. 3:15]. Is that how he is trying to get us back in the state where he is—completely hopeless? Would it be right to say that he tries to cripple our walk with God in this way?

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes. You can give many interpretations of that particular phrase. It means that the devil does not have power to do much.

* The Holy Fathers teach that, since the devil is bodiless, the action of his free will in choosing evil was immutable; whereas human beings have a chance to repent while they are still in the body. St. John Damascene writes: “Although man, by reason of the infirmity of his body, is capable of repentance, the angel, because of his incorporeality, is not.” Elsewhere the same Father states: “One should note that the fall is to the angels just what death is to men. For, just as there is no repentance for men after their death, so is there none for the angels after their fall.... It was by reason of his incorruptibility that the devil, after his fall by deliberate choice, became unrepentingly and immovably rooted in evil. In the same way again, after their deliberate election of virtue, the angels were immutably founded in good by grace” (*On the Orthodox Faith* 2.3, 2.4, 2.30, FC 37, pp. 206, 210, 265).—ED.

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If he were upright, then he would be a dangerous foe; he would be biting us in every place.

STUDENT: If he can't do much, how is it that he is able to snatch us from any given state and pull us down low?

FR. SERAPHIM: If we have the grace of God and are not cooperating with the devil, he can't. It's only when we ourselves allow our will to be drawn away by the devil.

Actually, we can allow ourselves to be drawn away just like Adam was, even without the devil. Adam could have sinned without Satan, because he saw the pleasant aspect of the forbidden fruit and there was already a temptation for him to want it for himself outside the commandment of God.

STUDENT: This may be an irrelevant question, but would you comment on Indian snake charmers? It is really weird how they make the snakes rise and stand up and so on.

FR. SERAPHIM: There is something very symptomatic in the fact that they are involved with that kind of a creature in the first place. It shows that there are demons at work somewhere there. Just in general, you can say that much about it.

STUDENT: Is Satan used as a tool by God?

FR. SERAPHIM: Whoa! That is a profound question.

STUDENT: You know how God let Satan tempt Job.

FR. SERAPHIM: That's right. We do not believe in a dualism: that there's a God and there's a devil, and they are fighting each other—like the Manichaeans believe. We believe that actually God is in charge of everything; and even when things go against Him, He uses that either for His greater glory or to bring men to salvation. So everything in the world happens either because God wills it that way or because He *allows* it that way due to the presence of freedom, in order to bring about a greater good.

Satan has an independent personality, but in the long run he loses out. Even when he causes some terrible thing like the Russian Revolution, out of it come the New Martyrs, a tremendous inspiration for men. You can imagine what would have happened to Russia without the Revolution, the way it was going. Probably it would have become a frightful place of worldliness, only pretending to be Orthodox—but

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instead it was chastised. Therefore, a good thing actually came out of the Revolution despite the fact that the devil meant evil. The devil is independent, he can do evil, but God always brings good out of it *to those whose wills want good.**

STUDENT: The devil can't do anything without God allowing it, can he?

FR. SERAPHIM: No, he can't. When we say that the devil is bound for a thousand years—the whole time between the first and second comings of Christ**—that doesn't mean that he can't do anything. It means he can do only what God allows. When a person is walking in the grace of Christ, then *only* if he himself falls away from that can the devil do anything to him at all. When we have temptations, they are exactly like the serpent bruising the heel: they are a small thing, and we should shake them off. Only if we allow ourselves to be overcome by them do we fall into despondency and anger and all kinds of sins. So the devil's power is very limited.

STUDENT: But it wasn't that way before Christ.

FR. SERAPHIM: Before the coming of Christ, Satan had much more

* St. Peter Damascene writes: "There is nothing incidental or evil in creation, and even what takes place against God's will is miraculously changed by God into something good. For example, the fall of the devil was not God's will, yet it has been turned to the advantage of those being saved" (*A Treasury of Divine Knowledge*, book 1, *Philokalia* 3, p. 137).

Likewise, St. Macarius the Great (in the adaptation of his writings by St. Symeon Metaphrastes) teaches: "The lord of this world [the devil] is a rod of chastisement and a scourge to beginners in the spiritual life. Yet, as has been said, he brings them great glory and added honor because of the afflictions and trials they endure. In this way he helps them to attain the state of perfection, while he prepares even greater and harsher punishment for himself. In short, something most beneficial is brought about through him.... Evil, while intending what is not good, contributes to the good. For, in souls whose intention is sound, even that which appears harmful results in something good. As St. Paul says: 'All things work together for good to them that love God' (Rom. 8:28)" (*On Patient Endurance and Discrimination* 6 [38], *Philokalia* 3, pp. 300–301).—ED.

** According to the Holy Fathers, the "thousand years" mentioned in Apocalypse 20:2 represents the period between the first and second comings of Christ. We are now in this period. See Archbishop Averky Taushev and Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Apocalypse in the Teachings of Ancient Christianity*, pp. 254–58.—ED.

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power because everyone was bowing down to idols, which were demonic.

STUDENT: But in the whole scheme of things, it was all within God's plan.

FR. SERAPHIM: Well, yes, but it's a very mystical thing. Everything is within the plan, and yet each person freely does what he wants in that plan. And God brings goodness and good order out of the whole thing, no matter how many demons or men want to do evil.

19. Christ's Spiritual Body

STUDENT: How does Christ fit in with the place where the saints are now, and with the state that you say Adam was meant to achieve?

FR. SERAPHIM: Jesus Christ is God.

STUDENT: Yes, and He's worshipped by the saints; but does He possess a spiritual body like the saints will have?

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes, He still has His body. St. Andrew [the Fool for Christ], for example, saw Christ on the throne in heaven.

STUDENT: But He is the Essence of God, and we commune with Him spiritually.

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes, God is everywhere. He is the Light. But Christ is also there in heaven in His resurrected body.

How it works in practice, we are not worthy of knowing: that is, whether we will be walking about and talking with Him. But just think—He walked about the earth with His disciples.

STUDENT: That explains it. He is the Essence of God, but ...

FR. SERAPHIM: But He took flesh. He became like us, and therefore that flesh is there in the other world. In heaven we will have contact with God spiritually, and also with Him in His body.

STUDENT: And we will commune with Him in His Essence?

FR. SERAPHIM: No. There is a teaching of St. Gregory Palamas on the Essence and Energies of God. We do not have any direct contact with God in His Essence, but we know Him in His Energies (grace).

STUDENT: So the saints don't have contact with the Essence?

FR. SERAPHIM: No, they have contact through the Energies, and so they are become participants in God. We can't think like God: we can't

think His thoughts or think what He was doing before the world was made, or anything like that. We can only participate according as He allows us, by His grace.

20. *The Firmament*

STUDENT: What was the firmament?

FR. SERAPHIM: Very interesting question. Let me briefly summarize it. The text of Genesis said there was a firmament that “separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament” (Gen. 1:7). Later on, in ancient Greece, there arose the theory that the universe was composed of ten spheres, with the earth, the moon, and each planet occupying its own sphere.* Some people, under the influence of this theory, thought that the text of Genesis taught there was a kind of glass bowl over the earth. St. Basil the Great specifically discussed this question, and he said there was no such thing: there was simply a force of nature which kept the waters above—that is, some kind of more rarefied waters—from the waters beneath.

In the time of Noah, when the Flood began, the windows of heaven were opened and the waters came in. In other words, it seems that the firmament “cracked,” so that power of nature holding those waters above was loosened somehow. That is one of the reasons why the Flood was a universal disaster. The waters from underneath the earth came up, and at the same time the waters which before had been above the firmament came down.

It is a very challenging theory that some people have put forward in connection with the fact that the rainbow was given to Noah as a sign there would be no more flood, suggesting that the rainbow was seen then for the first time. It is likely that the waters above the firmament were actually a cloud layer over the whole earth, which produced a greenhouse effect.** Fossil remains everywhere in the world

* The Prophet Moses, the author of Genesis, lived in the sixteenth century B.C. The Greek concept of a universe composed of spheres was first devised by Pythagoras in the sixth century B.C. and was revised by Eudoxus in the fourth century B.C.—ED.

** This idea, commonly known as the water vapor canopy theory, has been subjected to extensive scientific testing and analysis by creationists since Fr. Seraphim

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testify to the fact that in the past the earth had a universally warm climate, with ample moisture for abundant plant and animal life.* Besides the fossil evidence, there is evidence from the fact that there are remnants of animals in frozen soils on the Arctic islands north of Siberia—areas that could never support such animals under present climatic conditions.**

gave this talk. In recent years the most important work in this area has been done by Larry Vardiman, a doctor of Atmospheric Science who has conducted research in cloud physics and climate change for the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. (See his book *Climates before and after the Genesis Flood* [2001], pp. 7–21, and his articles “Temperature Profiles for an Optimized Water Vapor Canopy” [2003], and [with Karen Boussetot] “Sensitivity Studies on Vapor Canopy Temperature Profiles” [1998].) The research of Vardiman and others suggests that, while a pre-Flood vapor canopy would have produced very different atmospheric and climatic conditions from what is experienced today, the greater part of the Flood waters would have come not from such a canopy, but from underground.—ED.

* According to E. H. Colbert, an evolutionist, “Many lines of dinosaurs evolved during the 100 million years or more of Mesozoic history in which they lived.... In those days the earth had a tropical or sub-tropical climate over much of its land surface, and in the widespread tropical lands there was an abundance of lush vegetation. The land was low and there were no high mountains forming physical or climactic barriers” (“Evolutionary Growth Rates in the Dinosaurs,” *Scientific Monthly*, Aug. 1949, p. 71). W. J. Arkell, in his book *Jurassic Geology of the World* (p. 615), writes: “A fairly rich flora of temperate facies flourished within or near both the Arctic and Antarctic Circles, in East Greenland and Grahamland.”

In 1991, the fossil remains of a plant-eating dinosaur, 25 to 30 feet long, were found in a small section of exposed rock in the interior of Antarctica, about 400 miles from the South Pole. Even closer to the Pole (about 250 miles), geologists found thousands of well-preserved leaves, retaining their original cellular structure and organic content. (See Raymond Chris, “Scientists Report Finding Fossils of Dinosaurs in Antarctica’s Interior,” “Discovery of Leaves in Antarctica,” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 20, 1991).—ED.

** J. K. Charlesworth, in his book *The Quaternary Era* (vol. 2, p. 650), states: “Vast herds of mammoth and other animals (the New Siberian Islands in the far north of Asia have yielded mammoth, wooly rhinoceros, musk ox, saiga antelope, reindeer, tiger, arctic fox, glutton, bear and horse among the 66 animal species) required forests, meadows and steppes for their sustenance ... and could not have lived in a climate like the present, with its icy winds, snowy winters, frozen ground and tundra moss the year round.”—ED.

21. The “Location” of Paradise

FR. SERAPHIM: The connection between Paradise and our contemporary world is a very profound one because in the beginning Paradise was part of earth—an elevated place like a mountain. When Adam was cast out of Paradise he went lower down the slope and began living there. Then Cain had to go still lower down.

STUDENT: It says in Genesis that the river flowing out of Paradise parted and became the Euphrates and other rivers.

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes. Four rivers are mentioned, which are usually interpreted as the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Nile and the Ganges. There are various interpretations.

STUDENT: Is there still a mountain there?

FR. SERAPHIM: No. You see, what we have now is a different reality. For one thing, the Flood of Noah came, and apparently there were tremendous cataclysms during that time—probably volcanoes erupting, mountains rising up—of which we see the results now. It is very likely that before Noah there were not the five continents we know now—there was a tremendously *different* earth. Maybe there was one continent. We have no idea, actually; we are not told about that. The earth became so completely different that today we cannot say. Right now those four rivers do not come from the same source; they have been changed. Nevertheless, you can point and say that in that area is the cradle of ancient civilization; it is apparently where we all came from.

Now, of course, Paradise has been separated from the earth. But people still go to Paradise. We know of people who have been there, like St. Euphrosynus the Cook. He brought back apples, which people ate like holy bread. He actually experienced Paradise as if it was something physical, but it was different from our everyday material reality. You can only get there in a state of exaltation; you have to be out of yourself. Paradise is now gone from us, because Adam was originally different from what we are now. He was of a higher nature. In fact, the Fathers say that he was of flesh, but it was a flesh somehow halfway between what we know as flesh and spirit. It's a whole different thing.



St. Euphrosynus the Cook of Alexandria (ninth century, commemorated Sept. 11), who was granted access to Paradise. He gave to a priest of his monastery three apples from Paradise, which emitted an ineffable fragrance. The monastic brethren divided the apples among themselves and distributed pieces of them as a blessing to many, especially to those who were in need of healing. Whoever ate of these apples was healed of his infirmities. *Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan, Monastery of St. Nicholas Anapavsa, Meteora, Greece, 1527.*

22. Between the Fall and the Flood

STUDENT: When Adam was thrown out from Paradise, what was that separation like?

FR. SERAPHIM: Adam was cast out from Paradise, but it says that he sat there looking at it. It was still visible, and even Cain could still see Paradise. One of the Fathers says that perhaps until the Flood people could still see Paradise.* They could not get to it because there were two angels there guarding it, but we know they were somehow closer because God was constantly talking to the Patriarchs. Then there was a whole different state which is very difficult for us to imagine now, because after Noah this new period enters when we do not have contact with God that way. Before the Flood, God came and talked directly even to Cain, the sinner.

23. The Flood

STUDENT: Some say the Flood was only between the Tigris and the Euphrates.

FR. SERAPHIM: That would be a local flood. But what is described in Scripture is a universal Flood, over the whole earth.

STUDENT: Is that why shells are found on the tops of mountains?

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes. Of course, that is also due to the mountains rising up.**

The question of what mountains were before the Flood and how

* See St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise* 1.4, 1.10, PPS 10, pp. 78–79, 81.—ED.

** That the Flood was universal is witnessed by the vast extent of sedimentary deposits (formed by aqueous action) over what is today dry land. O. D. von Engeln and Kenneth E. Caster, in their book *Geology* (p. 129), write: “About three-fourths, perhaps more, of the land area of the earth, 55 million square miles, has sedimentary rock as the bedrock at the surface or directly under the cover of mantle-rock.... The thickness of the stratified rocks ranges from a few feet to 40,000 feet or more at any one place.... The vast bulk of the stratified rocks is composed of shallow-water deposits.”—ED.

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high the Flood rose cannot be solved conclusively, because it is very likely the cataclysm was so extreme that the whole earth was quite different then. All the mountains may have risen up at that time. Entirely different geographical and geological features would have been created.* Those people who accept the idea of the Flood in their studies of geology—like Henry Morris, in *The Genesis Flood*—say that most of the layers were formed during and right after the time of the Flood, not over millions of years. Read the book.

24. Patristic Interpretation vs. Modern “Higher” Criticism

STUDENT: Did Moses write every word of the first five books of the Bible? And do we know when exactly they were written down?

FR. SERAPHIM: When it says at the beginning “the book of Moses,” etc., it means “by Moses, in his tradition.” One of the books (Deuteronomy) mentions Moses’ death; therefore he did not write that part. In the same way, the Psalms of David were not written all by David. Maybe half were written by him, and others were written by other people. The Orthodox Church is not so concerned that every word is written by that person to whom it is ascribed. We are not that concerned because we have the idea of *tradition*; that is, this is the book of Moses, “in the tradition of” Moses. The basic part comes from the hand itself;** other parts were added later, which are all in the tradition of Moses.

I can’t give you exact details of when actually the books were written down. A lot was preserved in oral tradition. The basic text of Genesis was revealed to the Prophet Moses. We are not even concerned that every single word is actually correct according to the way he received it. The Protestants can become very upset about this question. It doesn’t bother us because, if it is interpreted *in the Church*, the Church itself is

* On this, see the quotation of St. Bede the Venerable, pp. 334–35n above.—ED.

** In the Gospels, Christ says many times that the Prophet Moses gave the Jews the Law: Matt. 8:4, 19:7–8; Mark 1:44, 7:10, 10:3; Luke 5:14, 16:29–31, 20:37, 24:44; John 7:19, 22–23. In John 5:45–46, He speaks specifically of Moses as a *writer of Scripture*: “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?”—ED.

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the guarantee that it will be preserved in the right spirit. The Hebrew and Greek texts disagree in a lot of specific and small points—the ages of the Patriarchs, for example.

STUDENT: The first chapter of Genesis tells of the Six Days and the creation of man and woman. Then in the second chapter, the text seems to start over, telling of how man was formed of the dust of the ground and Eve was created from Adam's rib. It looks like it was two stories.

FR. SERAPHIM: No, it is simply a retelling of the story from a different point of view. One account concerns the origin of Man himself; the other concerns the specific origin of the first people, Adam and Eve.

Modern scholars like to say, "Aha! that means there were two different authors, and you have to separate them and examine the viewpoint of each one—what were they trying to say?" This is not required, because even if the text was handed down somehow in corrupt form, still the basic text has come to us and we know that it all relates to truth.

Therefore, the interpretation of the Church is our key to understanding how the two accounts fit together. When we come across things like this, we simply say that the same story is being told from two different points of view—of emphasis. There is actually no basic problem.*

This idea that there must be two different authors or that there are three Isaiahs because there are three different periods spoken about—this is very childish. The modern scholars operate on the assumption that no one could talk about the future. Of course, with that idea you would have to cast out all the prophets.

* St. John Chrysostom explains that God inspired the second creation narrative in Genesis in order to further describe the events of the first narrative and thereby fore-stall the development of false teachings in the Church: "In His foreknowledge of the future, to prevent anyone born in subsequent generations from defying Sacred Scripture and captiously setting his own notions against the dogmas of the Church, the Holy Spirit, after teaching us the order of created things, what was created first and what second ... once again goes over all the items one by one so as to stop the unbridled tongue of people spoiling to make a show of their impudence" (*Homilies on Genesis* 12.2, PG 53.100, FC 74, p. 159 [12.5*]).—ED.

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STUDENT: Sometimes we forget that there is a whole school of theology that is basically humanistic and goes under the assumption that a book that tells of something in the future obviously had to be written later so that it looked backwards.

FR. SERAPHIM: Yes, and that is purely their assumption. According to our faith, we simply cannot accept that because we believe that there are prophets. There is one book with prophecies which are not fulfilled yet: the book of the Apocalypse. According to some modern scholars, it does not talk about future events. We believe, however, that we are going to see the fulfillment of those events ahead of us, always in a form which is a little hidden. We cannot say precisely that the world is going to end in 2005 or some such date; but as we see the events being fulfilled, we see the profound meaning of this prophecy which was written ahead of the event.

Even if it could be that different parts of the book of Genesis were written down by different scribes at different times, that might account for some difference of language, but it is totally a secondary question which does not affect the main point. The main point is: What is the truth spoken about in these texts? That is the basic thing we have to keep in mind in interpreting any sacred text: *What is the text talking about*, what is the meaning of it? All these little questions of when it was written down and how many different ways it was written down (scholars even analyze it to figure how many times different words are used, separating out particular synonyms to show that there were different authors, etc.)—all that is a waste of time, actually. The main question is, again: What is the truth contained in it? And our key to understanding what is the truth in the book of Genesis or any of the books of Scripture is the teaching of the Church handed down from the Holy Fathers.

The important thing is that we accept that the text itself is a whole, and that it is speaking about truth; and we should have utmost respect for it as the word of God. When we come to something that seems to be a contradiction, we have to look deeper and see how the Holy Fathers resolved this contradiction. Once in a while we can come up with a little interpretation ourselves. For example, we discussed this idea about the firmament: no Holy Father talks specifically about this

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theory. Modern people have thought about it, and it has weight as a theory, but it is not in the same category as a revealed truth. It is simply a help to interpret the text.

25. The Ages of the Patriarchs

FR. SERAPHIM: In Genesis 47:9 we read: “And Jacob said to Pharaoh, The days and the years of my life ... are an hundred and thirty years. Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life; they have not attained to the days of the life of my fathers.”

Jacob lived to be a hundred thirty years old, yet he complained that he was not living very long, as did his forefathers. This is another indication that the earlier Patriarchs indeed lived a very long time. The later descendants were very aware of that.

26. Different Interpretations

STUDENT: Who among the ancient writers held that the “sons of God” [Gen. 6:2–4] were angels?

FR. SERAPHIM: Tertullian, St. Justin Martyr, Athenagoras [of Athens], and Lactantius, the minor Latin writer. These are the earlier Fathers. Major Fathers such as St. John Chrysostom and St. Ephraim the Syrian* say that the “sons of God” had bodies and that therefore they could not be angels.**

This leads to the question of different interpretations of Scripture. In this course we are giving the standard interpretation of the Church Fathers, but of course there are different Fathers who might give differ-

* See p. 320n above for a fuller listing of those who accepted and rejected the idea that the “sons of God” were angels.—ED.

** As Blessed Theodoret (*Questions on Genesis* 47) and Blessed Augustine (*City of God* 15.23) point out, the fact that the “sons of God” mentioned in Genesis 6:2–4 were human beings with fleshy bodies is affirmed by the words of Genesis 6:3: “And the Lord God said, My Spirit shall certainly not remain among these men forever, because they are flesh.”—ED.

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ent interpretations. The question is: What do we think of the various interpretations? Sometimes they might even seem to conflict.

We should keep in mind that the Scripture is a very rich source, which is not exhausted by one interpretation. Usually there are at least two interpretations: a literal interpretation and a figurative or allegorical one. Sometimes there is also a mystical interpretation.

Therefore, different interpretations are possible. But there are rules:

1) Where it is opinion, it should not be held dogmatically or used to fight another opinion.

2) This opinion must have a serious foundation, and not be simply based on the latest intellectual fashion. For example, we should not simply fall into the latest fashion of science fiction and come up with the idea that the “sons of God” could be outer-space beings; there is no serious foundation for that.

3) It must make sense with the rest of Scripture.

4) There are some opinions which are inadmissible; and there are certain interpretations which conflict with the teaching of the Church. For example, we know that the “sons of God” cannot be angels, for this goes against the Orthodox doctrine of angels.*

At other times, there is simply no need to have a different interpretation. For example, we might be tempted to think, on the basis of our own opinion today, that the Patriarchs could not live nine hundred

* The “sons of God” in Genesis 6:2-4 had sexual relations with women and begot offspring. St. John Chrysostom—who like most of the Fathers after the mid-fourth century taught that the “sons of God” were the human descendants of Seth—dismisses the idea of angels having sexual intercourse with humans: “Is it not a particular hallmark of folly to claim that angels descended to have intercourse with women, and that incorporeal nature of theirs was reduced to association with corporeal creatures?” (*Homilies on Genesis* 22.2, FC 82, p. 73 [22.7]).

St. John Cassian argues further against this notion: “By no means should it be believed that spiritual natures can have carnal relations with women. But if this could ever have happened in a literal sense, why does it not occur now, at least occasionally, and why do we not see some people born of women without sexual intercourse, having been conceived by demons? Since it is particularly clear that they take great delight in filthy wantonness, they would doubtless prefer to engage in this directly rather than through human beings if it were at all possible” (*Conferences* 8.21.1, ACW 57, p. 304).—ED.

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years. We cannot reinterpret the Scripture that way, however, unless we have a substantial basis for this. We must be able to show, in Scripture or the writings of the Fathers, that it makes sense to have this interpretation. As for this particular opinion, the Fathers all agree that the Patriarchs did live nine hundred years. As we have seen, the Patriarch Jacob was aware that a hundred and thirty years was quite a young age compared to that of the fathers before him. The world was so different and so new then that it is quite plausible that people lived that long, though it is quite foreign to our experience. We cannot overturn what they said.

PART II

The Patristic Doctrine of Creation



Detail of the icon "The Symbol of Faith," showing Adam and Eve being cast out of Paradise, Cain slaying Abel, and Adam and Eve lamenting Abel's death.

*Russian icon of the second half of the seventeenth century,
Kolomenskoye Museum, Moscow.*

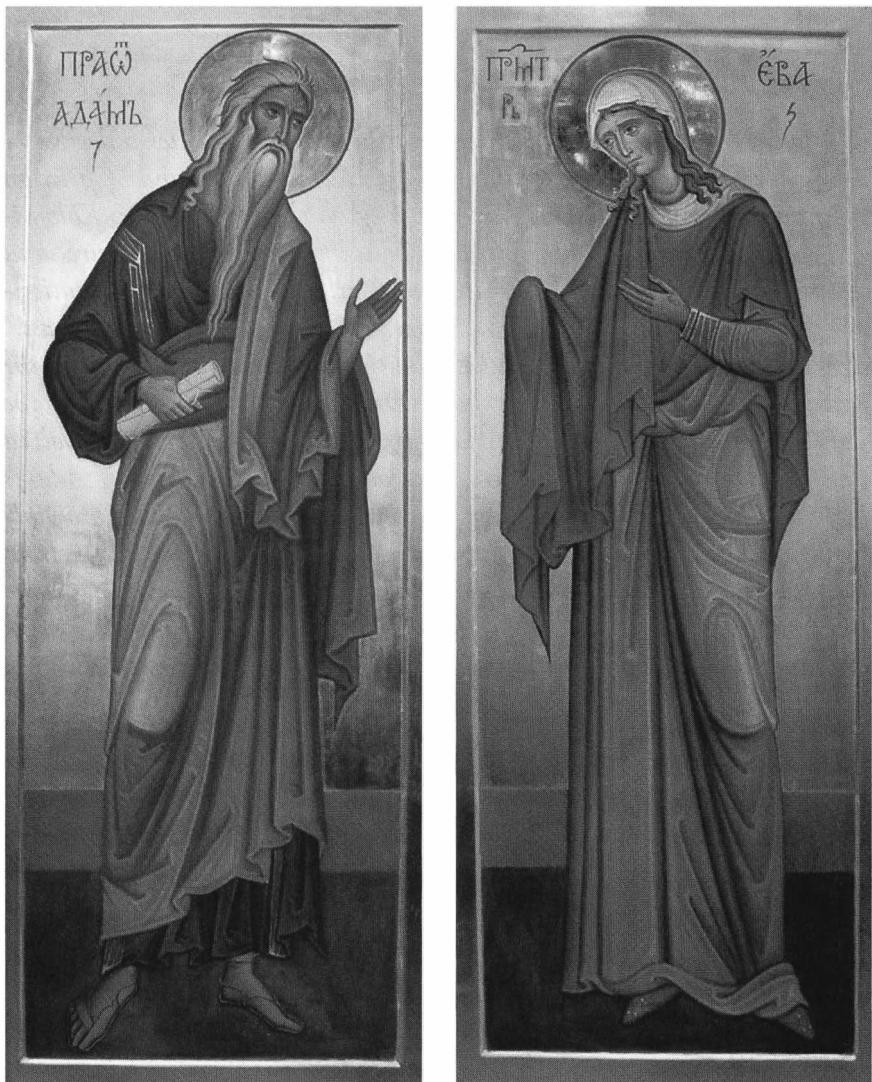
EDITOR'S NOTE

The following letter was written by Fr. Seraphim to Dr. Alexander Kalomirov, a Greek Orthodox medical doctor, church writer, and “Christian evolutionist.” Fr. Seraphim was responding to a letter from Dr. Kalomirov, in which the latter attempted to show that the Holy Scriptures and the teaching of the Holy Fathers were compatible with modern evolutionary theory. According to Dr. Kalomirov, Adam was an “evolved beast,” who at the appropriate point in his evolutionary development received the grace of God and thus became man. Dr. Kalomirov wrote: “When the Lord God breathed into Adam’s face the breath of life, then the evolved beast became a logical creature.... I would not be surprised if Adam’s body had been in all respects the body of an ape.... Adam was probably biologically less evolved than man of present days.... He was taken from the top step of the evolutionary ladder of anthropoids. Man does not come from monkeys but from another branch of anthropoids with a parallel evolution. We have nothing by which to conclude in which stage of evolution the breath of God was given to the animal.”

Fr. Seraphim’s reply to Dr. Kalomirov was published posthumously in Epiphany Journal (Fall 1989–Winter 1990) and later in abridged form in The Christian Activist (Spring–Summer 1998). We present it here with section titles added by the editor.

Not intending this letter for publication, Fr. Seraphim underlined and capitalized certain portions of it for emphasis to a much greater extent than he was wont to do in his published writings. In order to preserve the spirit of the original we have retained this emphasis, indicating the underlined portions with italics. All emphasis within Patristic quotations has been added by Fr. Seraphim.

For more about Fr. Seraphim’s correspondence with Dr. Kalomirov, see the editor’s preface (pp. 44–47, 52, 63, 63n, 65), Fr. Seraphim’s commentary on Genesis (pp. 117n, 155n), and selections from Fr. Seraphim’s letters (pp. 605, 616–17, 624–30, 632–40, 642–46).



Holy Forefather Adam and Holy Foremother Eve.
Icons by F. V. Strel'tsov, Moscow, 2007.



Fifth Week of Great Lent, 1974

Dear Dr. Kalomiros,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ.

At last I am writing my reply to your letter on “evolution.” This reply expresses the view of our Brotherhood on this question. I will repeat to you that I have written this reply not as an “expert” on the Holy Fathers, but as a “lover” of the Holy Fathers, which I believe you are also. Most of the citations I have made here from the Holy Fathers I have translated from the Russian Patristic translations of the nineteenth century, with some also from the English translations of the nineteenth century which are printed in the “Eerdmans” Nicene Fathers Series. I have given the sources as fully as possible so that you can read them in Greek. If you have questions about these or any other Patristic citations I will be glad to discuss them further with you. I am not at all concerned merely to find citations that “prove my point,” and in fact you will notice that I have also included some citations which do *not* seem to “prove my point”—for I am interested first and only in finding *how the Holy Fathers thought on these questions*, since I believe that is the way we should think also. May Christ our God bless me to speak truthfully.

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The question of “evolution” is an extremely important one for Orthodox Christians, for in it are involved many questions which directly affect our Orthodox doctrine and outlook: the relative worth of science and theology, of modern philosophy and Patristic teaching; the doctrine of man (anthropology); our attitude toward the writings of the Holy Fathers (do we really take seriously their writings and try to live by them, or do we believe first of all in modern “wisdom,” the wisdom of this world, and accept the teaching of the Holy Fathers only if it harmonizes with this “wisdom”?); our interpretation of the Holy

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Scriptures, and especially the book of Genesis. In what follows I will touch on all these subjects.

Before one begins to discuss the question of evolution, one must have a clear idea of what one is talking about. I say this because I have had very surprising experiences with very learned people who speak as if they knew all about this subject and yet they make very elementary mistakes which reveal that there is much that they do not know about it. In particular, almost everyone who writes about evolution *assumes* that he knows what “evolution” is—and yet what he says reveals that he has a very confused idea of it. The question of evolution is by no means a simple one, and there is so much confusion in people’s minds about it—including the minds of most Orthodox Christians—that we cannot even talk about it until we are *quite sure* that we know what we are talking about.

You have asked us, “Clear your mind very carefully of all Western conceptions, whether these are theological, philosophical, or scientific.” I assure you that I have tried to do this, and throughout this letter I will constantly be on the watch *not* to think in terms of Western conceptions, because I agree with you that these conceptions falsify the subject matter, and by means of them one *cannot* understand the question of evolution. But in turn I ask *you* to try very carefully to cleanse your mind of whatever preconceptions about the questions of evolution you may have—what you have learned in school, what you have read in scientific books, what you may think about “anti-evolutionists,” what Greek theologians may have said about the subject. Let us try to reason together, not in the manner of Western rationalists, but as Orthodox Christians who love the Holy Fathers and wish to understand their teaching, and also as rational beings who do not accept the teaching of any modern “wise men,” whether they be theologians or philosophers or scientists, *unless* that teaching accords with the Scriptural and Patristic teaching and does not come from some foreign philosophy.

1. *Evolution as Philosophy*

First of all, I agree entirely with you when you say: “You must not confuse *pure science* with the different philosophical theories written to

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explain the facts discovered by science. Facts are one thing (pure science) and explanations of facts is another (philosophy)."

I must tell you first of all that at one time I believed entirely in evolution. 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"? But then I began to think more deeply on this question. 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*.* After many years I came to the following conclusions:

- a. Evolution is *not* "scientific fact" at all, but philosophy.
- b. It is a *false* philosophy which was invented in the West as a reac-

* As will be seen later in this book, by "scientific philosophy" Fr. Seraphim is not referring to the common usage of basic scientific concepts and laws (as the statement of Dr. Kalomirov quoted above would seem to indicate), but more specifically to the metaphysical/philosophical assumptions that serve to bring together these building blocks into a certain paradigm aimed at explaining the data.

Philosophical presuppositions especially undergird what has been called origins or historical science—as distinct from operational or observational science. While in operational science, which involves explaining repeatable, observable phenomena in today's universe, the philosophical assumptions are testable at least indirectly, in origins science one deals with unique, unrepeatable, unobservable events and conditions of the past, about which one could make quite an array of conceivable assumptions, all beyond any possibility of serious experimental cross-examination. Hence, the only deciding factor in choosing among these decisively important alternatives is of a metaphysical/philosophical order, and it is philosophy at this level that Fr. Seraphim calls attention to here, while sticking to the terms chosen by Dr. Kalomirov.

As Fr. Seraphim notes a few pages ahead, by "pure science" (i.e. operational science) alone, one cannot prove or disprove the "fact" of evolution. By the same token, one cannot prove or disprove by science alone the fact of Creation. Neither can be proved apart from untestable assumptions of a metaphysical/philosophical character. Thus, conceptually speaking, both creation and evolution type theories are equally scientific, and are different only in adopting contrasting metaphysical, untestable assumptions.

As noted above (see especially pp. 21–28, 59, 73–74, 89–92, 98–102), modern evolutionary theory works from the philosophical assumption of naturalism. On the function of presuppositions in science, see also pp. 666, 666n, 683, 903–5 below.—ED.

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tion against Roman Catholic–Protestant theology, and which *disguised* itself as “science” in order to make itself respectable and deceive people who are willing to accept scientific fact. (In the West almost all modern errors do this same thing; even “Christian Science” claims to be “scientific,” so also Spiritism, various Hindu cults, etc.)

c. It is contrary to the teaching of the Holy Fathers on very many points.

I have deliberately given you my conclusions before explaining them to you, in order to make you stop and think: are you *sure* that you have put away all your preconceptions about evolution and are prepared to think clearly and dispassionately on this subject? Are you willing to admit that there may be some truth in what I will now have to say on this subject? I must tell you frankly that most “evolutionists” will stop at this point and say: this man is crazy, he is denying facts. I am trusting that your mind is at least open enough to read the rest of what I will say, which I try to base entirely on the Holy Fathers. If I make mistakes, I hope that you will tell me.

2. A Clear Definition

Many of the arguments between “evolutionists” and “anti-evolutionists” are useless, for one basic reason: they are usually not arguing about the same thing. Each one of them means *one thing* when he hears the word “evolution,” and the other means *something else*; and they argue in vain because they are not even talking about the same thing. Therefore, in order to be precise, I will tell you *exactly* what I mean by the word “evolution,” which is the meaning it has in all textbooks of evolution. But first I must show you that in your letter you have used the word “evolution” to mean two entirely different things, but you write *as if they were the same thing*. You have failed here to distinguish between *scientific fact* and *philosophy*.

a. You write: “The first chapters of the Holy Bible are nothing else but the history of creation progressing and being completed *in time*.... Creation did not come into being instantly, but followed a sequence of appearances, a development in six different ‘days.’ How can we call this progress of Creation in time if not evolution?”

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I answer: all that you say is true, and if you wish you can call this process of creation “evolution”—but *this is not what the controversy over evolution is about*. All scientific textbooks define evolution as a *specific theory concerning how* creatures came to be in time: BY MEANS OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF ONE KIND OF CREATURE INTO ANOTHER, COMPLEX FORMS BEING DERIVED FROM SIMPLER FORMS IN A NATURAL PROCESS TAKING COUNTLESS MILLIONS OF YEARS (Storer, *General Zoology*). Later on, when you talk about the “evolved beast” Adam, you reveal that you believe in this *specific scientific theory also*. I hope to show you that the Holy Fathers did *not* believe in this specific scientific theory, even though this is certainly not the most important aspect of the doctrine of evolution, which more fundamentally is in error concerning the *nature of man*, as I will show below.

b. You say: “We all came into being by evolution in time. In our mother’s uterus each one of us was at first one single-cell organism ... and finally a perfect man.” Of course *everyone* believes this, whether he is an “evolutionist” or an “anti-evolutionist.” But this has nothing to do with the *doctrine* of evolution which is being disputed.

c. Again you say: “Adam was of which race, white, negro, red, or yellow? How did we become so different from one another when we are descendants of one single couple? Is this differentiation of man in different races not a product of evolution?”

I answer again: No, this is *not* what the word “evolution” means! 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 you that if you look at this evidence objectively, without any *preconceptions* about what you will find in it, you will discover that there is not one piece of evidence for evolution that cannot equally be explained by a theory of “special creation.”

Please be very clear that I am *not* telling you that I can *disprove* the

theory of evolution by science; I am only telling you that *the theory of evolution can neither be proved nor disproved by science*. Those scientists who say that evolution is a “fact” are actually *interpreting* the scientific facts *in accordance with a philosophical theory*; those who say that evolution is *not* a fact are likewise *interpreting* the evidence in accordance with a *different* philosophical theory. *By pure science alone* it is not possible conclusively to prove or disprove the “fact” of evolution.

You should also know that many books have likewise been written about “the difficulties of the evolutionary theory.” If you wish, I will be glad to discuss with you some of these difficulties, which seem to be totally unexplainable if evolution is a “fact.”

3. Development, Not Evolution

I wish to make very clear to you: I do not at all deny the fact of *change and development* in nature. That a full-grown man grows from an embryo; that a great tree grows from a small acorn; that new *varieties* of organisms are developed, whether the “races” of man or different types of cats and dogs and fruit trees—but all of this is *not evolution*: it is only variation *within* a definite kind or species;* it does not prove or even suggest (unless you already *believe* this for non-scientific reasons) that one kind or species develops into another and that all present creatures are the product of such a development from one or a few primitive organisms. I believe that this is clearly the teaching of St. Basil the Great in the *Hexaemeron*, as I will now point out.

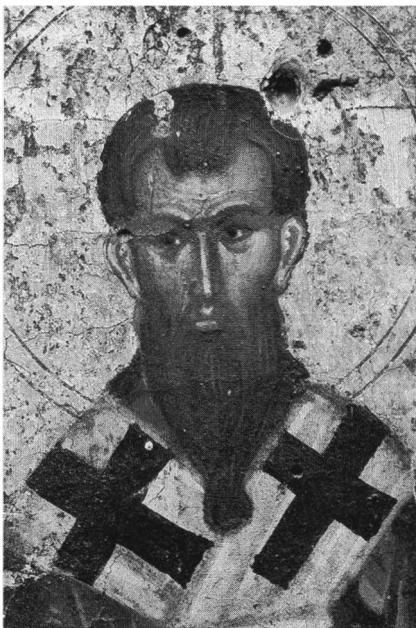
In Homily 5.7 of the *Hexaemeron*, St. Basil writes:

Let no one, therefore, who is living in vice despair of himself, knowing that, as agriculture changes the properties of plants, so the diligence of the soul in the pursuit of virtue can triumph over all sorts of infirmities.

No one, “evolutionist” or “anti-evolutionist,” will deny that the “prop-

* On the difference between the Biblical “kinds” (Gen. chap. 1) and the modern definition of “species,” see pp. 181–86, 181n, 184n above.—ED.

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St. Basil the Great (329–379).
Icon from Philotheou Monastery,
Mount Athos, Greece.

erties" of creatures can be changed; but this is not a proof of evolution unless it can be shown that *one kind or species can be changed into another*, and even more, that *every species changes into another in an uninterrupted chain back to the most primitive organism*. I will show below what St. Basil says on this subject.

Again St. Basil writes:

How then, they say, does the earth bring forth seeds of the particular kind, when, after sowing grain, we frequently gather this black wheat? This is not a change to another kind, but as it were some disease and defect of the seed. It has not ceased to be wheat, but has been made black by burning.¹

This passage would *seem* to indicate that St. Basil does not believe in "a change to another kind"—but I do not accept this as conclusive proof, since I wish to know what St. Basil *really* teaches, and not make my own arbitrary interpretation of his words. All that can really be said of this passage is that St. Basil recognizes some kind of a "change" in the

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wheat which is *not* a “change to another kind.” This kind of change is *not* evolution.

Again St. Basil writes:

Certain men have already observed that, if pines are cut down or burned, they are changed into oak forests.²

This quote really proves nothing, and I use it only because it has been used by others to show that St. Basil believed (1) that one kind of creature actually changes into another (but I will show below what St. Basil *actually* teaches on this subject); and (2) that St. Basil made scientific mistakes, since this statement is untrue. Here I should state an elementary truth: modern science, *when it deals with scientific facts*, does indeed usually know more than the Holy Fathers, and the Holy Fathers can easily make mistakes of scientific facts; *it is not scientific facts which we look for in the Holy Fathers*, but true theology and the true philosophy which is based on theology. Yet in this particular case it happens that St. Basil is *scientifically correct*, because it often in fact happens that in a pine forest there is a strong undergrowth of oak (the forest in which we live, in fact, is a similar kind of mixed pine-oak forest), and when the pine is removed by burning the oak grows rapidly and produces the change from a pine to an oak forest in ten or fifteen years. This is *not evolution*, but a different kind of change, and I will now show that St. Basil *could not* have believed that the pine is actually *transformed* or *evolved* into an oak.

Let us see now what St. Basil believed about the “evolution” or “fixity” of species. He writes:

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 expression “of its own kind.” For the shoot of the reed is not productive 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.³

Again, St. Basil writes:

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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 effaced, but, as if established just recently, nature, ever fresh, moves along with time.⁴

It seems quite clear that St. Basil did *not* believe that one kind of creature is transformed into another, much less that *every* creature now existing was evolved from some other creature, and so on back to the most primitive organism. *This is a modern philosophical idea.*

I should tell you that I do *not* regard this question as being of particular importance in itself; I shall discuss below other much more important questions. If it were really a *scientific fact* that one kind of creature can be transformed into another kind, I would have no difficulty believing it, since God can do anything, and the transformations and developments we can see now in nature (an embryo becoming a man, an acorn becoming an oak tree, a caterpillar becoming a butterfly) are so astonishing that one could easily believe that one species *could* “evolve” into another.* But there is no conclusive *scientific proof* that such a thing has *ever* happened, much less that this is the law of

* Here Fr. Seraphim is saying that, if it were a conclusive finding of operational/observational science that one kind of creature can be transformed into another, he could believe in such transformations happening at the present time in certain organisms, just as he believes in the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly, etc. He is not saying that he would then, by necessity, believe that all living things originally came into being through such transformations, and that they can therefore be traced to a common ancestor. In the sentence that follows he distinguishes between the bare notion of the transformation of kinds and the much greater claim of evolutionary transformism as *universal law* and as *creation story*. Neither the lesser nor the greater claims, he says, are borne out by scientific evidence. But while he says he regards the notion of transformism as not being “of particular importance in itself,” he goes on to show why evolutionary transformation as a creation story is of greater consequence. Whereas the former claim contradicts the teaching of St. Basil (and also Sts. Athanasius and

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the universe, and everything now living derives ultimately from some primitive organism. The Holy Fathers quite clearly did not believe in any such theory—*because the theory of evolution was not invented until modern times*. It is a product of the modern Western mentality, and if you wish I can show you later how this theory developed *together with the course of modern philosophy from Descartes onward*, long before there was any “scientific proof” for it. The idea of evolution is entirely absent from the text of Genesis, according to which each creature is generated “according to its kind,” *not* “one changing into another.” And the Holy Fathers, as I will show below in detail, accepted the text of Genesis quite simply, without reading into it any “scientific theories” or allegories.

Now you will understand why I do not accept your quotations from St. Gregory of Nyssa about the “ascent of nature from the least to the perfect”* as a proof of evolution. I believe, as the Sacred Scripture of Genesis relates, that there was indeed an orderly creation in steps; but *nowhere* in Genesis or in the writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa is it stated that one *kind* of creature was transformed into another kind, and that *all* creatures came to be in this manner! I quite disagree with you when you say: “Creation is described in the first chapter of Genesis exactly as modern science describes it.” If by “modern science” you mean *evolutionary* science, then I believe you are mistaken, as I have indicated. You have made a mistake by assuming that the kind of development described in Genesis, in St. Gregory of Nyssa, and in other Fathers is the *same* as that described by the doctrine of evolution; but such a thing *cannot* be assumed or taken for granted—you must *prove* it, and I will gladly discuss with you later the “scientific proof” for and

Ambrose; see pp. 183–86, 183–84n above) concerning the limits of change in living organisms, the latter goes against the entire Scriptural-Patristic testimony of the Orthodox Church concerning how God created all living things in the beginning. Moreover, the idea of transformism as creation story, which includes viewing man as an “evolved beast,” impinges on the Orthodox doctrine of the nature of man—and in particular the nature of first-created Adam—which as Fr. Seraphim later says (p. 465) is the “most important question ... raised for Orthodox theology by the modern theory of evolution.”—Ed.

* See p. 143 above and pp. 439–40 below.—Ed.

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against evolution, if you wish. The *development* of creation according to God's plan is one thing; the modern scientific (but actually philosophical) theory which *explains* this development by the transformation of one kind of creature into another, starting from one or a few primitive organisms, *is quite a different thing*. The Holy Fathers did *not* hold this modern theory; if you can show me that they *did* hold such a theory, I will be glad to listen to you.

If, on the other hand, by "modern science" you mean science which does *not* bind itself to the philosophical theory of evolution, I *still* disagree with you; and I will show below why I believe, according to the Holy Fathers, that modern science *cannot attain to any knowledge at all of the Six Days of Creation*. In any case, it is very arbitrary to identify the geological strata with "periods of creation."* There are numerous difficulties in the way of this naive correspondence between Genesis and science. Does "modern science" really believe that the grass and trees of the earth existed in a long geological period *before the existence of the sun*, which was created only on the Fourth Day? I believe you are making a serious mistake in binding up your interpretation of Holy Scripture with a *particular scientific theory* (not at all a "fact"). I believe that our interpretation of Holy Scripture should be bound up with *no scientific theory*, neither "evolutionary" nor any other. Let us rather accept the Holy Scriptures *as the Holy Fathers teach us* (about which I will write below), and let us not speculate about the *how* of creation. The doctrine of evolution is a modern speculation about the *how* of creation, and in many respects it contradicts the teaching of the Holy Fathers, as I shall show below.

Of course I accept your quotations from St. Gregory of Nyssa; I have found others similar to them in other Holy Fathers. I will certainly not deny that our nature is partly an animal nature, nor that we are bound up with the whole of creation, which is indeed a marvelous unity. *But all this has nothing whatever to do with the doctrine of evolution*, that doctrine

* Fr. Seraphim's comments here apply to the position of "old earth/progressive creationists," who, while not believing in evolutionary transformism and the descent of all organisms from a common ancestor, view the geological strata as a record of "periods of creation" spanning millions of years.—ED.

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which is defined in all textbooks as the derivation of all presently existing creatures from one or more primitive creatures through a process of the transformation of one kind or species into another.

Further, you should realize (and now I begin to approach the important teachings of the Holy Fathers on this subject) that St. Gregory of Nyssa himself quite explicitly did *not* believe in anything like the modern doctrine of evolution, for he teaches that *the first man Adam was indeed created directly by God and was not generated like all other men*. In his book *Against Eunomius* he writes:

The first man, and the man born from him, received their being in a different way; the latter by copulation, *the former from the molding of Christ Himself*; and yet, though they are thus believed to be two, they are inseparable in the definition of their being, and are not considered as two beings.... The idea of humanity in Adam and Abel does not vary with the difference of their origin, neither the order nor the manner of their coming into existence making any difference in their nature.⁵

And again:

That which reasons, and is mortal, and is capable of thought and knowledge, is called "man" equally in the case of Adam and of Abel, and this name of the nature is not altered either by the fact that Abel passed into existence by generation, or by the fact that *Adam did so without generation*.^{6*}

Of course I agree with the teaching of St. Athanasius which you quote, that "the first-created man was made of dust like everyone, and the hand which created Adam then is creating now also and always those who come after him."** How can anyone deny this obvious truth of God's continuous creative activity? But this general truth does not at all contradict the specific truth that the first man *was made in a way different from*

* Similar statements by St. Gregory of Nyssa are quoted on p. 144n above.—ED.

** On this quotation of St. Athanasius, see pp. 117–18, 117nn above.—ED.

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all other men, as other Fathers also clearly teach. Thus, St. Cyril of Jerusalem calls Adam “God’s first-formed man,” but Cain “the first-born man.”⁷ Again, he teaches clearly, discussing the creation of Adam, that *Adam was not conceived of another body*: “That of bodies bodies should be conceived, even if wonderful, is nevertheless possible; but that *the dust of the earth should become a man*, this is more wonderful.”⁸

Yet again, the divine Gregory the Theologian writes:

They who make “Unbegotten” and “Begotten” natures of equivocal Gods would perhaps make Adam and Seth differ in nature, since the former *was not born of flesh (for he was created)*, but the latter was born of Adam and Eve.^{9*}

And the same Father says even more explicitly:

What of Adam? *Was he not alone the direct creature of God?* Yes, you will say. Was he then the only human being? By no means. And why, but *because humanity does not consist in direct creation?* For that which is begotten is *also human*.¹⁰

And St. John Damascene, whose theology gives concisely the teaching of all the early Fathers, writes:

The earliest formation [of man] is called “creation” and not “genera-

* Together with St. Gregory the Theologian (*Orations* 31.11, 39.12) and St. Gregory of Nyssa (*Against Eunomius* 1.34, 3.3–4; *Answer to Eunomius’ Second Book; On the Faith: To Simplicius*), St. John Damascene cited the example of the different modes of coming-into-being in the first human beings in order to explain that the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity share the same nature: “Wherefore all the qualities the Father has are the Son’s, save that the Father is unbegotten, and this exception involves no difference in essence or dignity, but only a different mode of coming into existence. We have an analogy in Adam, who was not begotten (for God Himself molded him), and Seth, who was begotten (for he is Adam’s son), and Eve, who proceeded out of Adam’s rib (for she was not begotten). These do not differ from each other in nature, for they are human beings: but they differ in the mode of coming into existence” (*On the Orthodox Faith* 1.8, NPNF 2 9, p. 8b; cf. 4.24, p. 96b).—ED.

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tion.” For “*creation*” is the original formation at God’s hands, while “*generation*” is the succession from each other made necessary by the sentence of death imposed on us on account of the transgression.^{11*}

And what of Eve? Do you not believe that, as the Scripture and Holy Fathers teach, she was made from Adam’s rib and was not born of some other creature? But St. Cyril writes:

Eve was begotten of Adam, and not conceived of a mother, but as it were *brought forth of man alone*.¹²

And St. John Damascene, comparing the Most Holy Mother of God with Eve, writes:

Just as the latter *was formed from Adam without [carnal] conjunction*, so also did the former bring forth the new Adam, who was brought forth in accordance with the laws of parturition and above the nature of generation.^{13**}

* In calling Adam the first-formed man and saying that he was specially created, not born, the Fathers also point out that he is the father of the human race. The following passages are representative of this teaching. St. Irenaeus: “But this is Adam, if the truth should be told, the first-formed man, of whom Scripture says that the Lord spoke, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness’; and we are all from him” (*Against Heresies* 3.23.2, ANF 1, p. 456). Lactantius: “One man was formed by God, and from that one man all the earth was filled with the human race” (*Divine Institutes* 6.10, ANF 7, p. 173). St. Hilary of Poitiers: “Adam, the first parent of the human race, was formed from the earth, which was made out of nothing,... and began to be when he once had not been” (*On the Trinity* 12.16, NPNF 2 9, p. 222). St. Gregory of Nyssa: “Suppose someone were to state the right and sound view about Adam; namely, that it mattered not whether we called him ‘father of mankind’ or ‘the first man formed by God’ (for both mean the same thing)” (*Against Eunomius* 1.38, NPNF 2 5, p. 92). See also the quotation of St. Athanasius on p. 117 above.—Ed.

** While St. John Damascene compares the creation of Eve with the virginal birth of Christ (as do other Fathers; see pp. 242–43, 281n above), St. Photius the Great compares Adam and Eve’s creation with the miraculous birth of the Virgin Mary from an aged and barren woman, St. Anna. To those who might doubt the latter, St. Photius rhetorically asks: “Do you accept Adam to have been molded out of clay and

It would be possible to quote other Holy Fathers on this subject, but I will not do so unless you question this point. But with all of this discussion I have not yet come to the most important questions raised by the theory of evolution, and so I shall now turn to some of them.

4. How Do the Holy Fathers Interpret Genesis?

In what I have written about Adam and Eve, you will note that I quoted Holy Fathers who interpret the text of Genesis in a way that might be called rather “literal.” Am I correct in supposing that you would like to interpret the text more “allegorically” when you say that to believe in the immediate creation of Adam by God is “a very narrow conception of the Sacred Scriptures”? This is an extremely important point, and I am truly astonished to find that “Orthodox evolutionists” *do not at all know how the Holy Fathers interpret the book of Genesis*. I am sure you will agree with me that *we are not free to interpret the Holy Scriptures as we please*, but we must interpret them *as the Holy Fathers teach us*. I am afraid that not all who speak about Genesis and evolution pay attention to this principle. Some people are so concerned to combat Protestant fundamentalism that they go to extreme lengths to refute anyone who wishes to interpret the sacred text of Genesis “literally”; but in so doing they never refer to St. Basil or other commentators on the book of Genesis, who state quite clearly the principles we are to follow in interpreting the sacred text. I am afraid that many of us who profess to follow the Patristic tradition are sometimes careless, and easily fall into accepting our own “wisdom” in place of the teaching of the Holy Fathers. I firmly believe that *the whole world outlook and philosophy of life for an Orthodox Christian may be found in the Holy Fathers*; if we will listen to their teaching instead of thinking we are wise enough to teach others from our own “wisdom,” we will not go astray.

produced without birth; do you accept Eve to be the offspring not of intercourse but of a rib?” Christians, he argues, should “fittingly accord the same unhesitating faith” to the miraculous birth of the Virgin as they do to the “most unbelievable of things” that occurred at God’s creation of Adam and Eve (St. Photius, *Homily 9: On the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God* 5, trans. Cyril Mango, pp. 167–68).—ED.

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And now I ask you to examine with me the very important and fundamental question: how do the Holy Fathers teach us to interpret the book of Genesis? Let us put away our preconceptions about “literal” or “allegorical” interpretations, and let us see what the *Holy Fathers* teach us about reading the text of Genesis.

We cannot do better than to begin with St. Basil himself, who has written so inspiringly of the Six Days of Creation. In the *Hexaemeron* he 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 own opinion. They describe also the production of reptiles and wild animals, changing it according to their own notions, just like the dream interpreters, who interpret for their own ends the appearances seen in their dreams. 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).... Since Moses left unsaid, as useless for us, things in no way pertaining to us, shall we for this reason believe that the words of the Spirit are of less value than the foolish wisdom [of those who have written about the world]? Or shall I rather give glory to Him Who has not kept our mind occupied with vanities but has ordained that all things be written for the edification and guidance of our souls? This is a thing of which they seem to me to have been unaware, who 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.*¹⁴

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 accord-

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St. Ephraim the Syrian
(ca. 306–373).
Fresco from Meteora, Greece.



ing 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:

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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:

When *in the twinkling of an eye* [Adam's] 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.¹⁷

It is quite clear that St. Ephraim reads the book of Genesis “as it is written”; when he hears “the rib of Adam” he understands “the rib of Adam,” and does not understand this as an allegorical way of saying something else altogether. Likewise he quite explicitly understands the Six Days of Creation to be just six days, each with twenty-four hours, which he divides into an “evening” and “morning” of twelve hours each.

I have deliberately taken the “simple” commentary on Genesis of St. Ephraim the Syrian, before quoting other more “mystical” com-

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mentaries, because this “simple” understanding of Genesis is the most offensive to the “enlightened” modern mind. I suspect that most Orthodox Christians who are not well read in the Holy Fathers will immediately say: “This is too simple! We know more than that now. Give us more sophisticated Fathers.” Alas for our modern “wisdom”—there are no more “sophisticated” Fathers, for *even the most “mystical” Fathers understand the text of Genesis in just the “simple” way St. Ephraim does!* Those who wish more “sophistication” in the Holy Fathers are under the influence of modern Western ideas which are entirely foreign to the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church. But I will have to show this by quoting many Holy Fathers.

Let us examine now specifically the question of the “length” of the Six Days of Creation. I believe that this is still a question of secondary importance among those raised by the theory of evolution, but it certainly will not hurt us to know what the Holy Fathers thought of this, all the more so because here we will begin to glimpse the great difference which exists between the modern Western idea of creation, and the Patristic idea of creation. No matter how we understand them, these “Days” are quite beyond the comprehension of us who know only the corrupt “days” of our fallen world; how can we even imagine those Days when God’s creative power was mightily at work?

The Holy Fathers themselves do not seem to speak much about this question, doubtless because *for them it was not a problem*. It is a problem for modern men chiefly because *they try to understand God’s creation by means of the laws of nature of our fallen world*. It seems to be assumed by the Fathers that those Days, in duration, were not unlike the days we know, and some of them indeed specify that they were twenty-four hours in length, as does St. Ephraim. But there is one thing about these Days which it is most important for us to understand, and that concerns what you have written about whether God created “instantly.”

You write: “Since God created time, to create something ‘instantly’ would be an act contrary to His own decision and will.... When we speak about the creation of stars, plants, animals, and man we do not speak about miracles—we do not speak about the extraordinary inter-

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ventions of God in creation but about the ‘natural’ course of creation.” I wonder if you are not substituting here some “modern wisdom” for the teaching of the Holy Fathers? What is the *beginning* of all things but a *miracle*? I have already showed you that St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Damascene (and indeed all the Fathers) teach that the first man Adam appeared in a way *different from the natural generation of all other men*; likewise the first creatures, according to the sacred text of Genesis, appeared in a way different from all their descendants: they *appeared not by natural generation but by the word of God*. The modern theory of evolution denies this, because *the theory of evolution was invented by unbelievers who wished to deny God’s action in creation and explain the creation by “natural” means alone.** Do you not see what *philosophy* is behind the theory of evolution?

What do the Holy Fathers say about this? I have already quoted St. Ephraim the Syrian, whose whole commentary on Genesis describes how *all God’s creative acts are done in an instant*, even though the whole “Days” of creation last for twenty-four hours each. Let us now see what St. Basil the Great says about God’s creative acts in the Six Days.

In speaking of the Third Day of Creation, St. Basil says:

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.*¹⁸

Again, he says:

“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.¹⁹

* That this was Charles Darwin’s intention is evidenced by his notebook entries, in which he identified himself as a philosophical materialist prior to settling upon the theory of evolution for which he became known. See pp. 36–37n above.—ED.

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Again, on the Fifth Day:

The command came. *Immediately* rivers were productive and marshy lakes were fruitful of kinds proper and natural to each.²⁰

Likewise, St. John Chrysostom, in his commentary on Genesis, teaches:

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*? What tongue will be able worthily to glorify the Creator? He said only: "Let the earth bring forth"—and *immediately* He aroused it to bear fruit.... Just as of the earth He said only: "Let it bring forth," and there appeared a great variety of flowers, herbs, and seeds, and everything occurred by *His word alone*, so also here He said: "Let the waters bring forth ..." and *suddenly* there appeared so many kinds of crawling things, such a variety of birds, that it is impossible even to enumerate them with words.²¹

Here I will repeat: I believe that modern science in most cases knows more than St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom, St. Ephraim, and other Fathers about the properties of fishes and such specific scientific facts; no one will deny this. *But who knows more about the way in which God acts*: modern science, which is not even sure that God exists, and in any case tries to explain everything without Him; or *these God-bearing Holy Fathers*? When you say that God does not create instantly, I believe that you are giving the teaching of modern "wisdom," *not* the teaching of the Holy Fathers.

Of course, there is a sense in which it is true that God's creation is not the work of an instant; but here also the Fathers are quite precise in their teaching. I have quoted St. Ephraim, who says: "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." With this in mind, let us look at the passage you have quoted from St. Gregory of Nyssa: "Man was created last after the plants and animals

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because nature follows a path which leads gradually to perfection.”^{22*} “It is as if by steps that nature makes its ascent in life properties from the least to the perfect.”²³ In quoting these passages, you have tried to understand them in the sense of the modern doctrine of evolution. But certainly it is not proper to read into these ancient texts the conclusions of modern philosophy! Here St. Gregory of Nyssa is surely teaching nothing different from what many other Fathers taught, based on a very “literal” understanding of Genesis.

Thus, St. Gregory the Theologian teaches, when he, like St. Ephraim, also states that the creation is not “instantaneous”:

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 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.²⁴

Again, St. John Chrysostom teaches:

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 a single 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

* The above quotation (as also the one that follows) was translated by Dr. Kalomirov from the Greek. A more accurate translation would be “On account of this, man was made last after the plants and animals, since nature advanced along the path to perfection successively.”—ED.

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St. John Chrysostom (347–407) and St. Gregory the Theologian (ca. 329–389).

*Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan, Stavronikita Monastery,
Mount Athos, 1545–1546.*

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.²⁵

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Thus the Patristic teaching is clearly that God, although He *could* have created everything instantly, chose instead to create it in stages of increasing perfection, *each stage* being the work of an instant or a very short time, culminating in the creation of man, the king of creation; and the whole work is completed, neither in an instant nor in an indefinitely long time, but as it were a mean between these two extremes, *precisely in six days*.

St. Ephraim and St. John Chrysostom, in their commentaries on Genesis, clearly regard God's creation as being the work of six "literal" days, on each one of which God creates "immediately" and "instantly." And St. Basil the Great also, contrary to a widespread belief of "Christian evolutionists," viewing God's creations as "immediate" and "sudden," regarded the Six Days as being precisely of twenty-four hours' duration; for he says, regarding the First Day:

"There was evening and morning." *This means the space of a day and a night....* "And there was evening and morning, one day." Why did he say "one" and not "first"?... He said "one" because *he was defining the measure of day and night* and combining the time of a night and a day, since the twenty-four hours fill up the interval of one day, if, of course, night is understood with day.^{26*}

But even St. Gregory the Theologian, this most "contemplative" of Fathers, believed precisely the same thing, for he says:

Just as the first creation begins with Sunday (and this is evident from the fact that the seventh day after it is Saturday), because it is the day of

* St. Ambrose, who read St. Basil's *Hexaemeron*, gave this same teaching in his own *Hexaemeron*. Concerning the close of the First Day of Creation, St. Ambrose wrote: "In notable fashion has Scripture spoken of a 'day,' not the 'first day.' Because a second, then a third, day, and finally the remaining days were to follow, a 'first day' could have been mentioned, following in this way the natural order. But Scripture established a law that twenty-four hours, including both day and night, should be given the name of day only, as if one were to say the length of one day is twenty-four hours in extent" (St. Ambrose, *Hexaemeron* 1.10, FC 42, p. 42).—ED.

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repose from works), so also the second creation begins again with the same day [i.e., the day of Resurrection].²⁷

And again the Theologian says, giving the Patristic view of the kind of world into which Adam was placed:

The Word ... having taken a part of *the newly created earth*, with His immortal hands formed my image....²⁸

As I have said, I do not regard this question as one of the first importance in discussing the question of evolution; but it is nevertheless quite symptomatic of the influence of modern philosophy on them, that “Christian evolutionists” are so anxious to *reinterpret* these Six Days so as not to appear foolish before the “wise men” of this world, who have “proved scientifically” that whatever “creation” there was took place over countless millions of years. Most importantly, the reason why “Christian evolutionists” have such difficulty believing in the Six Days of Creation, which gave no problem to the Holy Fathers, is because *they do not understand what happened in those Six Days*: they believe that long natural processes of development were going on, according to the laws of our present corrupt world; but in actual fact, according to the Holy Fathers, *the nature of that first-created world was quite different from our world*, as I will show below.

Let us look now more closely at another basic Patristic commentary on the book of Genesis, that of St. John Chrysostom. You will note that I am not quoting obscure or dubious Fathers, but only the very pillars of Orthodoxy, in whom our whole Orthodox teaching is the most clearly and divinely expressed. In him once again we find no “allegory” at all, but only the strict interpretation of the text *as it is written*. Like the other Fathers, he tells us that Adam was formed *literally from dust*, and Eve *literally from Adam’s rib*. He writes:

If the enemies of truth will insist that it is impossible to produce something from what is nonexistent, we will ask them: Was the first man created from earth, or not? Without doubt they will agree with us and say, Yes, from earth. Then let them tell us, how was flesh

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formed from earth? From earth there can be dirt, bricks, clay, tile: but how was flesh produced? How were bones, nerves, sinews, fat, skin, nails, hair [produced]? How, from the single material at hand, are there so many things of different qualities? To this they cannot even open their mouths [to reply].²⁹

And again St. John Chrysostom writes:

God took a single rib, it is said: but how from this single rib did He form a whole creature? Tell me, how did the taking of the rib occur? How did Adam not feel this taking? You can say nothing about this; this is known only by Him Who created.... God did not produce a new creation, but taking from an already existing creation a certain small part, from this part He made a whole creature. What power the Highest Artist God has, to produce from this small part (a rib) the composition of so many members, make so many organs of sense, and form a whole, perfect, and complete being!³⁰

If you wish, I can quote many other passages from this work, showing that St. John Chrysostom—is he not the chief Orthodox interpreter of Sacred Scripture?—everywhere interprets the sacred text of Genesis *as it is written*, believing that it was nothing else than an actual *serpent* (through whom the devil spoke) who tempted our first parents in Paradise, that God actually brought all the animals before Adam for him to name, and “the names which Adam gave them remain until now.”³¹ (But according to evolutionary doctrine, many animals were extinct by the time of Adam—must we then believe that Adam did not name “all the wild beasts” [Gen. 2:19] but only the *remnant* of them?) St. John Chrysostom says, when speaking of the rivers of Paradise:

Perhaps those who love to speak from *their 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 decide 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*

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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.³²

Is there need to quote more from this divine Father? Like St. Basil and St. Ephraim he warns us:

*Not to believe what is contained in the Divine Scripture, but to introduce something else from one's own mind—this, I believe, subjects those who hazard such a thing to great danger.*³³

Before going on I will briefly answer one objection which I have heard from those who defend evolution: they say that if one reads all the Scripture “as it is written” one will only make oneself ridiculous. They say that if we must believe that Adam was actually made from dust and Eve from Adam’s rib, then must we not believe that God has “hands,” that He “walks” in Paradise, and the like absurdities? Such an objection could not be made by anyone who has read even a single commentary of the Holy Fathers on the book of Genesis. All the Holy Fathers distinguish between what is said about creation, which must be taken “as it is written” (unless it is an obvious metaphor or other figure of speech, such as “the sun knoweth his going down” of the Psalms; but this surely does not need to be explained to any but children), and what is said about God, which must be understood, as St. John Chrysostom says repeatedly, “in a God-befitting manner.” For example, St. John Chrysostom writes:

When you hear, beloved, 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.*³⁴

St. John of Damascus, in his work *On Heresies*, explicitly describes the allegorical interpretation of Paradise to be part of a heresy, that of the Origenists:

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They explain Paradise, the heavens, and everything else in an allegorical sense.³⁵*

But what, then, are we to understand of those Holy Fathers of profound spiritual life who interpret the book of Genesis and other Holy Scriptures in a spiritual or mystical sense? *If we ourselves had not gone so far away from the Patristic understanding of Scripture, this would present no problem whatever to us.* The same text of Holy Scripture is true “as it is written,” and it *also* has a spiritual interpretation. Behold what the great Father of the desert, St. Macarius the Great, a clairvoyant Saint who raised the dead, says:

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 indeed just as it is written, and at the same time* we find that this occurs mystically in every soul.³⁶

Our modern “Patristic scholars,” who approach the Holy Fathers not as living founts of tradition but only as dead “academic sources,” invariably misunderstand this very important point. Any Orthodox Christian who *lives* in the tradition of the Holy Fathers knows that when a Holy Father interprets a passage of Holy Scripture spiritually or allegorically, *he is not thereby denying its literal meaning*, which *he assumes* the reader knows enough to accept. I will give a clear example of this.

The divine Gregory the Theologian, in his Homily on the Theophany, writes concerning the tree of knowledge:

The tree was, according to my view, Contemplation, upon which it is only safe for those who have reached maturity of habit to enter.³⁷

* Part of St. John Damascene’s book *On Heresies*, including his refutation of Origenism, was based on the *Panarion (The Medicine Chest)*, a much earlier work on heresies by St. Epiphanius of Salamis. St. Epiphanius wrote in the *Panarion*: “Finally, he [Origen] interprets whatever he can allegorically—Paradise, its waters, the waters above the heavens, the water under the earth. He never stops saying these ridiculous things and others like them” (*Panarion* 63.4.10). In his *Ancoratus (The Well-anchored Man)* (54–64), St. Epiphanius further argued, against Origen, that the trees mentioned in Genesis are real trees, the rivers are real rivers, the bodies of Adam and Eve were really created as stated in Genesis, etc.—ED.

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This is a profound spiritual interpretation, and I do not know of any passage in this Father's writings where he says explicitly that this tree was also a literal tree, "as it is written." Is it therefore an "open question," as our academic scholars might tell us, whether he completely "allegorized" the story of Adam and Paradise?

Of course, we know from other writings of St. Gregory that he did *not* allegorize Adam and Paradise. But even more important, we have the direct testimony of another great Father concerning the very question of St. Gregory's interpretation of the tree of knowledge.

But before I give this testimony I must make sure you agree with me on a basic principle of interpreting the writings of the Holy Fathers. *When they are giving the teaching of the Church, the Holy Fathers* (if only they are genuine Holy Fathers and not merely ecclesiastical writers of uncertain authority) *do not contradict each other*, even if to our feeble understanding there *seem* to be contradictions between them. It is academic rationalism that pits one Father against another, traces their "influence" on each other, divides them into "schools" and "factions," and finds "contradictions" between them. All of this is foreign to the Orthodox Christian understanding of the Holy Fathers. For us the Orthodox teaching of the Holy Fathers is one single whole, and since the whole of Orthodox teaching is obviously not contained in any one Father (for all the Fathers are human and thus limited), we find parts of it in one Father and other parts in another Father, and one Father explains what is obscure in another Father; and it is not even of primary importance for us who said what, as long as it is Orthodox and in harmony with the whole Patristic teaching.* I am sure that you agree with me on this principle and that you will not be surprised that I am now going to present an interpretation of the words of St. Gregory the Theologian by a great Holy Father who lived a thousand years after him: St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica.

Against St. Gregory Palamas and the other hesychast Fathers who taught the true Orthodox doctrine of the "Uncreated Light" of Mount Tabor, there rose up the Western rationalist Barlaam. Taking advantage

* On this guiding principle, see the quotation of St. Barsanuphius the Great of Gaza on p. 31n above.—ED.

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of the fact that St. Maximus the Confessor in one passage had called this Light of the Transfiguration a “symbol of theology,” Barlaam taught that this Light was not a manifestation of the Divinity, but only something bodily, not “literally” Divine Light, but only a “symbol” of it. This led St. Gregory Palamas to make a reply which illuminates for us the relation between the “symbolical” and “literal” interpretation of Holy Scripture, particularly with regard to the passage from St. Gregory the Theologian which I have quoted above. He writes that Barlaam and others

do not see that Maximus, wise in Divine matters, has called the Light of the Lord’s Transfiguration a “symbol of theology” only by analogy and in a spiritual sense. In fact, in a theology which is analogical and intended to elevate us, objects which have an existence of their own become themselves, in fact and in words, symbols by homonymy; it is in this sense that Maximus calls this Light a “symbol.” ... Similarly, Gregory the Theologian has called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “contemplation,” having in his contemplation considered it as a symbol of this “contemplation” which is intended to elevate us; *but it does not follow that what is involved is an illusion or a symbol without existence of its own.* For the divine Maximus 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”? And could not Peter, for one who would wish to elevate himself in contemplation, become a symbol of faith, James of hope, and John of love?^{38*}

* In the same vein, St. Bede the Venerable speaks of the need to uphold the historical meaning of the Genesis narrative when a symbolic meaning is given. Having offered a symbolic interpretation of Genesis 1:1 at the beginning of his *Commentary on Genesis*, he adds: “But one must carefully contemplate lest he would so weigh down this study with the allegorical sense that he would then forsake the plainly faithful account of history with his allegorical approach” (*Commentary on Genesis* 1:1, ACT, p. 114).

On the relation between literal and symbolic interpretations of Scripture, see also pp. 39–43, 40–41nn, 42n, 78–79, 119–24, 121n, 122–23n, 275, 275–76n above.—ED.

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It would be possible to multiply such quotations which show what the Holy Fathers actually taught about the interpretation of Holy Scripture, and in particular of the book of Genesis; but I have already presented enough to show that the genuine Patristic teaching on this subject presents grave difficulties for one who would like to interpret the book of Genesis in accordance with modern ideas and “wisdom,” and indeed the Patristic interpretation makes it *quite impossible* to harmonize the account of Genesis with the theory of evolution, which requires an entirely “allegorical” interpretation of the text in many places where the Patristic interpretation will not allow this. The doctrine that Adam was created, not from the dust, but by development from some other creature, is a novel teaching which is entirely foreign to Orthodox Christianity.

At this point the “Orthodox evolutionist” might try to salvage his position (of believing *both* in the modern theory of evolution *and* in the teaching of the Holy Fathers) in one of two ways.

a. He may try to say that we now know more than the Holy Fathers about nature and therefore we really can interpret the book of Genesis better than they. But even the “Orthodox evolutionist” knows that the book of Genesis is *not a scientific treatise*, but a Divinely inspired work of cosmogony and theology. The interpretation of the Divinely inspired Scripture is clearly the work of God-bearing theologians, not of natural scientists, who ordinarily do not know the very first principles of such interpretation. It is true that in the book of Genesis many “facts” of nature are presented. But it must be carefully noted that these facts are not facts such as we can observe now, but an entirely special kind of facts: the creation of the heavens and the earth, of all animals and plants, of the first man. I have already pointed out that the Holy Fathers teach quite clearly that the creation of the first man Adam, for example, is *quite different* from the generation of men today; it is only the latter that science can observe, and about the creation of Adam it offers only *philosophical speculations*, not scientific knowledge.

According to the Holy Fathers, *it is possible for us to know something of this first-created world*, but this knowledge is *not* accessible to natural science. I will discuss this question further below.

b. Or again, the “Orthodox evolutionist,” in order to preserve the

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unquestioned Patristic interpretation of at least some of the facts described in Genesis, may begin to make arbitrary modifications of the theory of evolution itself, in order to make it “fit” the text of Genesis. Thus, one “Orthodox evolutionist” might decide that the creation of the first man must be a “special creation” which does not fit into the general pattern of the rest of creation, and thus he can believe the Scriptural account of the creation of Adam more or less “as it is written,” while believing in the rest of the Six Days’ Creation in accordance with “evolutionary science”; while another “Orthodox evolutionist” might accept the “evolution” of man himself from lower creatures, while specifying that Adam, the “first-evolved man,” appeared only in very recent times (in the evolutionary time scale of “millions of years”), thus preserving at least the historical reality of Adam and the other Patriarchs as well as the universally held Patristic opinion (about which I can speak in another letter, if you wish) that Adam was created about 7,500 years ago. I am sure you will agree with me that such rationalistic devices are quite foolish and futile. If the universe “evolves,” as modern philosophy teaches, then man “evolves” with it, and we must accept whatever all-knowing “science” tells us about the age of man; but if the Patristic teaching is correct, it is correct regarding *both* man and the rest of creation.

If you can explain to me how one can accept the Patristic interpretation of the book of Genesis and still believe in evolution, I will be glad to listen to you; but you will also have to give me better *scientific* evidence for evolution than that which so far exists, for to the objective and dispassionate observer the “scientific evidence” for evolution is extremely weak.

5. “*The Bondage of Corruption*” (*Romans 8:21*)

Now I come at last to the two most important questions which are raised by the theory of evolution: the nature of the first-created world, and the nature of the first-created man Adam.

I believe you express correctly the Patristic teaching when you say: “The animals became corrupted because of man; the law of the jungle is a consequence of the fall of man.” I also agree with you, as I have

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already said, that man, on the side of his body, is bound together with and is an organic part of the whole of the visible creation, and this helps make it understandable how the whole creation fell together with him into death and corruption. But you think that this is a proof of evolution, a proof that man's body evolved from some other creature! Surely if this is the case, the God-inspired Fathers would have known about it, and we would not have had to wait for the atheist philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to discover this and tell us about it!!

No, the Holy Fathers believed that the whole creation fell with Adam, but they did *not* believe that Adam "evolved" from some other creature; why should I believe differently from the Holy Fathers?

Now I come to a very important point. You ask: "How is it that the fall of Adam brought corruption and the law of the jungle to the animals, since animals have been created before Adam? We know that animals died, killed and devoured one another since their first appearance on earth and not only after the appearance of man."*

How do you know this? Are you sure that this is what the Holy Fathers teach? You explain your point, not by quoting any Holy Fathers, but by

* Not only "Christian evolutionists" such as Dr. Kalomiros, but also "old-earth/progressive creationists" (who as noted above do not believe in evolution *per se* but accept the evolutionary/uniformitarian schema of "millions of years") are forced by their position to conclude that there were millions of years of death and decay before the appearance of man. Here is one example from an old-earth/progressive creationist article intended as a catechesis for children:

"Starting about 2 to 4 million years ago God began creating man-like mammals or 'hominids.' These creatures stood on two feet, had large brains, and used tools. Some even buried their dead and painted on cave walls. However, they were very different from us. They had no spirit. They did not have consciences like we do. They did not worship God or establish religious practices.

"In time, all these man-like creatures went extinct. Then, about 10 to 25 thousand years ago, God replaced them with Adam and Eve" (Hugh Ross, "Genesis One, Dinosaurs, and Cavemen").

On the numerous problems and contradictions inherent in the "progressive creationist" position, see Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise: A Biblical and Scientific Refutation of "Progressive Creationism,"* and Tim Chaffey & Jason Lisle, *Old-Earth Creationism on Trial*.—ED.

giving a philosophy of “time.” I certainly agree with you that God is outside of time; to Him everything is present. But this fact is not a proof that animals, who died *because* of Adam, died *before* he fell.* *What do the Holy Fathers say?*

It is true, of course, that most Holy Fathers speak about animals as already corruptible and mortal; but they are speaking about their fallen state. What about their state before the transgression of Adam?

There is a very significant hint about this in the commentary on Genesis of St. Ephraim the Syrian. When speaking of the “skins”

* In his letter, Dr. Kalomirov had argued that, since God is outside time, Adam’s sin had a *retroactive* effect on all the other creatures: “The consequences of Adam’s fall have penetrated the whole universe in time as well as in space. Animals were in corruption long before the appearance of man on earth. Nevertheless, they were in corruption *because of man*.” This notion was first proposed by Protestant geologists J. Jay Dana and Edward Hitchcock in 1846 and 1851, respectively, after the uniformitarian idea of vast ages of earth history had taken hold—an idea which, as we have seen, inevitably entails millions of years of suffering and death before the appearance of man. Subsequently, the “retroactive” interpretation of the fall never caught on, undoubtedly due to the fact that it was deemed an obvious contrivance that did violence to the intended meaning of Scripture. In recent times, however, an attempt has been made to revive it by intelligent design theorist William A. Dembski in his book *The End of Christianity: Finding a Good God in an Evil World* (2009). Dana and Dembski argue (p. 110), as does Kalomirov in his letter to Fr. Seraphim, that the fall could have had a retroactive effect because Christ’s redemptive work also had such an effect. This argument, however, quickly falls apart upon examination. According to Scriptural-Patristic teaching, while it is true that Christ’s death was salvific for the souls of righteous ones who lived before Him, these souls were delivered from hades immediately *after* His death had been accomplished, not before (see pp. 340–42, 342n above and pp. 723, 753, 753n, 757–59 below); and while His rising from the dead is the cause of the incorruption of man and the cosmos, we still await that condition at the general resurrection, at a time posterior to that of His own Resurrection (see pp. 759–61 below). If the consequences of Christ’s redemptive work were indeed retroactive in the way that Kalomirov et al. propose in connection with the fall, then these consequences—the deliverance of the soul from hades, the body from death, and the cosmos from corruption—should have been tangibly seen from the beginning of the world and the dawn of man. On the contrary, according to the traditional Christian worldview, the cause-and-effect sequence of both the primordial transgression and Christ’s redemptive work is seen to exist within a linear temporal framework.—ED.

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which God made for Adam and Eve after their transgression, St. Ephraim writes:

One may suppose that the first parents, touching their waists with their hands, found that they were clothed with garments made of animal skins—killed, it may be, before their very eyes, so that they might eat their meat, cover their nakedness with the skins, *and in their very death might see the death of their own body.*³⁹

I will discuss below the Patristic teaching of the immortality of Adam before his transgression, but here I am only interested in the question of whether animals died before the fall. Why should St. Ephraim suggest that Adam would learn about death by seeing the death of animals—if he had already seen the death of animals before his transgression (which he certainly had according to the evolutionary view)? But this is only a suggestion; there are other Holy Fathers who speak quite definitely on this subject, as I will show in a moment.

But first I must ask you: if it is true as you say that animals died and the creation was corrupted *before* the transgression of Adam, then how can it be that God looked at His creation after every one of the Days of Creation and “saw that it was good,” and after creating the animals on the Fifth and Sixth Days He “saw that they were good,” and at the end of the Six Days, after the creation of man, “God saw all the things that He had made, and behold, they were very good.” How could they be “good” if they were already mortal and corruptible, contrary to God’s plan for them? The Divine services of the Orthodox Church contain many moving passages of *lamentation* about the “corrupted creation,” as well as expressions of joy that Christ by His Resurrection has “recalled the corrupted creation.” *How could God see this lamentable condition of the creation and say that it was “very good”?*

And again, we read in the sacred text of Genesis: “And God said, Behold, I have given to you every seed-bearing herb sowing seed which is upon all the earth, and every tree which has in itself the fruit of seed that is sown, to you it shall be for food. And to all the wild beasts of the earth, and to all the flying creatures of heaven, and to every reptile

creeping on the earth, which has in itself the breath of life, even *every green plant for food*; and it was so” (Gen. 1:29–30). Why, if the animals devoured each other before the fall, as you say, did God give them, *even “all the wild beasts and every reptile”* (many of which are now strictly carnivorous) only “green plants for food”? Only long after the transgression of Adam did God say to Noah: “And every moving thing that lives *shall be to you for food; I have given all things to you as the green herbs*” (Gen. 9:3). Do you not sense here the presence of a mystery which so far has escaped you because you insist on interpreting the sacred text of Genesis by means of modern evolutionary philosophy, which will not admit that animals could ever have been *of a nature different from that which they now possess*?

But the Holy Fathers clearly teach that the animals (as well as man) were *different* before the transgression of Adam! Thus St. John Chrysostom writes:

It is clear that man in the beginning had complete authority over the animals.... But that now we are afraid and terrified of beasts and do not have authority over them, this I do not deny.... *In the beginning it was not so, but the beasts feared and trembled and submitted to their master.* But when through disobedience he lost boldness, then also his authority was diminished. That all animals were subject to man, hear what the Scripture says: He brought the beasts and all irrational creatures “to Adam to see what he would call them” (Gen. 2:19). And he, seeing the beasts near him, did not run away, but like another lord he gives names to the slaves which are subject to him, since he gave names to all animals.... This is already sufficient as proof that beasts in the beginning were not frightful for man. But there is another proof not less powerful and even clearer. Which? The conversation of the serpent with the woman. If the beast had been frightful to man, then seeing the serpent the woman would not have stopped, would not have taken his advice, would not have conversed with him with such fearlessness, but immediately on seeing him would have been terrified and run away. But behold, she converses and is not afraid; *there was not yet then any fear.*⁴⁰

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Is it not clear that St. John Chrysostom reads the first part of the text of Genesis “as it is written,” as an *historical* account of the state of man and creation before the transgression of Adam, when both man and animals were different from what they now are? Similarly, St. John Damascene tells us that

*at that time the earth brought forth of itself fruits for the use of the animals that were subject to man, and there were neither violent rains upon the earth nor wintry storms. But after the fall, “when he was compared to senseless beasts and was become like to them” (Ps. 48:21) ... then the creation subject to him rose up against this ruler appointed by the Creator.*⁴¹

Perhaps you will object that in the same place St. John Damascene also says, speaking of the creation of animals, “Everything was for the suitable use of man. Of the animals, *some were for food*, such as deer, sheep, gazelles, and the like.” But you must read this passage *in context*; for at the end of this paragraph we read (just as you have noted that God created man male and female *foreknowing* Adam’s transgression):

God knew all things before they were made and *He saw that man in his freedom would fall and be given over to corruption*; yet for man’s suitable use He made all the things that are in the sky and on the earth and in the water.⁴²

Do you not see from the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers that God creates creatures so that they will be useful to man *even in his corrupted state*; but *He does not create them already corrupted*, and they were not corrupted *until Adam sinned.**

But let us turn now to a Holy Father who speaks quite explicitly about *the incorruption of the creation before Adam’s disobedience*: St. Gregory the Sinaite. He is a Holy Father of the highest spiritual life and theological soundness, who attained to the heights of Divine vision. In the Russian [edition of the] *Philokalia* he writes:

* On the capacities and attributes with which animals were created in God’s foreknowledge of man’s fall, see p. 707n below.—ED.

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The presently existing creation was not originally created corruptible; but afterwards it fell under corruption, being “made subject to futility,” according to the Scripture, “not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected it in hope” of the renewal of Adam who had become subject to corruption (Rom. 8:20). He Who renewed and sanctified Adam has renewed the creation also, but He has not yet delivered it from corruption.⁴³

Further, the same Father gives us remarkable details about the state of the creation (in particular, Paradise) before Adam’s transgression:

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.⁴⁴

(This passage is expressed in the present tense—*because the Paradise in which Adam was placed is still in existence,* but is not visible to our normal sense organs.)

What will you say of these passages? Will you still be so certain, as “uniformitarian” evolutionary philosophy teaches, that the creation *before* the fall was just the same as it is now after the fall? The Holy Scripture teaches us that “*God made not death*” (Wisdom 1:13), and St. John Chrysostom teaches that

just as the creation became corruptible *when your body became corruptible*, so also when your body will be incorrupt, the creation also will follow after it and become corresponding to it (*Homilies on Romans*).⁴⁵

And St. Macarius the Great says:

Adam was placed as lord and king of all the creatures.... But *after his captivity*, there was taken captive together with him the creation

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which served him and submitted to him, because through him death came to reign over every soul.⁴⁶

The teaching of the Holy Fathers, if we accept it “as it is written” and do not try to reinterpret it by means of our human wisdom, is clearly that *the state of creatures before the transgression of Adam was quite different from their present state.** I am not trying to tell you that I know precisely what this state was; this state between corruption and incorruption is very mysterious to us who live entirely in corruption. Another great Orthodox Father, St. Symeon the New Theologian, teaches that *the law of nature we now know is different from the law of nature before Adam's transgression.* He writes:

The words and decrees of God become the law of nature. Therefore also the decree of God, uttered by Him as a result of the disobedience of the first Adam—that is, the decree to him of death and corruption—*became the law of nature, eternal and unalterable.*⁴⁷

What the “law of nature” was before Adam’s transgression, which of us sinful men can define? *Certainly natural science, bound up entirely with its observation of the present state of creation, cannot investigate it.*

Then how do we know anything at all about it? Obviously, because God has revealed something of it to us through the Sacred Scripture. But we know, also, from the writings of St. Gregory the Sinaite (and other writings which I shall quote below), that God has revealed something besides what is in the Scriptures. And this brings me to another extremely important question raised by evolution.

6. Divine Vision

What is the source of our true knowledge of the first-created world, and how is it different from science? How can St. Gregory the Sinaite know what happens to the ripe fruits of Paradise, and why can natural

* For further elucidation of the Scriptural-Patristic teaching on the original incorruption of man and the cosmos, and on the entrance of death and corruption, see appendix 1, “Created in Incorruption,” below.—ED.

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science not discover such a thing? Since you are a lover of the Holy Fathers, I believe you already know the answer to this question. Still, I will set forth the answer, based not on my own reasoning but on the authority of a Holy Father of the highest spiritual life, St. Isaac the Syrian, who spoke of the soul's ascent to God *based on his own experience of it*. In describing how the 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 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.*⁴⁸

Do you see that St. Gregory the Sinaite and other Holy Fathers of the highest spiritual life beheld the first-created world *in the state of Divine vision*, which is beyond all natural knowledge? St. Gregory the Sinaite himself states that the "eight primary visions" of the state of perfect prayer are: (1) God, (2) the angelic powers, (3) "*the composition of visible things*," (4) the condescension of the Word (the Incarnation), (5) the universal resurrection, (6) the Second Coming of Christ, (7) eternal torments, (8) the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.⁴⁹ Why should the "composition of visible things" be included together with the other objects of Divine vision which are all within the sphere of theological knowledge alone, and not scientific knowledge? Is it not because there is an aspect and state of creatures *beyond the sphere of scientific knowledge*, which can only be seen, as St. Isaac himself saw God's creation, in vision by God's grace? The objects of these visions, St. Gregory teaches, "are clearly beheld and known by those who have attained by grace complete purity of mind."⁵⁰

In another place St. Isaac the Syrian clearly describes *the difference between natural knowledge and faith*, which leads to vision.

Knowledge is a rule of nature, and this rule preserves it in all its steps. But faith performs its journey *above nature. Knowledge does not attempt to permit anything to come to it which is subversive of nature*, but

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avoids this; but faith permits this and says: "Thou shalt tread upon the asp and the basilisk, and thou shalt trample on the lion and the dragon" (Ps. 90:13).... Many by faith have entered flames, bridled the burning power of fire and passed unharmed through its midst, and walked on the surface of the sea as on dry land. But all this is above nature, contrary to the capabilities of knowledge, and it is shown that the latter is vain in all its capabilities and laws. *Do you see how knowledge preserves the bounds of nature? Do you see how faith goes above nature* and there traces the steps of its path? The capabilities of knowledge for 5,000 years, or a little more or less than this, governed the world, and man in no way could raise his head from the earth and acknowledge his Creator, until our faith shone forth and delivered us from the darkness of earthly doing and vain submission to the empty soaring of the mind. And even now, when we have found an imper-turbable sea and an inexhaustible treasure, again we desire to turn away toward tiny springs. There is no knowledge that would not be poor, no matter how much it might be enriched. But the treasures of faith can be contained neither by the heaven nor by the earth.⁵¹

Do you now see what is at stake in the argument between the Patristic understanding of Genesis and the doctrine of evolution? The doctrine of evolution attempts to understand the mysteries of God's creation by means of natural knowledge and worldly philosophy, not even allowing the possibility that there is something in these mysteries which places them beyond its capabilities of knowing; while the book of Genesis is an account of God's creation *as seen in Divine vision by the God-seer Moses*, and this vision is confirmed also by the experience of later Holy Fathers. Now, even though revealed knowledge is higher than natural knowledge, still we know that there can be no conflict between *true* revelation and *true* natural knowledge. But there *can* be conflict between revelation and *human philosophy*, which is often in error. There is thus no conflict between the knowledge of creation contained in Genesis, as interpreted for us by the Holy Fathers, and the *true* knowledge of creatures which modern science has acquired by observation; but there most certainly is an irreconcilable conflict between the knowledge contained in Genesis and the *vain philosophical speculations of modern scienc-*

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tists, unenlightened by faith, about the state of the world in the Six Days of Creation. Where there is a genuine conflict between Genesis and modern philosophy, if we wish to know the truth we must accept the teaching of the Holy Fathers and reject the false opinions of scientific philosophers. The world has now become so infected by vain modern philosophy posing as science that very few, even among Orthodox Christians, are willing or able to examine this question dispassionately and discover what the Holy Fathers *really taught, and then accept the Patristic teaching even if it seems utter foolishness to the vain wisdom of this world.**

Concerning the true Patristic view of the first-created world, already I think I have indicated enough to you of the Patristic views which at first sight seem “surprising” to an Orthodox Christian whose understanding of Genesis has been obscured by modern scientific philosophy. Most “surprising” of all, perhaps, is the fact that the Holy Fathers understood the text of Genesis “as it is written,” and do not allow us to interpret it “freely” or allegorically. Many Orthodox Christians with a “modern education” have become accustomed to associating such an interpretation with Protestant fundamentalism, and they are afraid of being considered “naïve” by sophisticated scientific philosophers; but it is clear how much more profound is the true Patristic interpretation than that of the fundamentalists, on the one hand, who have never even heard of Divine vision and whose interpretation sometimes coincides with that of the Holy Fathers only by accident, as it were; and on the other hand, how much more profound is the Patristic interpretation than that of those who uncritically accept the speculations of modern philosophy as if they were true knowledge.

It may help the “modern” Orthodox Christian to understand how the incorruption of the first-created world is beyond the competence of science to investigate, if he would examine the fact of incorruption *as it has been manifested by God’s action even in our present corrupted world.* We can find no higher manifestation of this incorruption than in the Most Holy Mother of God, of Whom we sing: “Thee Who without corruption gavest birth to God the Word, true Mother of God, we magnify.” The Theotokia of our Orthodox Divine services are full

* On this, see the teaching of St. Theophan the Recluse, pp. 789–94 below.—ED.

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of this doctrine. St. John Damascene points out that in two respects this “incorruption” is *beyond the laws of nature*. “So far as He had no father, [Christ’s] birth was above the nature of generation,” and “in that His birth was painless, it was above the laws of generation.”⁵² 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 written 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 firm-

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ness 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 with the one and with the other—both with rightness of dogmas, and strictness of life.⁵³

There is one other question regarding the state of the first-created world about which you may wonder: what about the “millions of years” of the world’s existence which science “knows to be a fact”? This letter is already too long and I cannot discuss this question here. But if you wish, in another letter I can discuss this question also, including the “radiocarbon” and other “absolute” dating systems, giving you *the views of reputable scientists* about them and showing you how these “millions of years” also are *not at all a fact* but only more “philosophy.” This very idea was never even thought of until men, *under the influence of naturalistic philosophy*, began already to *believe* in evolution and saw that if evolution is true, then the world *must* be millions of years old (since evolution *has never been observed*, it is conceivable *only* under the supposition of countless millions of years which can bring about those processes which are too “minute” for contemporary scientists to see).* If you will examine this question objectively and dispassionately, *separating genuine evidence from suppositions and philosophy*, you will see, I

* Ideas of biological evolution were being propagated from the first half of the eighteenth century by such writers as Charles de Montesquieu (1689–1755), Benoît de Maillet (1656–1738), Pierre Louis Maupertuis (1698–1759), Denis Diderot (1713–1784), and George Louis Buffon (1707–1788), before uniformitarian ideas of vast ages of natural history were popularized by James Hutton (1726–1797) and Charles Lyell (1797–1875). By the time Lyell’s seminal work, *Principles of Geology*, was published in 1830–1833, the evolutionary formulations of Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802) and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744–1829) had also attracted considerable attention. Lyell was in fact heavily influenced by Lamarck. As noted elsewhere (pp. 517–18n below), Lyell in turn influenced Erasmus Darwin’s grandson Charles, whose theory of biological evolution through natural selection gained ascendancy after the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859. Thus, while it is true that the concept of biological evolution helped make way for the concept of millions of years of earth history (“deep time”), it is also true that the idea of a very old earth contributed to Charles Darwin’s formulation of evolutionary theory and to its widespread acceptance.—ED.

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believe, that there is no genuine factual evidence which requires us to believe that the earth is more than 7,500 years old. What one believes about this is *entirely dependent on his philosophy of the creation.*

To sum up the Patristic teaching of the first-created world I can do no better than to copy out the divine words of a Holy Father who so shone forth in mental prayer that he was only the third Father to be called by the entire Orthodox Church “Theologian”: I mean St. Symeon the New Theologian. In his 45th Homily (Russian edition), speaking from Patristic tradition and probably also from his own experience, he says:

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.... “And God planted Paradise in Eden in the east.... And God made to spring up also out of the earth every tree beautiful to the eye and good for food” (Gen. 2:8–9), *with various fruits which never spoiled and never ceased, but were always fresh and sweet* and furnished for the first-created ones great satisfaction and pleasantness. For it was fitting to furnish also an incorruptible enjoyment for these bodies of the first-created ones, which were incorrupt.... *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....

[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.... It was fitting in all justice for the one who had become corruptible and mortal by reason of the transgression of the commandment, to live upon the corruptible earth and be nourished with corruptible food.... Then also all creatures, when they saw that Adam had been banished from Para-

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dise, no longer wished to submit to him, the criminal.... But God restrained all these creatures by His power, and in His compassion and goodness did not allow them immediately to strive against man, and commanded that the creation should remain in submission to him, and *having become corrupt*, should serve corrupt man for whom it had been created, with the aim that when man again should be renewed and become spiritual, incorrupt, and immortal, then also the whole creation, which had been subjected by God to man to serve him, might be delivered from this servitude, might 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 the 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 might dwell in an incorruptible, eternal, and spiritual dwelling.... 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 futility of men.*

You should know likewise what is to be the glory and the brightly shining state of the creation in the future age. For when it will be renewed, it will not again be the same as it was when it was created in the beginning. But it will be such as, according to the word of the divine Paul, our body will also be.... The whole creation, according to the commandment of God, is to be, after the general resurrection, not such as it was created, material and sensuous, but it is to be re-created and to become a certain immaterial and spiritual dwelling, surpassing every sense.^{54*}

* We have conformed Fr. Seraphim's translation of this passage to a translation he later made of the same text and published in St. Symeon the New Theologian, *The Sin of Adam and Our Redemption* (1979; republished as FCM, 1994).—ED.

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Could there be any clearer teaching of the state of the first-created world before the transgression of Adam?

7. *The Nature of Man*

And now I come to the final and most important question which is raised for Orthodox theology by the modern theory of evolution: *the nature of man*, and in particular *the nature of the first-created man Adam*. I say that this is the “most important question” raised by evolution because the doctrine of man, anthropology, touches most closely upon theology, and here, perhaps, it becomes most possible to identify theologically the error of evolutionism.* It is well known that Orthodoxy teaches quite differently from Roman Catholicism regarding man’s nature and Divine grace, and now I shall attempt to show that the theological view of man’s nature which is implied in the theory of evolution, and which you have explicitly set forth in your letter, is *not* the Orthodox view of man, but is much closer to the *Roman Catholic* view; and this is only a confirmation of the fact that the theory of evolution, far from being taught by any Orthodox Father, is simply a product of the Western apostate mentality and even, despite the fact that it originally was a “reaction” against Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, has deep roots in the Roman Catholic scholastic tradition.

The view of human nature and the creation of Adam which you set forth in your letter is very much influenced by your opinion that Adam, in his body, was an “evolved beast.” This opinion you have obtained, not from the Holy Fathers (for you cannot find one Father who believed this, and I have already showed you that the Fathers indeed believe quite “literally” that Adam was created from the dust and not from any other creature), but from modern science. Let us then look, first of all, at the Orthodox Patristic view of the nature and value of secular, scientific knowledge, particularly in relation to revealed, theological knowledge.

This Patristic view is very well set forth by the great hesychast Father

* On this, see also the reflections of St. Justin of Celije, pp. 809–12 below.—ED.

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St. Gregory Palamas, who was forced to defend Orthodox theology and spiritual experience precisely against a Western rationalist, Barlaam, who wished to reduce the spiritual experience and knowledge of hesychasm to something attainable by science and philosophy. In answering him, St. Gregory set forth general principles which are well applicable in our own day when scientists and philosophers think they can understand the mysteries of creation and man's nature better than Orthodox theology. He writes:

The beginning of wisdom is to be sufficiently wise to distinguish and prefer to the wisdom which is low, terrestrial, and vain, that which is truly useful, heavenly, and spiritual, that which comes from God and conducts toward Him and which renders conformable to God those who acquire it.⁵⁵

He teaches that the latter wisdom alone is good in itself, while the former is both good and evil:

The practice of the graces of different languages, the power of rhetoric, historical knowledge, the discovery of the mysteries of nature, the various methods of logic ... all these things are at the same time good and evil, not only *because they are manifested according to the idea of those who use them and easily take the form which is given them by the point of view of those who possess them*,* but also because the study of them is a good thing only to the degree that it develops in the eye of the soul a penetrating view. But it is bad for one who gives himself over to this study in order to remain in it until old age.⁵⁶

Further, even

If one of the Fathers says the same thing as do those from without, *the concordance is only verbal, the thought being quite different*. The former, in fact, have, according to Paul, "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor.

* On the function of one's point of view in the acquisition of secular knowledge, see p. 666, 666n below.—ED.

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2:16), while the latter express at best a human reasoning. “As the heaven is distant from the earth, so is My thought distant from your thought” (Is. 55:9), saith the Lord. Besides, even if the thinking of these men were at times the same as that of Moses, Solomon, or their imitators, what would it benefit them? What man of sound spirit and belonging to the Church could from this draw the conclusion that their teaching comes from God?⁵⁷

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” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:20).⁵⁸

And this knowledge can also be harmful and fight against true theology:

*The power of this reason which has been made foolish and nonexistent enters into battle against those who accept the traditions in simplicity of heart; 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.⁵⁹**

There could hardly be a better account than this of what modern “Christian evolutionists” have tried to do by thinking themselves wiser

* Later in the same work, speaking of the “wisdom of secular learning” ($\tauῶν ἔξω μαθημάτων σοφία$), St. Gregory writes: “Is not the truth that is found in it open to question and mixed with falsehood? That is why it is always contradicted, as its leaders themselves can testify, while the wisdom of God, in accordance with the divine saying of the Gospel, cannot be resisted by anyone (cf. Luke. 21:15), for it offers the plain truth, unadulterated with that which is opposed to it.... Thus it is shown that there are two kinds of truth: one is the result of inspired teaching; the other, which is sought though rarely found by secular philosophy, is not necessary and does not lead to salvation” (*In Defense of the Holy Hesychasts [The Triads]* 2.1.5, ed. and trans. [Fr.] Jean Meyendorff, pp. 233–35).—ED.

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than the Holy Fathers, *using secular knowledge to reinterpret the teaching of the Sacred Scripture and the Holy Fathers.* Who can fail to see that the rationalistic, naturalistic spirit of Barlaam is quite close to that of modern evolutionism?

But notice that St. Gregory is speaking of scientific knowledge which, on its own level, is *true*; it becomes false only by warring against the higher knowledge of theology. Is the theory of evolution even *true* scientifically?

I have already spoken in this letter of the dubious nature of the scientific evidence for evolution in general, about which I would be glad to write you in another letter. Here I must say a word specifically about the scientific evidence for *human evolution*, since here we already begin to touch on the realm of Orthodox theology.

You say in your letter that you are happy not to have read the writings of Teilhard de Chardin and other exponents of evolution in the West; you approach this whole question “simply.” But I am afraid that this is where you have made a mistake. It is well and good to accept the writings of the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers *simply; that is the way they should be accepted*, and that is the way I try to accept them. But why should we accept the writings of modern scientists and philosophers “simply,” merely taking their word when they tell us that something is true—*even if this acceptance forces us to change our theological views?* On the contrary, *we must be very critical* when modern wise men tell us how we should interpret the Holy Scriptures. We must be critical not only with regard to their philosophy, but also with regard to the “scientific evidence” which they think supports this philosophy; for *often this “scientific evidence” is itself philosophy.*

This is especially true of the Jesuit scientist Teilhard de Chardin; for not only has he written the most thorough and influential philosophy and theology based on evolution, *but he was also closely connected with the discovery and interpretation of almost all the fossil evidence for the “evolution of man” that was discovered in his lifetime.*

And now I must ask you a very elementary scientific question: *what is the evidence for the “evolution of man”?* About this question too I cannot go into in detail in this letter, but I will discuss it briefly. I can write more in detail later, if you wish.

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The scientific fossil evidence for the “evolution of man” consists of: Neanderthal Man (many specimens); Peking Man (several skulls); the “men” called Java, Heidelberg, Piltdown (until twenty years ago), and the recent finds in Africa: *all extremely fragmentary*; and a few other fragments. *The total fossil evidence for the “evolution of man” could be contained in a box the size of a coffin,** and it is from widely separated parts of the earth, with no reliable indication of even *relative* (much less “*absolute*”) age, and *with no indication whatever of how these different “men” were connected with each other*, whether by descent or kinship.

Further, one of these “evolutionary ancestors of man,” “Piltdown Man,” was discovered twenty years ago to have been a *deliberate fraud*. Now it is an interesting fact that Teilhard de Chardin was *one of the “discoverers” of “Piltdown Man”*—a fact which you will not find in most textbooks or in biographies of him. He “discovered” the canine tooth of this fabricated creature—a tooth which had already been dyed with the intent to cause deception regarding its age when he found it! I do not have the evidence to say that Teilhard de Chardin consciously participated in fraud; I think it more likely that he was the victim of the actual perpetrator of the fraud, and that *he was so anxious to find proof for the “evolution of man” in which he already believed* that he simply did not pay any attention to the anatomical difficulties which this crudely fabricated “man” presented to any objective observer. And yet in evolutionary textbooks printed before the discovery of the fraud, Piltdown Man is accepted as an evolutionary ancestor of man *without question*; his “skull” is even illustrated (even though only fragments of a cranium had been discovered); and it is confidently stated that “he combines human characteristics with others far retarded” (Tracy I. Storer, *General Zoology*, 1951). This, of course, is just what is required for a “missing link” between man and ape; and that is why the Piltdown fraud *was composed precisely of a mixture of human and ape bones*.

Some time later this same Teilhard de Chardin participated in the discovery, and above all in the “interpretation,” of “Peking Man.”

* Fr. Seraphim was here referring to a statement made in *New Scientist* (March 25, 1965, p. 798), an international science magazine based in London. This statement is quoted on p. 578 below.—ED.

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Thanks to his “interpretation” (for by then he had established a reputation as one of the world’s leading paleontologists), “Peking Man” also entered evolutionary textbooks as an ancestor of man.

Teilhard de Chardin was also connected with the discovery *and above all the interpretation* of some of the finds of “Java Man,” which were fragmentary.* In fact, everywhere he went he found “evidence” *which exactly matched his expectations*—namely, that man has “evolved” from ape-like creatures.

If you will examine objectively all the fossil evidence for the “evolution of man,” I believe you will find that *there is no conclusive or even remotely reasonable evidence whatever for this “evolution.”* The evidence is believed to be proof for human evolution *because men want to believe this; they believe in a philosophy that requires that man evolved from ape-like creatures.* Neanderthal Man is simply “*Homo sapiens*,” no different from modern man than modern men are different from each other, a variation within one definite kind or species.** Please note that the *pictures* of Neanderthal Man in evolutionary textbooks are the invention of artists *who have a preconceived idea of what “primitive man” must have looked like*, based on evolutionary philosophy!

I have said enough, I believe, not to show that I can “disprove” the “evolution of man” (for who can *prove or disprove anything* with such

* Both “Peking Man” (*Sinanthropus pekinensis*) and “Java Man” (*Pithecanthropus erectus*) are considered examples of *Homo erectus*, and have been given the titles *Homo erectus pekinensis* and *Homo erectus erectus*, respectively.—ED.

** Some evolutionists have concluded that *Homo erectus* also belongs within the species *Homo sapiens*. For example, William S. Laughlin (University of Connecticut), in studying the Eskimos and Aleuts, noted the many similarities between these peoples and the Asian *Homo erectus* people (*Sinanthropus*). He concludes his study: “When we find that significant differences have developed, over a short time span, between closely related and contiguous peoples, as in Alaska and Greenland, and when we consider the vast differences that exist between remote groups such as Eskimos and Bushmen, who are known to belong to the single species of *Homo sapiens*, it seems justifiable to conclude that *Sinanthropus* belongs within this same diverse species” (*Science*, vol. 142 [Nov. 8, 1963], p. 644).

According to the evolutionary time scale, both *Homo erectus* and Neanderthal Man lived contemporaneously with anatomically modern *Homo sapiens*. (See also pp. 383–84n, 385, 385n above and pp. 837–38 below.)—ED.

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fragmentary evidence?!), but to indicate that we must be very critical indeed of the biased interpretations of such scanty evidence. Let us leave it to our modern pagans and their philosophers to become excited with the discovery of every new skull, bone, or even a single tooth, about which newspaper headlines declare: "New Ancestor of Man Found." This is not even the realm of vain knowledge; it is the realm of *modern fables and fairy tales*, of a wisdom which truly has become astonishingly foolish.

Where does the Orthodox Christian turn if he wishes to learn the true doctrine of the creation of the world and man? St. Basil tells us clearly:

Whence shall I begin my narration? Shall I refute the vanity of the heathens? Or shall I proclaim our truth? The wise men of the Greeks wrote many works about nature, but not one account among them remained unaltered and firmly established, for the later account always overthrew the preceding one. As a consequence, *there is no need for us to refute their words: they avail mutually for their own undoing.*^{60*}

Like St. Basil,

*let us leave the accounts of outsiders to those outside, and turn back to the explanation of the Church.*⁶¹

Let us, like him,

examine the structure of the world and contemplate the whole universe, *beginning, not from the wisdom of the world, but from what God taught His servant when He spoke to him in person and without riddles.*⁶²

Now we shall see that the evolutionary view of man's origin not only teaches us nothing in reality of man's origin, but rather teaches a *false doctrine of man*, as you yourself prove when you are forced to express this doctrine in order to defend the idea of evolution.

When setting forth your view of man's nature, based on your ac-

* See pp. 503–4n below, where this passage is quoted at greater length.—ED.

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ceptance of the idea of evolution, you write: "Man is not *naturally* the image of God. Naturally he is an animal, an evolved beast, dust from the ground. He is the image of God supernaturally." And again: "We see that by himself man is nothing, and let us not be scandalized by his natural origin." "God's breath of life transformed the animal to man without changing a single anatomical feature of his body, without changing a single cell. I would not be surprised if Adam's body had been in all aspects the body of an ape." Again: "Man is what he is, not because of his *nature*, which is dust from the ground, but because of the supernatural grace given to him by the breath of God."

Now, before examining the Patristic teaching of man's nature, I will admit that this word "nature" can be a little ambiguous, and that one can find passages where the Holy Fathers use the expression "human nature" in the way it is used in common discourse, as referring to this fallen human nature whose effects we observe every day. *But there is a higher Patristic teaching of human nature, a specific doctrine of human nature, given by Divine revelation, which cannot be understood or accepted by one who believes in evolution.* The evolutionary doctrine of human nature, based on a "common sense" view of fallen human nature, is the *Roman Catholic*, not the Orthodox, teaching.

The Orthodox doctrine of human nature is set forth most concisely in the *Spiritual Instructions* of Abba Dorotheus. This book is accepted in the Orthodox Church as the "ABCs," the basic textbook of Orthodox spirituality; it is the first spiritual reading which an Orthodox monk is given, and it remains his constant companion for the rest of his life, to be read and reread. It is most significant that *the Orthodox doctrine of human nature is set forth in the very first page of this book, because this doctrine is the foundation of the entire Orthodox spiritual life.*

What is this doctrine? Abba Dorotheus writes in the very first words of his First Instruction:

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*

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natural condition in which he was created. For God created man according to His own image, that is, immortal, master of himself, 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 of the enjoyments of this age, and of other passions, and he was mastered by them, for he became himself their slave through the transgression....

[The Lord Jesus Christ] accepted our very nature, the essence of our constitution, and became a new Adam in the image of God Who created the first Adam; *He renewed the natural condition* and made the senses again sound, as they were in the beginning....

The children of humility of wisdom are: self-reproach, not trusting one's own mind, hatred of one's own will; for through them a man is enabled to come to himself and *return to the natural condition* through purifying himself by the holy commandments of Christ.⁶³

The same doctrine is set forth by other ascetic Fathers. Thus Abba Isaiah teaches:

In the beginning, when God created man, He placed him in Paradise, and he had then sound senses, *which stood in their natural order*; but when he obeyed the one who deceived him, all his senses were *changed into an unnatural state*, and he was then cast out from his glory.⁶⁴

And the same Father continues:

And so, let him who desires to *come into his natural condition* cut off all his fleshly desires, so as to place himself in the condition *according to the nature of the (spiritual) mind.*⁶⁵ *

The Holy Fathers clearly teach that, when Adam sinned, man did

* On the restoration of man to his natural (original) condition, see also the Patristic quotations on pp. 85n, 235n above and pp. 755–56 below.—ED.

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not merely lose something which had been *added to his nature*, but rather *human nature itself was changed, corrupted*, at the same time that man lost God's grace.* The Divine services of the Orthodox Church also, which are a foundation of our Orthodox dogmatic teaching and spiritual life, clearly teach that the human nature which we now observe *is not natural to us*, but has been corrupted:

Healing human nature, which had become corrupted by the ancient transgression, without corruption a child is born anew (Menaion, Dec. 22, Matins, Theotokion of the Sixth Canticle of the Canon).

And again:

The Creator and Lord, desiring to save from corruption *the corrupted human nature*, having come to dwell in a womb cleansed by the Holy Spirit, is unutterably formed (Menaion, Jan. 23, Matins, Theotokion of the Fifth Canticle of the Canon).

It can be noted in such hymns also that our whole Orthodox conception of the Incarnation of Christ and our salvation through Him is bound up with *a proper understanding of human nature as it was in the beginning*, to which Christ has restored us. We believe that we will one day live with Him *in a world very much like the world that existed here on this earth, before the fall of Adam, and that our nature will then be the nature of Adam*—only even higher, because everything material and changeable will then be left behind, as the quote already given from St. Symeon the New Theologian clearly indicates.

And now I must show you further that even your doctrine of human nature *as it is now in this fallen world*, is incorrect, is not according to the teaching of the Holy Fathers. Perhaps it is a result of careless expression on your part—but I believe it is probably precisely because you have been led into error by believing the theory of evolution—that you write: “Apart from God man is from his nature nothing at all,

* On the change or corruption of human nature that occurred at the fall, see also pp. 712–25, 715n, 734–41, 741n below.—ED.

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because his nature is the dust from the ground, like the nature of the animals." Because you believe in the philosophy of evolution, you are forced either to believe that human nature is only a low, animal nature, as you indeed express by saying that "man is not *naturally* the image of God"; or at best (since I think that you do not really believe this, being Orthodox), you divide human nature artificially into two parts; that which is from "nature" and that which is from God. But the true Orthodox anthropology teaches that *human nature is one*, it is that which we have from God; *we do not have some nature "from the animals" or "from the dust" which is different from the nature with which God created us.* And therefore, *even the fallen, corrupted human nature which we have now is not "nothing at all,"* as you say, but it still preserves in some degree the "goodness" in which God created it. Behold what Abba Dorotheus writes of this doctrine:

We have naturally the virtues given to us by God. For when God created man, He sowed virtues in him, as also He said: "Let Us create man in Our image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26). It is said: "In Our image," inasmuch as God created the soul immortal and with authority over itself, and "in Our likeness," referring to virtues.... *By nature God gave us virtues. But passions do not belong to us by nature,* for they do not even have any substance or composition.... But the soul in its love of pleasure, having inclined away from virtues, instills the passions in itself and strengthens them against itself.^{66*}

Further, these God-given virtues still exercise themselves even in our fallen state. This is the extremely important Orthodox teaching of St. John Cassian, who thus refuted the error of Blessed Augustine, who

* Compare the words of St. Maximus the Confessor, who writes that the passions "were not originally created together with human nature, for if they had been they would contribute to the definition of human nature. But following what the great Gregory of Nyssa taught [*On Virginity* 12; *On the Soul and the Resurrection*], I say that, on account of the fall from perfection, the passions were introduced and attached themselves to the more irrational part of human nature. As soon as man sinned, the divine and blessed image was displaced by the clear and obvious likeness to unreasoning animals" (*Ad Thalassium* 1, CCSG 7.47, PPS 25, p. 97*).—ED.

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indeed believed that man apart from God's grace was "nothing at all." St. Cassian teaches in his Thirteenth Conference:

That the human race after the fall actually did not lose the knowledge of good is affirmed by the Apostle, who says: "When the Gentiles, who have not the law, *do by nature those things that are of the law*, these who have not the law are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law *written in their hearts*" (Rom. 2:14–15).

And again:

To the Pharisees He said that they can know the truth: "Why even of yourselves do ye not judge that which is just?" (Luke 12:57). He would not have said this if they could not have discerned what is just *by their natural reason*. Therefore one should not think that human nature is capable only of evil.⁶⁷

Likewise, with regard to the righteous Job, St. Cassian asks whether "he conquered the various snares of the enemy in this battle apart from his own virtue, but only with the assistance of God's grace," and he answers:

Job conquered him by his own power. However, the grace of God also did not abandon Job; lest the tempter burden him with temptations above his strength, it [God's grace] allowed him to be tempted *as much as the virtue of the tempted one could bear.*⁶⁸

Again, with regard to the Patriarch Abraham:

God's righteousness wished to test the faith of Abraham, *not that which the Lord had instilled in him, but that which he showed by his own freedom.*⁶⁹

Of course, the reason why Augustine (and Roman Catholicism and Protestantism after him) believed that man was nothing without grace, was because *he had an incorrect conception of human nature*, based on a naturalistic view of man. The Orthodox doctrine, on the other hand, *of*

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human nature as it was created in the beginning by God and is even now preserved in part in our fallen state, prevents us from falling into any such a false dualism between what is “man’s” and what is “God’s.” To be sure, *everything good that man has is from God, not the least his very nature,* for the Scripture says, “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Cor. 4:7). Man has no “animal nature” as such and never did have; he has only the fully human nature which God gave him in the beginning, and which he has not entirely lost even now.

Is it necessary to quote for you the multitude of clear Patristic evidence that the “image of God,” which is to be found in the soul, *refers to man’s nature and is not something added from without?* Let it suffice to quote the marvellous testimony of St. Gregory the Theologian, showing how man *by his constitution* stands between two worlds, and is free to follow whichever side of his nature he will:

I do not understand how I became joined to the body and how, *being the image of God*, I became mixed with dirt.... What wisdom is revealed in me, and what a great mystery! Was it not for this that God led us into this warfare and battle with the body, that we, *being a part of Divinity* [how boldly the Theologian speaks of man’s nature, so boldly that we cannot take his words absolutely literally!],* and proceeding from above, might not be haughty and exalt ourselves because of our dignity, and might not disdain the Creator, but might always direct our gaze toward Him, and so that our dignity

* St. Maximus the Confessor wrote an entire essay—*Ambiguum 7*—on this passage of St. Gregory the Theologian, in order to show that St. Gregory was not literally claiming the human soul to be an Uncreated part of Divinity. As St. Maximus explains, the phrase “part of Divinity” (found also in St. Gregory’s *Dogmatic Poem 8: On the Soul*, line 77) refers to the fact that the Uncreated *logos* (“thought-will”) of man preexisted in God prior to man’s creation, and that man—although created and not Divine himself—can *participate* in God through the Divine Energies. (See St. Maximus, *Ambigua 7*, PPS 25, pp. 45–78, especially pp. 54–61).

In modern times, the Orthodox theological writer Vladimir Lossky made the same point regarding the above-quoted passage of St. Gregory the Theologian, and quoted another passage of St. Gregory (*Moral Poem 14: On Human Nature*, lines 76–84) to show that he did not believe the human soul itself to be Divine. (See Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, pp. 117–18; as well as pp. 216–17, 216–17n above.)—ED.

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St. Seraphim of Sarov, Russia (1754–1833).
Nineteenth-century Russian lithograph.

might keep within bounds the infirmity joined to us?—So that we might know that at the same time we are both immensely great and immensely low, earthly and heavenly, temporal and immortal, inheritors of light and inheritors of fire or darkness, depending upon which side we incline towards? *So was our constitution established*, and this, as far as I can see, was in order that the earthly dust might humble us if we should imagine to exalt ourselves because of the image of God.⁷⁰

This image of God which man possesses by his nature was not completely lost even among the pagans, as St. John Cassian teaches; it has not been lost *even today*, when man, under the influence of modern philosophy and evolutionism, is trying to turn himself into a

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subhuman beast—for even now God awaits man's conversion, awaits his awakening *to the true human nature which he has within him.*

And this brings me to the very important point of your interpretation of the teaching of the God-bearing Father of almost our own times, St. Seraphim of Sarov, contained in his famous "Conversation with Motovilov."

St. Seraphim is my own patron Saint, and it was our Brotherhood of St. Herman that first published the complete text of this "Conversation" in the Russian language in which it was spoken (for the pre-revolutionary edition was incomplete), as well as other of his genuine words which had hitherto been unpublished. So you may be sure that we do not believe that he taught a false doctrine of the nature of man, one that contradicts that of other Holy Fathers. But let us examine what St. Seraphim himself says.

As you correctly quote him, St. Seraphim says:

Many explain that when it says in the Bible that God breathed the breath of life into the face of Adam the first-created, who was created by Him from the dust of the ground, it must mean that until then there was neither human soul nor spirit in Adam, but only the flesh created from the dust of the ground. This interpretation is wrong, for the Lord created Adam from the dust of the ground with the constitution which our dear father, the holy Apostle Paul describes: "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. 5:23). And all these three parts of our nature were created from the dust of the ground, and Adam was not created dead, but an active being like all the other animate creatures of God living on earth. The point is that if the Lord God had not then breathed into his face the breath of life (that is, the grace of our Lord God the Holy Spirit ...), Adam, however perfect he had been created and superior to all the other creatures of God as the crown of creation on earth, nevertheless would have been without the Holy Spirit within himself, like unto the other creatures, although he possessed flesh, soul, and spirit. But when the Lord God breathed into Adam's face the breath of life, then, according to Moses' expression, "Adam

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became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7), that is, completely and in every way like God, and, like Him, forever immortal.⁷¹*

This is the one Patristic quote you give which *seems* to support your view that *man was first a beast, and then (later in time) received the image of God and became man*. This is indeed what you *must* believe if you accept the theory of evolution, and I am glad to see that you have the courage to express clearly what all "Orthodox evolutionists" actually believe (even if in a rather confused manner) but are often afraid to express openly for fear of offending other Orthodox believers who are "naive" and in their "simplicity" refuse to believe that man in actual fact is "descended from apes" or ape-like creatures.

But here let us remember the words of St. Gregory Palamas which I have already quoted:

If one of the Fathers says the same thing as do those from without, the concordance is only verbal, the thought being quite different. The former, in fact, have, according to Paul, "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16), while the latter express at best a human reasoning.... What man of sound spirit and belonging to the Church could from this conclude that their teaching comes from God?⁷²

And in fact, I must tell you that *you have completely misunderstood* the teaching of St. Seraphim, who is not at all teaching what the doctrine of evolution teaches. This I can show by quoting both the clear teaching of other Holy Fathers and that of St. Seraphim himself.

But first I must explain what might seem to a rationalist to be a "contradiction" between the teaching of St. Seraphim and that of other Fathers. First, we should be clear that when St. Seraphim speaks of man as being composed of "spirit and soul and body" he is *not* contradicting those many other Holy Fathers who speak of human nature as merely "soul and body"; he is merely making a distinction between dif-

* Here we have corrected some mistakes in the English translation. (The translation that Dr. Kalomirov used as his source had not been done by Fr. Seraphim.)—ED.

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ferent aspects of the soul and speaking of them separately, as many Holy Fathers also speak.* Second, in saying that the “breath of life” which God breathed into the face of Adam is the grace of the Holy Spirit, he is not contradicting the very many Holy Fathers who teach that the “breath of life” is the *soul*, but is only giving a perhaps more profound and precise interpretation of this passage from Scripture. But is he actually making the rationalistic distinction which you make between the *nature* of man which existed “before” this breathing, and the *grace* which was communicated by it? Does Orthodox theology accept the rigid dichotomy which Roman Catholic teaching makes between “nature” and “grace,” as though men knew everything there is to know about these two great mysteries?

No; Orthodox theology does not know such a rigid dichotomy, and that is why rationalist scholars find so many “contradictions” between different Orthodox Fathers on this subject, as will be clear from a single example: Does immortality belong to the human soul *by nature or by grace*? Different Orthodox Fathers who are of equal authority *answer differently* on this question, *not because they teach differently about man* and thus “contradict” each other, but because *they approach the question from different sides*. Those who approach the question of man’s nature more from the side of the present corrupted human nature say that man’s soul is immortal by grace; while those (especially the ascetic and mystical Fathers) who begin with the view of man’s nature *as it was in the beginning*, view the soul rather as immortal by nature. It may even be that one and the same Father views the question now from one and now from the other side, as does St. Gregory of Nyssa when he says in one place: “That which reasons, *and is mortal*, and is capable of thought and knowledge, is called ‘man’”;⁷³ but in another place he

* What St. Seraphim calls man’s “spirit,” духъ—*dukh*” in Russian, corresponds to the Greek *νοῦς—nous* (also translated as “mind” or “intellect”): the highest part of the human soul, and the faculty by which man knows God and enters into communion with Him. In the words of St. John Damascene, “The soul does not have the *nous* as something distinct from itself, but as its purest part, for as the eye is to the body, so is the *nous* to the soul” (*On the Orthodox Faith* 2.12, FC 37, p. 236). According to St. Diadochus of Photiki, the *nous* dwells “in the depths of the soul” (*On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 79, *Philokalia* 1, p. 280).—ED.

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says: “Man *did not* in the course of his first production *have united to the very essence of his nature the liability to passion and to death.*”⁷⁴ Does this great Father “contradict” himself? Of course he does not.

What belongs to first-created Adam by nature and what by grace? Let us not make false rationalistic distinctions, but let us admit that *we do not fully understand this mystery.* Nature and grace *both come from God.** The nature of first-created Adam was so exalted that we can only faintly understand it now by our own experience of grace, which has been given to us by the Second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ; but Adam’s state was also higher than anything we can imagine even from our own experience of grace, for even his high nature was made yet more perfect by grace, and he was, as St. Seraphim says, “completely and in every way like God, and, like Him, forever immortal.”**

What is absolutely clear, and what is sufficient for us to know, is that the creation of man—of his spirit and soul and body, *in the Divine grace which perfected his nature—is a single act of creation*, and it cannot be artificially divided up, as though one part of it came “first,” and another part “later.” God created man *in grace*, but neither the Holy Scriptures nor the Holy Fathers teach us that this grace came *later in time* than the creation of man’s nature. This teaching belongs to Medieval Latin scholasticism, as I will show below.

St. Seraphim only *appears* to teach this doctrine, because he speaks in terms of the simple narrative of the sacred text of Genesis. But it is clear enough, as St. Gregory Palamas says, that “*the concordance is only verbal, the thought being quite different.*” To be convinced of this we

* Contrasting Eastern Orthodox theology with Roman Catholic teaching, Vladimir Lossky writes: “The Eastern tradition knows nothing of ‘pure nature’ to which grace is added as a supernatural gift. For it, there is no natural or ‘normal’ state, since grace is implied in the act of creation itself.... ‘Pure nature,’ for Eastern theology, would thus be a philosophical fiction corresponding neither to the original state of creation, nor to its present condition which is ‘against nature,’ nor to the state of deification which belongs to the age to come.... Nature and grace do not exist side by side, rather there is a mutual interpenetration of one another, the one exists in the other” (*Mystical Theology*, pp. 101, 126).—ED.

** For further discussion of whether man was originally immortal by “nature” or by “grace,” see pp. 736–41, 738–39nn, 740n below.—ED.

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have only to examine *how the Holy Fathers instruct us to interpret the sacred narrative of Genesis at this point.*

Fortunately for us, *this very question was raised and answered by the Holy Fathers.* This answer is summed up for us by St. John Damascene:

From the earth [God] 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.⁷⁵

Here let us be sure again that we understand that although St. John speaks of the inbreathing of God as the *soul*, he does not teach a doctrine different from St. Seraphim, who speaks of this inbreathing as the *grace of the Holy Spirit.** St. John in fact hardly speaks of grace at all in the creation of man, for *it is understood as being present in the whole process of creation*, above all in the creation of the image of God, the soul, which he teaches is part of our nature. St. Gregory of Nyssa likewise speaks of the creation of man without paying special attention to what comes from “nature” and what from “grace,” only ending his whole treatise with the words:

May we all return to that *Divine grace in which God at the first created man*, when He said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.”⁷⁶

St. John Damascene and others who speak of the inbreathing of God

* As noted above (p. 215n), St. Gregory Palamas affirms the inner harmony of these two views when he says that God breathed into Adam His Spirit at the same time He breathed into him a soul.

Summarizing the Patristic teaching on this subject, Vladimir Lossky writes of how God’s grace was united with man’s spirit (*nous*) at the moment of creation: “The ‘Divine breath’ points to a mode of creation, by virtue of which the human spirit is intimately connected with grace, and is produced by it in the same way as a movement of air is produced by the breath and is inseparable from it” (*Mystical Theology*, p. 118).—ED.

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as the soul view this matter from an aspect slightly different from that of St. Seraphim; but clearly *the teaching of all these Fathers regarding the whole creation of man*, and in particular regarding the question of whether *the narrative of Genesis indicates a difference in time between the "forming" and "inbreathing" of man—is the same*. St. John Damascene speaks for all the Holy Fathers when he says that they occurred “*at the same time—not one before and the other afterwards.*”

In saying this, St. John Damascene was refuting in particular the Origenist heresy of the “preexistence of souls.” But *there was also a heresy opposed to this, which taught the “preexistence” of the human body, just as it is taught by modern “Christian evolutionists.”* This heresy was specifically refuted by St. Gregory of Nyssa, whom I shall now quote.

After discussing the Origenist error of the “preexistence of souls,” St. Gregory continues:

Others, on the contrary, marking the order of the creation 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 argument they prove that the flesh is more noble than the soul, that which was previously formed [more noble] than that which was afterwards infused into it. For they say that the soul was made for the body, that the thing formed might not be without breath and motion, and that everything that is made for something else is surely less precious than that for which it is made.... *The doctrine of both is equally to be rejected.*⁷⁷

Specifically refuting the doctrine of the “preexistence of the body,” St. Gregory says:

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

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to be antecedent and posterior to himself, *as if the bodily element were first in point of time, and the other were a later addition....* For as our nature is conceived as twofold, 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 completely sufficient for the whole task at once*, but dividing the work, and busying itself with each of the halves in turn.⁷⁸

Do I need to point out that the “God” of “Christian evolution” is precisely this kind of God who is not “completely sufficient for the whole task at once”; and the very reason why the doctrine of evolution was invented was to account for the universe on the assumption that God either does not exist or is incapable of creating in six days or bringing the world into existence by His mere word? EVOLUTION WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN THOUGHT OF BY MEN WHO BELIEVE IN THE GOD WHOM ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS WORSHIP.

The account of the creation of man in the book of Genesis must be understood in a “God-befitting manner.” Here you have made the mistake of accepting a literal interpretation of the text precisely where the Holy Fathers do not allow this! How important it is for us to read the Holy Scriptures as the Holy Fathers instruct us, and not according to our own understanding!

It is quite clear that St. Seraphim did not understand the text of Genesis in the way in which you have interpreted it. Indeed, there are other passages in the same “Conversation with Motovilov” which reveal that St. Seraphim viewed the creation and nature of Adam in precisely the same way as the whole Patristic tradition.

Thus, immediately after the passage which you quote, and which I have reproduced above, there follow these words which you did not quote (the English translation here is not precise, and so I am translating directly from the Russian original):

Adam was created to such an extent immune to the action of every one of the elements created by God, that neither could water drown him, nor fire burn him, nor could the earth swallow him up in its abysses, nor

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could the air harm him by its action in any way whatsoever.* Everything was subject to him....

This is precisely a description of the incorruption of Adam's body in a creation subject to laws quite different from today's "laws of nature"—in which as an "evolutionist" you cannot believe, since you *must* believe with modern philosophy *that the material creation was "natural," that is, corrupted, even before the fall of Adam!*

Again, shortly after this passage, St. Seraphim says:

To Eve also the Lord God gave the same wisdom, strength, and unlimited power, and all the other good and holy qualities. And *He created her not from the dust of the ground but from Adam's rib* in the Eden of delight, in the Paradise which He had planted in the midst of the earth.⁷⁹

Do you believe in this creation of Eve from Adam's rib as an historical fact, as all the Holy Fathers do? No, you cannot, because from the point of view of evolutionary philosophy it is quite absurd: why should "God" evolve Adam's body from beasts "naturally," and then create Eve miraculously? *The "God" of evolution does not perform such miracles!*

Let us look now specifically at the Orthodox Patristic view of the *body* of first-created Adam, which according to the evolutionary doctrine had to be corruptible like the corruptible world from which it "evolved," and might even have been, as you state, entirely that of an ape.

The Holy Scripture explicitly teaches: "*God created man incorruptible*" (Wisdom 2:23).

St. Gregory the Sinaite teaches:

The body, theologians say, *was created incorruptible*, which is how it will arise, just as the soul was created passionless; but just as the soul

* Such a view is also found in the writings of Sts. Maximus the Confessor and Symeon the New Theologian; see p. 250n above.—ED.

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had the freedom to sin, so *the body had the possibility to become subject to corruption.*⁸⁰

And again:

The incorruptible body will be earthly, but without moisture and coarseness,* having been unutterably changed from animate to spiritual, so that it will be both of the dust and heavenly. *Just as it was created in the beginning, so also will it arise, that it may be conformable to the image of the Son of Man by entire participation in deification.*⁸¹

Notice here that the body in the future age will still be “of the dust.” When looking at the corruptible dust of this fallen world, we are humbled to think of this side of our nature; but when we think of that *in-corruptible dust of the first-created world out of which God made Adam*, how exalted we are by the grandeur of even this, the lowest part of God’s unutterable creation!

St. Gregory the Theologian suggests, giving a symbolical interpretation of the “garments of skins” with which God clothed Adam and Eve after their transgression, that *the flesh of our present human body is different from the flesh of first-created Adam:*

Adam “is clothed in garments of skin” (perhaps a coarser, mortal, and antagonistic flesh).^{82**}

Again, St. Gregory the Sinaite says:

Man was created incorruptible, as also he will arise; but not unchangeable, nor yet changeable, but having the power at his own desire to change or not.... Corruption is the offspring of flesh. To eat

* Or “without humors and material density”; see p. 766, 766n below; cf. p. 693, 693n.—ED.

** Or “perhaps a denser, mortal, and unyielding flesh”; see p. 693 below. The term here translated as “coarser” or “denser,” *παχυτέραν*, was later employed by other Holy Fathers to denote a quality that man’s body acquired at the fall, and that it will lose in the general resurrection; see pp. 693n, 700, 700n, 719–20, 720n, 766, 766n, 768, 768n.—ED.

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food and excrete the excess, to hold the head proudly, and to lie down to sleep—are the natural attributes of beasts and cattle, *into which we also, having become like to the cattle through the transgression* (cf. Ps. 48:21), *fell away from the God-given good things natural to us*, and became from rational, cattle-like, and from divine, bestial.⁸³

Concerning Adam's state in Paradise, St. John Chrysostom teaches:

Man lived on earth like an angel; he was in the body, but he had no bodily needs; like a king, adorned with purple and a diadem and clothed in royal garb, he took delight in the dwelling of Paradise, having an abundance in everything.... Before the fall men lived in Paradise like angels; they were not inflamed with lust, were not kindled by other passions either, were not burdened with bodily needs; but *being created entirely incorruptible and immortal*, they did not even need the covering of clothing.⁸⁴

St. Symeon the New Theologian likewise speaks clearly of first-created Adam in Paradise, and his final state in the future age:

If now, after we transgressed the commandment and were condemned to die, people have so multiplied, then just imagine how many there would have been if all those born from the creation of the world had not died! And what kind of life they would have lived, *being immortal and incorrupt*, strangers to sin, sorrows, cares, and difficult necessities! And how, prospering in the keeping of the commandments and the good ordering of the dispositions of the heart, in time they would have ascended into the most perfect glory, and being changed, would have drawn near to God; and the soul of each one would have become light-bearing by reason of the illuminations which would have been poured out upon it from the Divinity! And this sensuous and crudely material body would have become as it were immaterial and spiritual, above all senses; and the joy and rejoicing with which we then would have been filled by fellowship one with the other, in truth would have been unutterable and beyond human thought.... Their life in Paradise was not burdened with

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labors and not weighed down with misfortunes. *Adam was made with a body that was incorrupt, although material and not yet spiritual....* Concerning our body the Apostle says: "It is sown a natural body, but is raised" not as the body of the first-created one was before the transgression of the commandment, that is, material, sensuous, changeable, having need of sensuous food, but "it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44) and unchanging, such as was the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, after the Resurrection, He being the firstborn from among the dead, which body was incomparably superior to the body of first-created Adam.^{85*}

From our experience of our own corruptible body it is not possible for us to understand the state of the incorruptible body of Adam, which had no natural needs as we know them, which ate of "every tree" of Paradise without excreting any excess, and which did not know sleep (until God's direct action caused him to sleep, so that Eve might be created from his rib). And how much less are we able to understand the even more exalted state of our bodies in the future age! But we know enough from the Church's teaching to refute those who think they can understand these mysteries by scientific knowledge and philosophy. *The state of Adam and the first-created world has been placed forever beyond the knowledge of science by the barrier of Adam's transgression, which changed the very nature of Adam and the creation, and indeed the nature of knowledge itself.* Modern science knows only what it observes and what may be reasonably inferred from observation; its guesses about the earliest creation have no more and no less validity than the myths and fables of the ancient pagans. *The true knowledge of 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.*

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All that I have said in this letter, derived strictly from the Holy Fathers, will come as a surprise to many Orthodox Christians. Those

* Again, we have conformed Fr. Seraphim's translation to his later published one.—ED.

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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,** helps us to understand the “spiritual body” with which we shall be

* Fr. Seraphim is referring here to a translation of St. Gregory’s *Commandments and Doctrines* found in the 1951 volume *Writings from the Philokalia on the Prayer of the Heart* (London: Faber and Faber). This translation was made from the same Russian version of the Greek *Philokalia* that Fr. Seraphim used, and did not always accurately convey the meaning of the Russian text or the Greek original. In 1995, a corrected version of the 1951 translation, revised according to the original Greek, was published in volume 4 of the complete English *Philokalia* (London: Faber and Faber).—ED.

** St. John Damascene writes: “Compared with us, the angel is said to be incorporeal and immaterial, although in comparison with God, Who alone is incomparable, everything proves to be gross and material—for only the Divinity is truly immaterial and incorporeal.... The angels are circumscribed, because when they are in heaven they are not on earth, and when they are sent to earth by God they do not remain in heaven. However, they are not confined by walls or doors or bars or seals, because they are unbounded” (*On the Orthodox Faith* 2.3, FC 37, pp. 205–6; see also 1.13, pp. 197–99). Likewise, St. Basil the Great writes: “In the case of the heavenly powers,

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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 the modern Roman Catholic doctrine, as set forth in nineteenth-century Latin sources. His conclusion is that the Orthodox doctrine on these matters—on angels and demons, heaven and hell, Paradise—even though it is given to us by sacred tradition only in part, nonetheless is quite precise in that part which we can know; but the Roman Catholic teaching is extremely indefinite and imprecise. The reason for this indefiniteness is not far to seek: from the time Papalism began to abandon the Patristic teaching, it gradually gave itself over to the influence of worldly knowledge and philosophy, first that of such philosophers as Barlaam, and then of modern science. Even by the nineteenth century Roman Catholicism no longer had a

they are in essence—if one may so speak—aerial spirits, composed of immaterial fire.... They exist in space, and become visible, and appear in their appropriate bodily form to those who are worthy” (*On the Holy Spirit* 16.38, SC 17.380, NPNF 2 8, p. 24*.) Again: “With regard to other [bodiless] powers [besides the Spirit of God], each is believed to be in a circumscribed place. The angel who stood by Cornelius was not at one and the same moment with Philip (Acts 10:3, 8:26); nor did the angel who spoke with Zachariah from the right side of the altar (Luke 1:11) at the same time occupy his own place in heaven” (*ibid.* 23.54, SC 17.444, NPNF 2 8, pp. 34–35*). Blessed Theodore of Cyrus says the same: “[Angels] require a place; only the Divinity, uncircumscribed in being, does not occupy a place” (*Questions on Genesis* 3, LEC 1, p. 15). St. Symeon the New Theologian also writes of the relative materiality of angels and on their being circumscribed, and then goes on to say that “the same reasoning holds for the [human] soul as well”; see pp. 770–71n below. For further elaboration from Patristic sources, see Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Soul after Death*, 4th ed., pp. 23–27.—ED.

* This subject is discussed at greater length on pp. 761–74, 768n, 770–771nn below.—ED.

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certain teaching of its own on these subjects, but had grown accustomed to accept whatever “science” and its philosophy say.

Alas, our present-day Orthodox Christians, and not least those who have been educated in “theological academies,” *have followed the Roman Catholics in this and have come to a similar state of ignorance of the Patristic teaching.* This is why even Orthodox priests are extremely vague about the Orthodox teaching of Adam and the first-created world and blindly accept whatever science says about these things.

The vague teaching on Paradise and creation of Roman Catholicism—and of those Orthodox Christians who are under Western influence in this matter—has deep roots in the past of Western Europe. The Roman Catholic scholastic tradition, even at the height of its Medieval glory, already taught a false doctrine of man, and one which doubtless paved the way for the later acceptance of evolutionism, first in the apostate West, and then in the minds of Orthodox Christians who are insufficiently aware of their Patristic tradition and so have fallen under foreign influences. In fact the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, unlike the Orthodox Patristic teaching, in its doctrine of man is quite compatible with the idea of evolution which you advocate.

Thomas Aquinas, in the *Summa Theologica*, teaches that,

in the state of innocence, *the human body was in itself corruptible*, but it could be preserved from corruption by the soul.

Again:

It belongs to man to beget offspring, *because of his naturally corruptible body.*⁸⁶

Again:

In Paradise man would have been like an angel in his spirituality of mind, *yet with an animal life in his body.*⁸⁷ Man’s body was indissoluble, not by reason of any intrinsic vigor of immortality, *but by reason of a supernatural force given by God to the soul*, whereby it was enabled to preserve the body from all corruption so long as it itself remained

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subject to God.... This power of preserving the body from corruption *was not natural to the soul*, but the gift of grace.^{88*} Now it is clear that such a subjection of the body to the soul and of the lower powers to reason (as Adam had in Paradise) *was not from nature*, or otherwise it would have remained after sin.⁸⁹

This last quote shows clearly that Thomas Aquinas does not know that *man's nature was changed* after the transgression. Again:

The immortality of the first state was based on *a supernatural force in the soul*, and not on any intrinsic disposition of the body.⁹⁰

So far is Thomas Aquinas from the true Orthodox vision of the first-created world that he understands it, as do modern "Christian evolutionists," solely from the viewpoint of this fallen world; and thus he is forced to believe, against the testimony of Orthodox Holy Fathers, that Adam naturally *slept* in Paradise,⁹¹ and that he voided faecal matter, a sign of corruption:

Some say that in the state of innocence man would not have taken more than necessary food, so that there would have been nothing superfluous. This, however, is unreasonable to suppose, as implying that there would have been no faecal matter. Therefore there was need for voiding the surplus, yet so disposed by God as not to be unbefitting.⁹²

How low is the view of those who try to understand God's creation and Paradise when their starting point is their everyday observation of this present fallen world! As against St. Seraphim's splendid vision of man's *invulnerability to the elements* in Paradise,** behold Thomas Aquinas' purely mechanistic explanation of the rationalistic questions: what happened when a hard body came into contact with the soft body of Adam?

* What Thomas Aquinas here calls variously "a supernatural force" and "grace" is not the same as what Orthodox theology knows as grace. On the distinction between the Roman Catholic teaching of supernatural (created) grace and the Orthodox teaching of grace as the Uncreated Energy of God, see p. 715n below.—ED.

** See pp. 250, 485–86 above.—ED.

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In the state of innocence, man's body could be preserved from suffering injury from a hard body, partly by the use of his reason, whereby he could avoid what was harmful; and partly also by Divine providence, which so preserved him, that nothing of a harmful nature could come upon him unawares.⁹³

Finally, Thomas Aquinas himself does not teach, but other Medieval scholastics (William of Auxerre, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure) did teach, the very foundation of present-day “Christian evolutionary” views of man’s creation:

*Man was not created in grace, but grace was bestowed on him subsequently, before sin.*⁹⁴

In a word: according to Orthodox doctrine, which comes from Divine vision, Adam’s *nature* in Paradise was different from present human nature, both in body and soul, and this exalted nature was perfected by God’s grace; but according to Latin doctrine, which is based on rationalistic deductions from the present fallen creation, man is *naturally corruptible and mortal*, just as he is now, and his state in Paradise was a special, supernatural gift.*

I have quoted all these passages from a heterodox authority, not in

* Some “Orthodox evolutionists” have tried to find a correspondence between the teaching of St. Athanasius the Great on prelapsarian humanity and the view of Thomas Aquinas detailed above: a view which, as Fr. Seraphim observed, might be seen to be compatible with evolutionism. Upon close examination, however, one finds that (in the above-quoted phrase of St. Gregory Palamas) “the concordance” between St. Athanasius and Aquinas, “is only verbal, the thought being quite different.” While St. Athanasius did teach that man was originally mortal by nature and incorruptible by grace (see pp. 738–39, 738–39n below), it should be kept in mind that, as Fr. Seraphim noted earlier, the Orthodox Holy Fathers expressed themselves in various ways when speaking of what is of “grace” and what is of “nature,” not seeing a rigid dichotomy between the two and viewing the same reality from complementary sides (see also pp. 724–25, 738–41, 739n, 740n, where this is discussed at length). That St. Athanasius’ view of prelapsarian man does not in fact accord with that of Thomas Aquinas is seen most clearly when we compare their teachings on human sexual reproduction. According to Aquinas, sexual reproduction was “natural to

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order to argue over details of Adam's life in Paradise, but merely to show how far one corrupts the marvelous Patristic vision of Adam and the first-created world when one approaches it with the wisdom of this fallen world. *Neither science nor logic can tell us a thing about Paradise;* and yet many Orthodox Christians are so cowed by modern science and its rationalistic philosophy that they are actually afraid to read seriously the first chapters of Genesis, knowing that modern "wise men" find so many things there that are "dubious" or "confused" or need to be "reinterpreted," or that one may obtain the reputation of being a "fundamentalist" if one dares to read the text simply, "as it is written," *as all the Holy Fathers read it.*

The instinct of the simple Orthodox Christian is sound when he recoils from the "sophisticated," fashionable view that man is descended from an ape or any other lower creature, or even (as you say) that Adam might have had the very body of an ape. St. Nectarios of Pentapolis rightly expressed his righteous anger against those who try to "prove that man

man" in his original condition, and would have been the means of generation even if the fall had not occurred. He categorically rejected as "unreasonable" the idea that, had man not fallen, God would have employed a means of increasing the human race other than sexual reproduction (*Summa Theologica*, part 1, question 98, article 2). Aquinas attributed this "unreasonable" idea specifically to St. Gregory of Nyssa, but it was actually the common teaching of the Eastern Holy Fathers, including St. Athanasius, who wrote in his Commentary on Psalm 50:5: "The original intention of God was for us to generate not by marriage and corruption. But the transgression of the commandment introduced marriage on account of the lawless act of Adam.... Thus the Psalmist shows, because from the beginning the nature of man had fallen under sin by the transgression in Eve, and under the curse did procreation come about" (PG 27.240CD; see p. 722 below). Since St. Athanasius held that the first humans were not intended to reproduce sexually, that this original state changed when "the nature of man had fallen under sin," and that sexual procreation is to be associated with "corruption" rather than incorruption, it is clear that he saw Adam and Eve as having been in a fundamentally different condition before the fall. Thus, his teaching is shown to be in harmony not with that of Thomas Aquinas—who believed that at his creation man was mentally and physically like people today, possessing bodily needs such as sleep, the voiding of excess, and sexual procreation—but rather with the common Patristic view on the exalted, angel-like state of prelapsarian man, both of soul and body.—ED.



Adam in Paradise (detail).
*Fresco by Monk Theophanes the Cretan in the Catholicon of the
Monastery of St. Nicholas Anapavsa, Meteora, Greece, 1527.*

is an ape, from which they boast that they are descended.”* *That is the view of Orthodox holiness*, which knows that creation is not as modern wise men describe it by their vain philosophy, but as God revealed it to Moses “not in riddles,” and as the Holy Fathers have seen it in vision. *Man’s nature is different from ape nature and has never been mixed with it.* If God, for the sake of our humility, had wished to make such a mixture, *the Holy Fathers, who saw the very “composition of visible things” in Divine vision, would have known it.*

HOW LONG WILL ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS REMAIN IN CAPTIVITY TO THIS VAIN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY? Much is said about the “Western captivity” of Orthodox theology in recent centuries; when will we realize that it is a far more drastic “Western captivity” in which every Orthodox Christian finds himself today, a helpless prisoner of the “spirit of the times,” of the dominating current of worldly philosophy which is absorbed in the very air we breathe in an apostate, God-hating society? An Orthodox Christian who is not consciously fighting against the vain philosophy of this age *simply accepts it into himself*, and is at peace with it because his own understanding of Orthodoxy is distorted, does not conform to the Patristic standard.

The sophisticated, worldly-wise laugh at those who call evolution a “heresy.” True, evolution is not *strictly speaking* a heresy; neither is Hinduism, *strictly speaking*, a heresy: but like Hinduism (with which it is indeed related, and which probably had an influence on its development)** evolutionism is an ideology that is profoundly foreign to the teaching of Orthodox Christianity, and it involves one in so many wrong doctrines and attitudes that it would be far better if it were simply a heresy and could thus be easily identified and combatted. Evolu-

* St. Nectarios (1846–1920), Metropolitan of Pentapolis and Wonderworker of Aegina, is one of the most beloved Greek Orthodox saints of modern times. The original context of the above quotation, as well as the Saint’s treatment of the evolutionary writings of Lamarck and Darwin, can be found on pp. 797–99 below.—ED.

** The two Hindu teachers who most thoroughly articulated the concordance between modern evolutionism and Advaita Vedanta Hinduism are Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) and Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950). See “Swami Vivekananda on Darwin, Evolution, and the Perfect Man,” *What Is Enlightenment?*, Spring/Summer 2002, pp. 58–63, 150–51; and Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (1985).—ED.

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tionism is closely bound up with the whole apostate mentality of the rotten “Christianity” of the West; it is a vehicle of the whole “new spirituality” and “new Christianity” in which the devil is now striving to submerge the last true Christians. It offers an *alternative explanation* of creation to that of the Holy Fathers; it allows an Orthodox Christian under its influence *to read the Holy Scriptures and not understand them*, automatically “adjusting” the text to fit his preconceived philosophy of nature. Its acceptance cannot but involve the acceptance also of *alternative explanations* of other parts of Divine revelation, of an automatic “adjustment” of other Scriptural and Patristic texts to fit in with modern “wisdom.”

I believe that in your feeling for God’s creation, as you describe it in your letter, you are Orthodox; but why do you feel that you must corrupt this feeling with modern wisdom and justify this new ideology which is so foreign to Orthodoxy? You have written most movingly “against false union”; how we wish that you would now become just as great a zealot “against false wisdom,” and tell the Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians who have accepted this new doctrine much too uncritically that our only wisdom comes from the Holy Fathers, and all that contradicts it is a lie, even if it calls itself “science.”

I beg your forgiveness if anything that I have said seems harsh; I have tried only to speak the truth as I see it in the Holy Fathers. If I have made any mistakes in my citations from the Holy Fathers, I beg you to correct them, but not to let any small mistakes keep you from seeing what I have tried to say. There is much else that I could say on this subject, but I will wait for your reply before doing so. Above all, I have the heartfelt wish that both you and we might see *the true Patristic teaching* on this subject, which is so important for our whole Orthodox worldview. I ask your prayers for myself and our Brotherhood.

With love in Christ our Savior,
Seraphim, monk

PART III

The Philosophy of Evolution



Ivan V. Kireyevsky, a Russian philosopher and disciple of the
Holy Fathers (see pp. 505–6, 505n below).

CHAPTER ONE

Science and the Holy Fathers

EDITOR'S NOTE: This chapter has been taken from among the miscellaneous notes of Fr. Seraphim found after his repose. Each section represents a separate set of notes. We have chosen and arranged those notes which provide the best introduction to the chapters that follow. Other miscellaneous notes of Fr. Seraphim may be found in part 5.

1. True Theology and Secular Knowledge

THE ATTACK of modern atheistic thought on Christianity has been so effective that many Orthodox Christians are defensive and feel inferior about their own Orthodox wisdom, and are very willing to admit that there is truth and wisdom to be found in modern secular knowledge about which Orthodoxy has “no opinion.” They thus undervalue the immeasurably rich tradition of the Holy Fathers, which gives us Christian wisdom not by any means only on narrow ecclesiastical or theological subjects, but on much else. Patristic wisdom comprises an Orthodox Christian’s whole philosophy of life, including his attitude toward modern conveniences, scientific knowledge, and other things which did not exist in their modern form in the lifetimes of the Holy Fathers of the past.

Roman Catholic theology long ago gave up trying to give the standard of wisdom to contemporary men, with the result that it is now “generally assumed” that answers to many modern questions are to be found in modern “wise men”—scientists and even philosophers.

Orthodox Christians know better than this, and must be quite careful in deciding how much to believe these “wise men.”

One area of common confusion is the interpretation of Genesis, especially in view of the “scientific” theory of evolution. It is no exaggeration to say that many even among Orthodox Christians assume that science has much to say in helping Christians to “interpret” the text of Genesis. Here we shall examine this assumption—not at first by examining directly the theory of evolution, about which of course the Holy Fathers did not speak directly, since it is a product of eighteenth and nineteenth century “Enlightenment” thought which was unheard of in earlier centuries—but chiefly by examining the attitude of the Holy Fathers toward secular knowledge on the one hand, and their principles for understanding and interpreting Genesis on the other hand (and also their *interpretation* of Genesis itself).

No one will dare to say that the Holy Fathers, and Orthodox Christians in general, are “against science,” that is, opposed to scientific knowledge insofar as it is actually knowledge of nature. As God is the author both of revelation and of nature, there can be no conflict whatever between theology and science, as long as each is true and remains in the sphere which belongs to it by nature. Further, those Holy Fathers who wrote commentaries on the book of Genesis did not hesitate to make use of the scientific knowledge of nature known at that time, insofar as it was applicable to the subject. Thus Fr. Michael Pomazansky,* in a perceptive article comparing the *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil with the *Talks on the Days of Creation* of St. John of Kronstadt, notes that “the *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil to a certain degree is an encyclopedia of the knowledge of the natural sciences of his time in their positive attainments,” his intention being to show the greatness of God as it is still visible in the obvious kinds of creatures. The knowledge of the natural sciences, to be sure, is one that is constantly open to revision owing to new findings made by observation and experiment, and so it is that there one may find errors even in the writings of St. Basil and other Holy Fathers, just as there are errors in the works of every-

* Fr. Michael Pomazansky (1888–1989), one of the last living graduates of a pre-revolutionary theological academy in Russia, was a theological writer for whom Fr. Seraphim had great respect. Fr. Seraphim translated and annotated the English edition of Fr. Michael’s major work, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*.—ED.

one who writes concerning scientific facts. These errors in no way detract from the overall value of such works as the *Hexaemeron*, wherein scientific facts are never used as more than illustrations of principles which derive, not from knowledge of nature, but from revelation. With regard to knowledge of the *facts* of nature, modern works of science are of course superior to the “scientific” part of the *Hexaemeron* and similar works of Holy Fathers, being based as they are on more precise observations of nature. This is the *one and only respect* in which science can be said to be superior to or “improve” on the writings of the Holy Fathers; but this is a point which in the Holy Fathers is quite incidental to other, theological and moral teachings.

But let us distinguish quite carefully between actual scientific facts and something quite different which is today, when different kinds of knowledge are not often carefully distinguished, often confused with “fact.” Fr. Michael Pomazansky continues:

St. Basil acknowledges all the scientific facts of natural science. But he does not accept the philosophical *conceptions*, or the interpretations of the facts, which were contemporary to him: the mechanistic theory of the origin of the world, the teaching of the eternity and unbeginningness of the natural world [and the like]....* St. Basil the Great knew how to raise himself above the theories contemporary to

* Refuting Greek philosophical-scientific theories of a materialistic, naturalistic origin of the world, St. Basil wrote: “The wise men of the Greeks wrote many works about nature, but not one account among them remained unaltered and firmly established, for the later account always overthrew the preceding one. As a consequence, there is no need for us to refute their words: they avail mutually for their own undoing. Those, in fact, who could not recognize God, did not concede that an intelligent cause was the author of the creation of the universe, but they drew their successive conclusions in a manner in keeping with their initial ignorance. For this reason some had recourse to material origins, referring the beginning of the universe to elements of the world; and others imagined that the nature of visible things consisted of atoms and invisible particles, of molecules and interstices; indeed, that, as the indivisible particles now united with each other and now separated, there were produced generations and deteriorations; and that the stronger union of the atoms of the more durable bodies was the cause of their permanence. Truly, it is a spider’s web that these writers weave, who suggest such weak and unsubstantial beginnings of the heavens and earth and sea. It is

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him concerning the basic principles of the world, and his *Hexaemeron* stands out as a bright and exalted system which reveals the meaning of Genesis, and reigns above the former [theories] as a bird soars above the creatures which are able to move only along the earth.¹

The conceptions and theories of present-day science (such as the “theory of evolution”) are clearly of the same order as was that part of the “science” contemporary to him which St. Basil did not accept, inasmuch as it was clearly opposed to Christian revelation. We shall see in what follows whether or not the theory of evolution is an exception to this general rule that the independent philosophical speculations of non-Christians (which always have a greater or lesser appearance of “scientific fact” to support them) have no part in the Orthodox Christian worldview, which is founded on Divine revelation as interpreted and handed down by the Holy Fathers.

One thing more should be said about the distinction in the very nature and quality of theological knowledge and scientific knowledge. The former proceeds from God’s revelation and is judged according to its faithfulness to that revelation, and it leads the soul up to its Source; while scientific knowledge proceeds from the facts of the physical world and it has no purpose but to be faithful to the facts. One need only read the commentaries on Genesis of St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, St. John of Kronstadt, or any of the Holy Fathers, to see how these Holy Fathers constantly use the knowledge which is available to them, whether theological knowledge of God’s doings or just scientific knowledge of God’s creatures—to draw the reader’s mental gaze up to the Creator, offer moral instruc-

because they did not know how to say: ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’ They were deceived by the godlessness present within them into thinking that the universe was without guide and without rule, as if borne around by chance” (*Hexaemeron* 1.2, FC 46, pp. 5–6). (See St. Athanasius’ refutation of the same type of philosophical-scientific notions, p. 132n above.)

As against the philosophical idea that matter is eternal, St. Basil wrote: “If matter itself is uncreated, it is, in the first place, of equal rank with God, worthy of the same honors. What could be more more impious than this ...?” (ibid. 2.2, p. 23). (On other Patristic writings against this idea, see pp. 156–57n above.)—ED.

tion, and the like: but *never* to rest content with the mere abstract knowledge of things....*

We shall have occasion later on to remember the distinctions between secular and theological knowledge. For now let it be sufficient for us to know that secular knowledge can teach us nothing about God's revelation that is not contained in that revelation itself. If it attempts to do so it is trying to measure the Divine by human reasoning. In particular, those who think to "interpret" parts of Genesis by means of the evolutionary theory must be prepared to find clear, theological evidence of that theory in God's revelation.

2. Science and Christian Philosophy

The Russian philosopher Ivan V. Kireyevsky (1806–1856), a disciple of Elder Macarius of Optina, wrote:**

* Here Fr. Seraphim goes on to quote St. Gregory Palamas on the distinction between true theology and secular knowledge. We have omitted these passages here since they are quoted in part 2 (see pp. 466–67).—ED.

** In his "Survival Course," Fr. Seraphim said of Kireyevsky: "Having himself been a son of the West and gone to Germany to study with the most advanced philosophers—Hegel and Schelling—he was thoroughly penetrated with the Western spirit and then became thoroughly converted to Orthodoxy. Therefore he saw that these two things could not be put together. He wanted to find out why they were different and what was the answer in one's soul, what one had to choose.... He did not come back to Orthodoxy in order to be against the world without understanding it. Rather, it was in Orthodoxy that he found the key to understanding the history of the Western world and what was happening there."

It is noteworthy that Kireyevsky's former teachers Georg Hegel (1770–1831) and Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854), with whom he was personally acquainted, were the first major philosophers in the West to propound a philosophy of "spiritual evolution." This was many years before Charles Darwin came out with his biological theory.

Besides writing philosophical works of his own, Kireyevsky was instrumental in helping his elder, St. Macarius of Optina, to edit and publish major Patristic works which were sent all over Russia. See Fr. Leonid Kavelin, *Elder Macarius of Optina*, pp. 287–307.

See also Fr. Alexey Young's book *A Man Is His Faith: Ivan Kireyevsky and Orthodox Christianity* (1980), for which Fr. Seraphim translated passages of Kireyevsky's writings.—ED.

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The sciences in their essential part, i.e., as knowledge, belong equally to the pagan and Christian world and are distinguished only by their philosophical side. [Roman] Catholicism could not give them this philosophical side of Christianity because she did not possess it herself in pure form. And so we see that the sciences, as the inheritance of paganism, have flourished powerfully in Europe, but have ended in atheism, as an inevitable consequence of their one-sided development....

Christian philosophy alone can give to the sciences a correct foundation.²

In Russia (as opposed to the West),

all the Greek Holy Fathers, not excluding the most profound thinkers, were translated and read, and copied, and studied in the quiet of our monasteries, these holy embryos of the universities which did not exist. Isaac of Syria, the most profound thinker of all the philosophical writers, remains to this time in copies of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. And these monasteries were in living, unceasing contact with the people.³

This is the foundation of *true* enlightenment.

The sciences now have gone far astray, their knowledge twisted, because they have no *Christian* foundation; thinking to make their own foundation they have stumbled over their own unconscious presuppositions and have stupidly assumed the prejudices of the “spirit of the age.” Present-day sciences exist in a state of “learned ignorance,” a mass of details in a context of stupidity. Contemporary science exists in a state of philosophical barbarism, a true Dark Ages of knowledge. Only true Christianity can give it true philosophy.*

* See the observations of St. Theophan the Recluse and St. Justin (Popovich) of Celije on this topic, pp. 789–94, 809–10 below.—ED.

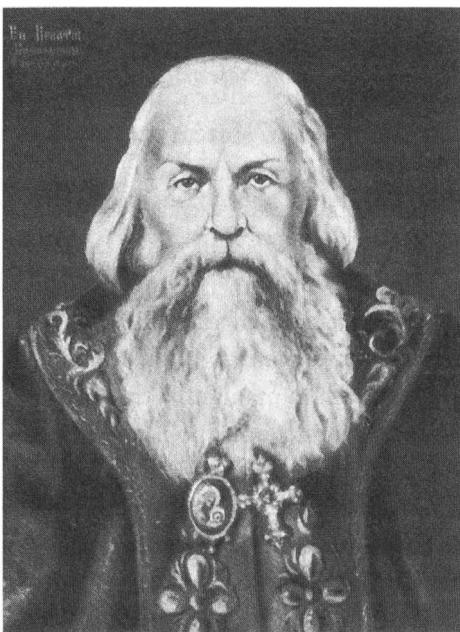
3. Distinguishing Materialistic Fantasies from Scientific Truth

Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov (1807–1867)* teaches that, for true philosophy today, one must know *both* true Christianity and true science; without this, one can't distinguish materialistic fantasies from scientific truth. He writes:

It is to be desired that some Orthodox Christian, having studied the applied sciences, would then study the fundamentals of the asceticism of the Orthodox Church, and bequeath to mankind a true philosophy, founded upon precise knowledge and not upon arbitrary hypotheses. The Greek sage Plato forbade the exercise of philosophy without the prerequisite study of mathematics. This is a true view of the matter. Without a prerequisite study of mathematics, together with the other sciences based upon it, and without the active and grace-filled knowledge of Christianity, it is impossible in our time to set forth a correct philosophical system. Many who consider themselves adepts in philosophy but are unacquainted with mathematics and the natural sciences, upon encountering arbitrary fantasies and

* In his book *The Soul after Death*, Fr. Seraphim wrote of St. Ignatius Brianchaninov: “[He] was perhaps the first great Orthodox theologian to face squarely the very problem which has become so acute in our own days: how to preserve the authentic Christian tradition and teaching in a world that has become entirely foreign to Orthodoxy and strives either to overthrow and dismiss it or else ‘reinterpret’ it so that it can be made compatible with a worldly way of life and thinking. Acutely aware of the Roman Catholic and other Western influences which were striving to ‘modernize’ Orthodoxy even in his days, Bishop Ignatius prepared for the defense of Orthodoxy both by delving deeply into the authentic Orthodox sources (whose teaching he absorbed in some of the best Orthodox monastic centers of his time) and by familiarizing himself also with the scientific and literary culture of his century (he attended an engineering school, not a theological seminary). Armed thus with a knowledge both of Orthodox theology and of secular knowledge, he devoted his life to the defense of authentic Orthodoxy and to an exposure of the modern deviation from it. It is no exaggeration to say that no other Orthodox country in the nineteenth century possessed such a defender of Orthodoxy against the temptations and errors of modern times” (*The Soul after Death*, 4th ed., p. xiv).—ED.

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Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov,
glorified as a saint by the
Russian Orthodox
Church in 1988.

hypotheses in the works of materialists, will not be able in any way to differentiate them from knowledge derived from science itself, and will not be able in any way to give a satisfactory response to and evaluation of the most absurd ravings of any kind of dreamer. Very often they are attracted to these ravings to the point of delusion, having taken them as evident truth.^{4*}

4. Science as a Lower Form of Knowledge

The Orthodox Christian is not “against science.” But he expects from science only that knowledge which it is capable of giving, by its

* The above passage appeared in vol. 3 of St. Ignatius’ collected works, which was prepared by the author and published in 1866, a year before he reposed. This was four years after Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species* had reached Russia, where it initially met with prolonged opposition. It is likely that, in speaking of the “arbitrary fantasies and hypotheses in the works of materialists,” St. Ignatius had Charles Darwin’s theory in mind, as well as the previous evolutionary ideas of Erasmus Darwin and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck.—ED.

very nature—not theology, not a philosophy of life. Yet in our time of intellectual confusion, when “science” has achieved such prestige in the popular mind as to be synonymous with knowledge itself, it happens all too often that scientists presume to teach that which they did not learn by means of science at all; such scientists, in fact, talk like theologians.

Modern science thinks it is “knowledge” par excellence, and before its prestige Orthodox believers waver, often apologizing for believing what seems “unscientific,” remaining content with the pietism or “religious feeling” which is the place where the scientific establishment allows faith today.

But true Orthodox Christianity is quite different. It is not bound up with any current of modern thought; it is a knowledge superior to science, and it certainly need not apologize to a lower form of knowledge.

We know God created the world in “measure, number, and weight” (Wisdom 11:20); but God has not revealed to man the details of His ordered creation, and those who pry into the “mystery of nature” find out only an infinitesimal part of the mysteries which come from God’s infinite wisdom. Modern science has proved that fallen man is not capable of using well what knowledge he has obtained.

But modern science is not only knowledge. It has divorced itself from revelation, and therefore placed itself at the disposal of heretical, un-Christian and anti-Christian theories and philosophies. Often these conflict with revelation because they enter the realm open only to theology.

So it is with the doctrine of the first man. God has not revealed many details of the first state of His creation, but [what He has revealed] is sufficient to judge the philosophical-religious speculations of evolutionists. The Orthodox doctrine of creation has not been known in the West; the Roman Catholic doctrine is quite different.

5. An Alien System of Thought

There is much confusion about evolution. Some say, “Orthodox Christians have no quarrel with evolution,” or they use the one phrase “God-guided evolution.” This understanding of evolution is rather

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primitive: assuming it is a “scientific fact” on the level of heliocentrism. In fact those opposed to evolution are often compared to the Roman Catholic Church against Galileo, and even Orthodox Christians are rather afraid to be found “naïve” or be left behind the intellectual currents or fashions of the age.

But the whole doctrine of evolution is rather more complex than a single “scientific fact” or even “hypothesis.” And it is a doctrine—a belief involving many spheres of thought and by no means just science; and it is sufficiently coherent to be able to speak of it as a more or less coherent doctrine. We shall find it to be a *whole distinctive approach to reality*, with its own distinctive philosophical and theological presuppositions and deductions. In theology, in particular, it offers a *conscious alternative* to Orthodox Christianity on a number of key dogmas.

6. *The Lack of Philosophical Culture among Orthodox Christians*

The misunderstanding of evolution on the part of some Orthodox Christians comes from a want of philosophical culture:

1. They do not have a critical approach to scientific “findings” (although, in full harmony with the modern spirit, they do have a critical approach to Scripture) and do not understand the *nature* of scientific “evidence” which supposedly supports evolution, nor do they know how to distinguish between fact and *philosophy*. They are unnecessarily awed by scientific “experts” and do not take the necessary trouble to investigate the question themselves.

2. They do not understand the philosophical “spirit of the age” which gave rise to evolution, and therefore they naively accept the “scientific fact” of evolution, but reject the finished *philosophy* of evolution as in Teilhard de Chardin. They do not see that these are one whole; without the *philosophy*, there would never have been the “fact” of evolution.

3. They do not understand the *philosophy* of the Holy Fathers—their whole outlook on nature and on specific questions such as the natures of individual things.

7. The Philosophy of the Holy Fathers

“The Fathers said nothing about evolution”—this is used by many Orthodox as an excuse for actually *believing whatever one wants or whatever “science” says on this subject.*

But our attitude to the Fathers must be more serious and more profound than this. Being faithful to the Fathers does not mean merely being ready to quote them or feel “free” to think as one pleases if no quotes are available. Rather, it means entering into their thought, which is the thought of the Church of Christ, and having a coherent philosophy of life derived from our life in the Church in harmony with the thought of the Fathers.

And the Fathers did have a philosophy, indeed a theology, which encompasses the question of evolution and makes it absolutely clear what the Orthodox Christian must think about this question. “Evolution” is not a “heresy,” any more than Buddhism is a “heresy”; but it includes, implies and presupposes so many errors and false views as to be totally incompatible with Orthodox Christianity. Most Orthodox believers have not thought deeply on this question, and so in their carelessness they think it is somehow “possible” to accept evolution. The rest of this study will attempt to clarify this issue, to make Orthodox Christians aware of the implications of Orthodox theology and the philosophy of the Holy Fathers, which have a very clear view of the chief questions raised by evolution for Christian believers.

CHAPTER TWO

A Brief Critique of the Evolutionary Model

EDITOR'S NOTE: This chapter has been transcribed from a taped lecture that Fr. Seraphim gave during his "Orthodox Survival Course" in the summer of 1975. The section titles and some additions to the text have been taken from his written outline of the course. Additions have also been taken from previous lectures in the same course, which provide necessary background to the present discussion.

1. Introduction

NOW WE COME to a key concept which is extremely important for understanding both the religious and the secular outlook of contemporary man. This idea is an extremely complex one, and here we can give only a sketchy outline of the problems involved in this question.

Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* came out in 1859, was instantly accepted by many people, and soon became very popular. People such as T. H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer in England, together with Ernst Haeckel in Germany (author of *The Riddle of the Universe*, 1899) and others, popularized the ideas of Darwin and made evolution the very center of their philosophy. It seems to explain everything. Of course, people like Nietzsche picked it up and used it for their so-called spiritual prophecies.* Thus, the people who were in the main school of Western thought—which was rationalism carried as far as you can take

* Through the mouth of his "prophet" Zarathustra, Friedrich Nietzsche proclaimed: "Man is something to be surpassed.... What is the ape to man? A laughing-stock or a bitter shame. And just the same shall man be to the Superman: a laughingstock or a bitter shame. Ye have made your way from worm to man, and

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it—accepted evolution. To the present day, one can say that evolution is a central dogma of “advanced” thinkers, of people who are in harmony with the times.

From the very beginning, however, there were people who were arguing about this. In the time of Darwin, there was a Catholic thinker, St. George Jackson Mivart (author of *On the Genesis of Species*, 1871), who believed in evolution but not in Darwin’s idea of natural selection. Especially in the last ten to thirty years, there have come out many critical accounts of evolution from an objective point of view. As these works demonstrate, most of the books supporting evolution begin with certain premises and assumptions arising from the naturalistic outlook.

Now there is even a society in San Diego called the Institute for Creation Research, which has come out with several good books. They themselves are religious, but they have several books which discuss evolution from a scientific, not a religious standpoint. They say there are two models for understanding the universe: one is the evolution model, and another is the creation model. They take the evidence of the history of the earth, for example—the geological layers and so forth—and they try to see which model it fits. They have discovered that fewer adjustments have to be made if one follows the model of creation—if there was a God Who created things in the beginning and if the earth is not billions of years old but only some thousands of years old. The evolutionary model, on the other hand, requires a good many corrections. In this regard, it can be compared to the old model of the Ptolemaic universe (vs. the Copernican model). Like the Ptolemaic model, the evolutionary model is now proving quite cumbersome.*

Some members of this Institute travel around to various universi-

much in you is still worm. Once ye were apes, and even now man is more ape than any ape.... Behold, I preach to you the Superman. The Superman is the meaning of the earth” (Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Prologue 3). Elsewhere Nietzsche affirmed his belief in the central tenets of evolutionist philosophy: “[T]he doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types and kinds, of the lack of any cardinal distinction between human and animal—[are] doctrines that I hold to be true but deadly” (Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* 2.9, quoted in John Richardson, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism*, p. 14, n. 8).—ED.

* Fr. Seraphim discusses this at greater length on pp. 371–72, 374–75 above.—ED.

ties. In the last year or two, they have held several debates before thousands of spectators at universities in Tennessee, Texas, etc. Interest has been quite high. Those defending evolution have not been able to give sound evidence in support of it and, in fact, on several points were caught on their ignorance of recent discoveries in paleontology.

There are very sophisticated and knowledgeable people defending both points of view. Here we will not even discuss the question of atheistic evolution because it is obviously a philosophy of fools,* of people who can believe, as Huxley said, that if you put a group of monkeys together with typewriters they will eventually give you the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, given enough time—if not millions then billions of years, according to the laws of chance.** Someone calculated evolutionary theory according to the laws of chance and found that in fact such a thing would never happen.*** Anyone who can believe that can believe anything.

The more serious dispute is between theistic evolution—that God created the world and then it evolved—and the Christian point of view. Here we must say that the fundamentalist point of view is incorrect in many instances because the fundamentalists do not know how to interpret Scripture. They say, for example, that the book of Genesis must be understood “literally,” and one cannot do this. The Holy Fathers tell us which parts are literal and which parts are not.

The first misunderstanding that must be cleared away before even discussing this question—one that causes many people to miss the point—centers on the failure to distinguish between *evolution* and *variation*. Variation is the process by which people make various hy-

* Cf. Psalm 13:1: “The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.”—ED.

** This idea, now known as the “infinite monkey theorem,” was actually misattributed to T. H. Huxley by the English scientist James Jeans in 1931. Nevertheless, the typing monkey concept is employed by evolutionists today in their arguments for Darwinian gradualism; see, for example, Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (1986), pp. 141–42.—ED.

*** See, for example, Paul S. Moorhead and Martin M. Kaplan, eds., *Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution*, Witmar Institute Symposium Monograph, no. 5 (1967); and Lee Spetner, *Not by Chance!* (1997), chap. 4, pp. 85–124.—ED.

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brids of peas, different breeds of cats, etc. After fifty years of experimentation, for example, they came up with a new breed of cat: a combination of Siamese and Persian, called the Himalayan cat, which has long hair like a Persian with the coloring of a Siamese. At first this had happened accidentally, but the cat was never able to reproduce itself purely; and only now after all these years of experimentation have they come up with a new breed which breeds true. Likewise, there are different breeds of dogs, different varieties of plants, and the very “races” of men are all quite different: Pygmies, Hottentots, Chinese, Northern Europeans—all different types of human beings who came from one ancestor. Therefore, the question of variation is one thing, and must be distinguished from evolution.*

There are undoubtedly many variations within one kind of creature, but these variations never produce anything new; they only produce a different *variety* of dog or cat or bean or people. In fact, this is more of a proof *against* evolution than for it because no one has ever been able to come up with a new kind of creature. The different “species”—and this term is itself quite arbitrary—for the most part are not able to bear offspring with each other; and, in the few cases where they can, the offspring is not able to reproduce itself. Thus, St. Ambrose of Milan says: This is an example to you, O man, to stop meddling in the ways of God. God means for each creature to be separate.**

2. Historical Background

During the period of the Enlightenment, the worldview was quite stable. Just before this time, the Anglican Archbishop Ussher of Armagh

* In his notes, Fr. Seraphim writes: “The popular mind accepts mere ‘variation’ as proof of a much bigger question of ‘evolution.’ We leave it to scientists to define the limits of change observable to them. By its grandiose conception, evolution as such cannot be *proved* by the small variations observable by science today....

“Let scientists define the limits of variation, and let them use the word and concept of ‘evolution’ in explaining change—but let them abandon metaphysical schemes which strive to extrapolate small changes into an all-encompassing principle. If this latter is true, let it come naturally from the data without forcing an interpretation on facts.”—ED.

** See p. 185 above.—ED.

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calculated all the years given in the Old Testament genealogies and came up with the idea that the world was created in the year 4004 B.C.* Newton believed this, and the Enlightenment worldview was in favor of the idea that God created the world in six days and then left it to develop itself, and that all the species were just as we see them today. The scientists of that time accepted that.

At the end of the period of Enlightenment, however, as the revolutionary fever began to come on, this very stable worldview began to break down, and already some scientists were coming up with more radical theories. At the end of the eighteenth century, Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin, had already come up with the hypothesis that all of life comes from one primordial filament—which is exactly what is meant today by the theory of evolution. His theory did not concern only one species or kind of creature, but proposed that a primordial blob or filament developed into all the different kinds of creatures by transmutations.**

This new explanation of Erasmus Darwin was an attempt to continue in the spirit of the Enlightenment: a spirit marked by utter

* The Archbishop's finding was published in 1650 and was soon added as a marginal notation to the book of Genesis in the Authorized Version of the Bible. His calculation was based on the Masoretic (Hebrew) Text of the Old Testament. According to the Old Testament chronology in the Septuagint (Greek) text, which is used by Orthodox Christians, the earth is approximately 1,500 years older than Archbishop Ussher's calculation; see pp. 314–15, 314n, 315n, 387, 387nn above.—ED.

** Erasmus Darwin's book *Zoonomia*, in which he proposed this theory, was first published in London in 1794. In it he wrote: "From thus meditating on the great similarity of the structure of the warm-blooded animals, and at the same time on the great changes they undergo both before and after their nativity; and by considering in how minute a portion of time many of the changes of animals above described have been produced; would it be too bold to imagine, that in the great length of time, since the earth began to exist, perhaps millions of ages before the commencement of the history of mankind, would it be too bold to imagine, that all warm-blooded animals have arisen from one living filament, which the Great First Cause endued with animality, with the power of acquiring new parts attended with new propensities, directed by irritations, sensations, volitions, and associations; and thus possessing the faculty of continuing to improve by its own inherent activity, and of delivering down those improvements by generation to its posterity, world without end?" (p. 572).—ED.

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rationalism and simplicity. As rationalism entered deeper into the mind, it was simpler (he thought) to explain life as coming from a single living filament than to give the more “complicated” explanation that God gave being all at once to all different kinds of creatures.

There was one naturalist, Chevalier de Lamarck (author of *Philosophie zoologique*, 1809), who had a definite evolutionary theory just after this, but he had the idea that the changes necessary to account for the evolving of one species into another were due to the inheritance of acquired characteristics. This could never be proved, and has in fact been quite disproved. Hence, the idea of evolution did not take hold.

There was, however, one important geologist at this period of the early nineteenth century who gave a great impetus towards the acceptance of this idea of evolution. This was Charles Lyell, who in 1830 came up with the theory of uniformitarianism, that is, that all we see in the earth today is due not to catastrophes—to a sudden flood or something similar—but rather to the fact that the processes operating today have been operating in past ages, from the beginning of the world, as far back as we can see. Therefore, if we look at the Grand Canyon, we see that the river has been eating away the canyon, and we can calculate—by taking into account how fast the water flows, how much water there is in it now, the quality of the soil and so on—how long it must have taken to wear away the canyon. Lyell thought that if we assume that these processes were always going on at the same rate—this being very rational and given to calculation—we can come up with a uniform explanation of things.* Of course, there is no proof of this; this is merely his hypothesis.

This idea, together with the idea which was now gaining sympa-

* In 1829, Lyell wrote: “My work [*Principles of Geology*] will endeavor to establish the principle of reasoning in the science ... that no causes whatever have from the earliest time to which we can look back, to the present, ever acted, but those now acting; and they have never acted with different degrees of energy from that which they now exert” (quoted in Stephen J. Gould, *Ever Since Darwin*, p. 192).

In 1831, a year after Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* was published, Darwin read it during his voyage on the *Beagle*. After the voyage, Lyell became Darwin’s mentor,

thy—that species evolve into each other—led to another idea. If 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 earth. But again this belief (that the world must be very old) was only a presupposition; it was not proved.

Already this idea was sinking into the minds of men when in 1859 Charles Darwin came out with his book propounding the idea of natural selection. Darwin's idea was opposed to that of Lamarck, who said that the giraffe evolved because a short-necked creature stretched its neck to eat the higher leaves, its offspring had a neck an inch longer, the next one stretched a little more, and gradually it became what we know today as a giraffe. This is against all scientific laws, because such things don't happen. An acquired characteristic cannot be inherited. For example, when Chinese women had their feet bound, their daughters were always born with normal feet.

Darwin, on the other hand, came up with the idea that there were perhaps two longer-necked creatures which survived because they had longer necks; they were joined together because all the rest died off due to adverse circumstances or disaster; and their offspring did have longer necks because a change had occurred within them: what scientists today call a "mutation." This might have been a chance thing at first, but once reproduction between two such creatures has taken place, it continues down through the ages.

Of course, this is a *guess* because no one has observed such a thing

and it is clear from Darwin's later statements that Lyell's ideas made him think of applying the principles of uniformitarianism to the past history of living creatures. In his private letters, Lyell made it clear that he was intent upon abolishing what he called "Mosaic geology," i.e., interpreting the geologic strata in terms of the Genesis Flood.

Paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould, one of the twentieth century's most prominent evolutionists, has accused Lyell of deception in his promotion of uniformitarianism: "Lyell relied upon true bits of cunning to establish his uniformitarian view as the only true geology.... Lyell imposed his imagination upon the evidence" (*Ever Since Darwin*, pp. 149–50).—ED.

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happen.* But this guess struck the consciousness of the people; they were like tinder, all ready for it, and this was the spark. The idea sounded so plausible; and the idea of evolution took hold—not because it was proved.

As a matter of fact, the speculations of Darwin were based almost entirely upon his observations, not of evolution, but of *variation*. When he was traveling in the Galápagos Islands, Darwin wondered why there were thirteen different varieties of one kind of finch, and thought that it was because there was one original variety which had developed according to its environment. This is not evolution but variation. From this, he jumped to the conclusion that if you keep making small changes like that, eventually you will have an absolutely different kind of creature. The problem in trying to prove this scientifically is that no one has ever observed these larger changes; they have only observed changes *within* a kind.**

3. "Proofs" of Evolution

Let us look now at the so-called proofs of evolution to see what they are. We are not going to try to disprove evolution, but just to try to see the quality of the proofs that are used—what it is that seems convincing to people who believe in evolution.

1. There is a standard textbook of zoology used twenty years ago, *General Zoology* by Tracy I. Storer, which lists a number of proofs. The first proof in the book is called "*comparative morphology*," that is, a comparison of body structures. Man has arms, birds have wings, fish have flippers—the book has convincing diagrams which make them look

* That is, no one has observed complex new creatures or organs come into being through such means.—ED.

** This is because, as has now been shown through genetic research, the capacity for variation in a particular organism is limited by the inherent variability of that organism's gene pool. "In other words," writes Phillip E. Johnson, "the reason that dogs don't become as big as elephants, much less change into elephants, is not that we just haven't been breeding them long enough. Dogs do not have the genetic capacity for that degree of change, and they stop getting bigger when the genetic limit is reached" (*Darwin on Trial*, p. 18).—ED.

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very much alike. The birds have claws and we have fingers—the book shows how one might have developed into the other.* All creatures are shown to have a very similar structure, and the different structures are arranged according to different phyla and genera. Of course, this is not a proof. It is very logical, however, to one who believes in evolution.

On the other hand, the scientific creationists say that if you believe that God created the universe, He must have had a basic master-plan of creation; therefore, all kinds of creatures would have basic similarities. If you believe that God created all the creatures, these diagrams convince you that, yes, God created them according to a plan. If you believe that one creature evolved into the other, you look at the same diagrams and say, yes, one evolved into the other. But there is no proof either for or against evolution in this. In actual fact, people accept evolution on some other basis and then look at such diagrams, and the diagrams convince them even more.

2. Secondly, there is "*comparative physiology*." The book *General Zoology* states: "The tissue and fluids of organisms show many basic similarities in physiological and chemical properties that parallel morphological features."¹ For example,

from the hemoglobin in vertebrate blood, oxyhemoglobin crystals can be obtained; their crystalline structure ... parallels that of vertebrate classification based on body structure. Those of each species are distinct, but all from a genus have some common characteristic. Furthermore, those of all birds have certain resemblances but differ from crystals obtained from blood of mammals or reptiles.²

We can say the same thing here as we said of morphology. If you believe in creation, you say that God made similar creatures with similar blood, and there is no problem. If you believe in evolution, you say that one evolved into the other.

* In this illustration, on p. 215 of *General Zoology*, a "hypothetical intermediate" (referred to as such in the caption) is shown between the fin of a fish and the limb of an amphibian. In other words, in the absence of an intermediate structure, the author had to invent one.—ED.

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A dating system has been devised from precipitations from blood. Scientists see that the precipitations are similar in each species, that they have something in common within one genus, and that they are quite distinct in different genera: birds and monkeys, for example. From this they make certain calculations and decide how many years apart on the evolutionary scale these different creatures are. As it happens, their calculations throw everything else off. If this is to be accepted, other dating systems have to be changed; so it is still controversial. It actually proves nothing, because you can accept it as a proof either of evolution or of God's creation.

3. There is a third argument called "*comparative embryology*." Text-books like *General Zoology* used to have pictures that show an embryonic 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 the 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, but are just preparing for what is to be developed in the neck of the hu-

* That is, a proof that man evolved from aquatic animals with gills.—ED.

** Evolutionists now acknowledge that Haeckel faked his famous drawings of embryonic development in order to prove his (and Darwin's) theory. Stephen Jay Gould wrote that "Haeckel had exaggerated the similarities [between embryos] by idealizations and omissions. He also, in some cases—in a procedure that can only be called fraudulent—simply copied the same figure over and over again" (*Natural History*, March 2000, pp. 42–49). British embryologist Michael Richardson, interviewed for *The Times* (London) after he and his colleagues published comparisons between Haeckel's drawings and actual embryos, was even stronger in his criticism: "This is one of the worst cases of scientific fraud. It's shocking to find that somebody one thought was a great scientist was deliberately misleading. It makes me angry.... What he [Haeckel] did was to take a human embryo and copy it, pretending that the salamander and the pig and all the others looked the same at the same stage of development. They don't.... These are fakes" (*The Times* [Aug. 1997], pp. 14, 11). On the history of Haeckel's "biogenetic law," see Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution*, chap. 5.—ED.

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man being. So this proof has been pretty well discarded. Again, they used the argument that similarity means proof, which in fact it does not.

4. Another proof, which used to be more powerful than it is today, is that of “*vestigial*” organs. Evolutionists claimed that there are certain organs, like the appendix in man, which seem to have no function now and therefore must be left over from a previous stage of evolution, when a monkey or another of man’s ancestors used these organs. But more and more these “*vestigial*” organs are found to have a certain use; 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 that 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 kinds of strata; and the lower you get the more primitive the creatures there seem to be. Scientists date the strata by what kind of creatures are found in them.

In the nineteenth century they discovered these strata and determined which were older and which were younger; and now they have a rather elaborate system by which to tell which strata are older and which younger. However, the whole dating system is rather circular. Since often these strata are “upside down” according to the evolutionary model, they have to make certain readjustments. Just like the Ptolemaic system needed certain adjustments (epicycles had to be devised, because the planets were not going around the earth uniformly), in the same way evolutionists must make adjustments when they find that, according to evolutionary theory, the strata are “upside down.” They have to date them by the fossils in

* In 1890, evolutionists claimed there were about 180 vestigial organs in man, but virtually none are claimed now. The organs once regarded as vestigial—including, the appendix, thyroid gland, thymus, coccyx, pineal gland, ear muscles and tonsils—are now known to have useful and often essential functions. For a detailed treatment of this subject, see the book “*Vestigial Organs*” Are Fully Functional by Dr. Jerry Bergman and Dr. George Howe (1990).—ED.

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them. But how do they know that the fossils in them are in the right order? They know because somewhere else the fossils were in the "right" order according to the evolutionist model, and they got the system from that. If you look at it closely, you see that it is a circular system.* One has to have *faith* that this actually corresponds to reality.

There are a number of flaws in this. For one thing, the creatures appear quite *suddenly* in each strata, with no intermediary types leading up to them. Besides this, as research continues, they are finding animals in the strata which are not supposed to be where they are. For example, now in the Precambrian level they are finding jellyfish-like creatures [*Tribrachidium*] and all kinds of complex animals, which should not be there because they supposedly should not have evolved until some hundred million years later.** Either you have to change

* Some evolutionary paleontologists have acknowledged the problem of this circular reasoning. Dr. Ronald R. West (Assistant Professor of Paleobiology, Kansas State University) writes: "Contrary to what most scientists write, the fossil record does not support the Darwinian theory of evolution because it is this theory (there are several) which we use to interpret the fossil record. By doing so, we are guilty of circular reasoning if we then say the fossil record supports this theory" ("Paleontology and Uniformitarianism," *Compass*, vol. 45 [May 1968], p. 216). Likewise, Dr. David G. Kitsch (Head Curator, Department of Geology, Stovall Museum, University of Oklahoma) writes: "But the danger of circularity is still present. For most biologists, the strongest reason for accepting the evolutionary hypothesis is their acceptance of some theory that entails it. There is another difficulty. The temporal ordering of biological events beyond the local section may critically involve paleontological correlation, which necessarily presupposes the non-repeatability of organic events in geologic history. There are various justifications for this assumption, but for almost all contemporary paleontologists it rests upon the acceptance of the evolutionary hypothesis" ("Paleontology and Evolutionary Theory," *Evolution*, vol. 28 [Sept. 1974], p. 466).

For further discussion of the role of evolutionary theory in modern stratigraphy, see pp. 371–72, 371–72n above and pp. 530n, 866–68, 878–80 below.—Ed.

** These soft-bodied organisms found in Precambrian rocks are so unusual that some evolutionist paleontologists have concluded that they cannot be ancestral to Cambrian groups (see, for example, Stephen Jay Gould, "The Ediacaran Experiment," *Natural History*, vol. 93, no. 2 [1984], pp. 14–23; and Adolf Seilacher, "Vendobionta and Psammocorallia: Lost Constructions of Precambrian Evolution,"

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your idea of the evolution of such creatures, or you have to say that these were exceptions.*

In general, there is no proof that these strata were laid down over millions of years. The creationists who talk about the Flood of Noah say that it is equally conceivable that the Flood caused exactly the same thing. The simpler marine animals on the sea-bottoms would generally be the first to be buried, followed by fish and other organisms living nearer the ocean surface. The more advanced animals, including man, would be going on higher ground trying to get away from the Flood. There would be few remnants of man because man would be trying to get on ships and other things to get away.**

Journal of the Geological Society, London, vol. 149, no. 4 [1992], pp. 607–13). The fact that these creatures have been found in Precambrian beds actually demolishes a standard Darwinian explanation for the absence of Precambrian ancestors: that soft-bodied creatures would not fossilize. Many soft-bodied fossils do exist in Precambrian rocks, but secular scientists have found it impossible to determine their evolutionary relationship to “later” creatures. See Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, pp. 54–55, note 3.—ED.

* See John Woodmorappe, “The Fossil Record: Becoming More Random All the Time,” *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal* (now *Journal of Creation*), vol. 14, no. 1 (2000), pp. 110–16; and Brian Thomas, “Fossil Discoveries Disrupt Evolutionary Timescales,” Institute for Creation Research website, posted June 28, 2010 (<http://www.icr.org/article/5501/>).—ED.

** For further discussion of this creationist model of interpreting fossil sequence, see Andrew A. Snelling, *Earth’s Catastrophic Past*, vol. 2, pp. 727–44; idem, “Doesn’t the Order of Fossils in the Rock Record Favor Long Ages?,” in *The New Answers Book 2*, ed. Ken Ham, chap. 31, pp. 341–54; idem, “Order in the Fossil Record,” *Answers*, Jan.–March 2010, pp. 64–68; Don Batten et al., *The Creation Answers Book*, chap. 15, pp. 193–200; Ariel A. Roth, *Origins: Linking Science and Scripture*, pp. 153–77; and Gary Parker, *Creation: Facts of Life*, pp. 191–213. For a more technical treatment, see John Woodmorappe, *Studies in Flood Geology*, pp. 23–75, 177–97.

Dr. David M. Raup, a world-renowned paleontologist who served as curator and Dean of Science at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago (which houses the world’s largest collection of fossils), has acknowledged that one could fit the fossil record into a variety of models, including one of random fossil deposition. He writes: “The fossil record is amenable to a wide variety of models ranging from completely deterministic [i.e., with sequences determined by the course of evolution] to com-

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Moreover, there are only very particular conditions which cause a fossil to be left at all. A creature has to be buried suddenly in a certain kind of mud which allows it to be preserved.* The whole idea of the gradualness of these phenomena is being called more and more into question. There is now proof that oil and coal and such things can be made in an extremely short time—in a matter of days or weeks.** The formation of fossils itself is very much in favor of some catastrophe.

In the realm of paleontology, the most important argument against evolution is that it is hard to say that there has ever been found a single thing which can be called an intermediary species. In fact, Darwin was extremely worried about this. He wrote:

The number of intermediate varieties, which have formerly existed, [must] be truly enormous. Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely-graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and serious objection which can be urged against the theory. The explanation lies, as I believe, in the extreme imperfection of the geological record.⁴

Today's scientists say that the fossil record is extremely abundant: there are more fossil species known than living species. Still, there

pletely stochastic [i.e., with sequences random in occurrence]" (Raup, "Probabilistic Models in Evolutionary Paleobiology," *American Scientist*, vol. 65, no. 1 [Jan.–Feb. 1977], p. 57). Raup, an evolutionist, even notes the ironic implications of this for creationists: "In the years after Darwin, his advocates hoped to find predictable progressions. In general, these have not been found—yet the optimism has died hard, and some pure fantasy has crept into the textbooks.... One of the ironies of the evolution-creation debate is that the creationists have accepted the mistaken notion that the fossil record shows a detailed and orderly progression and they have gone to great lengths to accommodate this 'fact' in their Flood geology" (Raup, "Evolution and the Fossil Record," *Science*, vol. 213, no. 4505 [July 17, 1981], p. 289).—ED.

* I.e., to prevent decay by bacteria or assault by predators. Furthermore, this sediment must be of considerable depth to prevent the remains from being dispersed by natural processes.—ED.

** See John Morris, *The Young Earth*, pp. 106–7.—ED.

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have not been found more than a couple which might be interpreted as somehow being an intermediary species.* They will tell you about the pterodactyl—a reptile with wings—and say that this reptile is becoming a bird. But why can't you simply say this is a reptile with wings?**

There are certain fossils called “index fossils” which, when seen in a certain stratum, determine that that stratum cannot be any older or younger than a certain date because that animal supposedly became extinct at a certain period. They found a fish*** swimming around in the

* Dr. David M. Raup, the leading paleontologist mentioned above, has said as much: “[Darwin] was embarrassed by the fossil record because it didn’t look the way he predicted it would.... Well, we are now about 120 years after Darwin, and knowledge of the fossil record has been greatly expanded. We now have a quarter of a million fossil species but the situation hasn’t changed much.... Ironically, we have even fewer examples of evolutionary transition than we had in Darwin’s time. By this I mean that some of the classic cases of Darwinian change in the fossil record, such as the evolution of the horse in North America, have had to be discarded or modified as a result of more detailed information” (Raup, “Conflicts between Darwin and Paleontology,” *Field Museum of Natural History Bulletin*, no. 50 [Jan. 1979], pp. 22–25). A similar admission has been made by paleontologists Niles Eldredge and Ian Tattersall, p. 838 below.—ED.

** The animal that evolutionists have most often cited as a reptile-to-bird transition is actually not the pterodactyl but *Archaeopteryx*. Phillip E. Johnson questions whether *Archaeopteryx* “is just one of those odd variants, like the contemporary duckbilled platypus” (*Darwin on Trial*, p. 80); and even the evolutionists Stephen Jay Gould and Niles Eldredge acknowledge that “curious mosaics like *Archaeopteryx* do not count” as smooth intermediates in the fossil record (“Punctuated Equilibria: The Tempo and Mode of Evolution Reconsidered,” *Paleobiology*, vol. 3 [Spring 1977], p. 147). Michael Denton notes that “there is no question that this archaic bird is not led up by a series of transitional forms from an ordinary terrestrial reptile through a number of gliding types with increasingly developed feathers until the avian condition is reached” (*Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, p. 176). For more on *Archaeopteryx*, see pp. 833–34 below.—ED.

*** The coelacanth, which was discovered in 1938 off the coast of Madagascar. The coelacanth was thought to be closely related to the immediate ancestors of the amphibians. When it was dissected, however, “its internal organs showed no signs of being preadapted for a land environment and gave no indication of how it might be possible for a fish to become an amphibian” (Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, pp. 76–77; see also Denton, pp. 157, 179–80).—ED.

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ocean which was supposed to be extinct seventy million years ago.* Because it was thought to be an index fossil, it threw off the whole thing; and that particular layer which was dated according to this supposedly extinct fish was no longer correct.**

Why is it that certain species evolve and others stay the same as they were? There are many species found in the “ancient” strata which are exactly the same as currently living species. Evolutionists have ideas that some are “reprobate” species that do not go anywhere for some reason, and others are more progressive species since they have the energy to go forward. But that is *faith*, not proof. The fossil species which have been preserved are just as distinct from each other as are living species.

6. Then there are the “*obvious*” *family proofs* of evolution. In most textbooks of evolution, there are artistic renderings tracing the evolution of the horse and the elephant.*** There is a great deal of subjectivity involved in this, just as when artists make Neanderthal Man look bent over to resemble an ape. This is not scientific proof but imagina-

* I.e., at about the same time that dinosaurs were supposed to have become extinct.—ED.

** There are many other organisms whose fossils had been found only in strata thought to be many millions of years old, and which were thus used as index fossils—until they were found still living in modern times. See Dr. Carl Werner, *Evolution: The Grand Experiment*, vol. 2—*Living Fossils* (2009).—ED.

*** Gene Edward Veith writes in *World* magazine about the once highly touted scenario of horse evolution: “The Field Museum [of Chicago] is the source of that oft-reprinted exhibit purportedly showing the evolution of the horse. Little skeletons are followed by slightly larger and ever more equine skeletons, smoothly mutating until we have the modern-day horse. On the face of it, this seems to provide a vivid visual proof of evolution, with no missing links from the tiny ferret-like creature to the magnificent stallion, and it has been used as such in countless science textbooks. It turns out, though, that the animals whose skeletons are so arranged have nothing to do with each other. They represent different species, different branches, and overlapping times, as even evolutionists—called on the matter by critics of Darwinism—have been forced to admit. The Field Museum, to its credit, has pulled the showcase, substituting a photo of the old exhibit, along with an account of the controversy” (“Admitting Its Mistakes,” *World*, vol. 14, no. 27 [July 17, 1999]).

On the supposed lines of evolutionary descent, see also Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, pp. 182–86, 191, and Richard Milton, *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism*, pp. 102–5.—ED.

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tion based on one's philosophical idea. There is quite a bit of evidence in the fossil record which is either against evolution or shows that there is no proof one way or the other; and there are some things which are quite remarkable and are unable to be explained by evolution.

7. The final so-called proof of evolution is *mutations*. As a matter of fact, the serious scientist will tell you that all the rest is not really proof, but the one proof is mutations.

There are some evolutionists, such as Theodosius Dobzhansky, who say, "I have proved evolution because I have made a new species in the laboratory." After thirty years of working on fruit flies, which multiply very quickly, you can get the generational equivalent of several hundred thousand years of human life in a few decades. Dobzhansky experimented by irradiating fruit flies and finally came up with two which had changes, and which no longer interbred with the other type of fruit fly. This is his definition of species—that they do not interbreed; therefore, he said, "I have evolved a new species."

In the first place, this was done under extremely artificial conditions, with radiation; and you have to come up with a new theory of radioactive waves from outer space in order to justify it. Secondly, it is still a fruit fly. So it has no wings or it is purple instead of yellow; it is still a fruit fly and is basically no different from any other fruit fly; it is simply another variety. So he has actually proved nothing.*

Furthermore, mutations are 99 percent harmful. All experiments,

* Phillip E. Johnson notes: "An experimenter can greatly increase or decrease the number of bristles in a fruit fly,... or greatly reduce the wing size, etc., but the fruit flies are still fruit flies, usually maladapted ones. Some accounts credit the fruit fly experiments with producing new species, in the sense of populations which do not interbreed with each other; others dispute that the species border has in reality been crossed. Apparently the question turns on how narrowly or broadly one defines a species, especially with respect to populations that are inhibited from interbreeding but not totally incapable of it. I am not interested in pursuing the question, because what is at issue here is the capacity to create new organs and organisms by this method, not the capacity to produce separated breeding populations. In any case, there is no reason to believe that the kind of selection used in the fruit fly experiments has anything to do with how fruit flies developed in the first place" (*Darwin on Trial*, p. 175).

On the changing definition of "species" in modern biology, see p. 181n above. On Dobzhansky's experiments with fruit flies, see p. 574, 574n below.—ED.

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including those by evolutionists who have worked on them for many decades, have proved unsuccessful in showing any real change from one kind of creature to another, even the most primitive creature that reproduces itself every ten days. If anything, the evidence in that sphere is for the “fixity” of the kinds.*

But in the end, we have to say that there is no conclusive scientific proof *for* evolution; and likewise there is no conclusive proof *against* evolution, because even though it might not seem too logical or too plausible according to the evidence, still there is no proof that given a billion or trillion years a monkey might not be produced from an amoeba. Who knows? If you don’t consider for a moment what the Holy Fathers say, you might think that perhaps it’s true, especially if there is a God. If you think it happened “by chance,” you have no argument at all.** To believe it happened by chance requires much more faith than to believe in God. In any case, the evidence we have just examined will make sense to you according to what your philosophy is. The creationist philosophy requires less adjustment of the evidence, and so is more plausible.

8. There is one more thing that has been used as a kind of “proof of evolution,” and that is *radiometric dating*: radiocarbon, potassium-argon, uranium decay,*** and so on. These were all discovered in the present century, some of them just recently. It is said that these systems

* In a synopsis of his groundbreaking book *Not by Chance!* (see p. 61 above and p. 889 below), biophysicist Dr. Lee Spetner has observed: “If random mutations could account for the evolution of life, then they must have added a lot of information to the genome from the time of the first putative organism until the appearance of all present life. If this vast amount of information was built up by an accumulation of a long series of random mutations and natural selection, then each of these many billions of mutations must have, on the average, added some information. Yet after all the molecular studies that have been done on mutations, not a single one has been found that adds any genetic information! They all lose information!”—ED.

** In saying “by chance,” Fr. Seraphim means without an intentional Cause or an intelligent Designer. As mentioned above (p. 61), according to neo-Darwinian theory the fundamental mechanism of evolution is natural selection acting together with chance mutations.—ED.

*** The uranium decay system is the first radiometric method used historically, the method against which others have been calibrated, and the main support for the widely accepted idea that the earth is 4.6 billion years old.—ED.

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prove the world is really very old. One textbook says they have brought about a revolution in dating, because before we had only relative ideas of age and now we have absolute ideas. One can test a certain rock according to the potassium-argon system and come up with the idea that the rock is two billion years old; they allow a margin of error of about ten percent.

The fact of the matter is that the great age of the earth was supposedly already "known" by scientists *before* these dating systems were developed.* From their inception, the dating systems were based on the unproven uniformitarian presuppositions of Charles Lyell, which had led to the idea that the world was many millions if not billions of years old. Thus, they are not really revolutionary in dating; they simply fit into an already accepted view. If these new dating systems had said that the world was only five thousand years old, instead of three billion, scientists would not have accepted them so easily.

Secondly, there are certain basic assumptions which the radiometric dating systems must make. The systems, which trace the decay rate of radioactive minerals to "daughter" components, require: (1) that there is absolute uniformity—that the decay rate has always been the same for as long as the process has been going on; (2) that the thing being dated has been isolated, that there has been no contamination from outside sources—which they admit does happen; and finally, (3) that there was none of the daughter component in the first place, but only the "parent" component. All these things are assumptions; they are not proved.

Many people, even among non-evolutionists, will admit that carbon-14 is the most reliable of all the dating systems; even the scientific creationists admit that it has a fair accuracy back perhaps 3,000 years. It has been tested on certain articles whose age has been deter-

* Also, the approximate ages of fossil-bearing strata were worked out according to evolutionary theory long before the advent of radiometric dating. For example, in the nineteenth century Charles Lyell attempted to date the end of the Cretaceous period by reference to how long he thought it would have taken the marine molluscs of this period to have evolved into their modern descendants. Lyell estimated that the Cretaceous ended 80 million years ago—not far from today's accepted figure of 65 million (cf. Harold L. Levin, *The Earth through Time*, p. 475).—ED.

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mined, and it has proved to be not too far off in many cases.* But beyond 2,000 or 3,000 years it becomes extremely dubious. Even those who are adherents to this system admit that, because the half-life of carbon-14 is 5,700 years or so, it cannot be accurate beyond 25,000 or 35,000 years at the most.** The other systems, such as potassium-argon, uranium decay, etc., claim to measure a half-life of 1.3 and 4.5 billion years respectively; and therefore when they talk about proving the age of old rocks they are using these systems.

The carbon-14 system is used only on organic matter; and the potassium-argon and uranium systems are used on rocks.*** In the latter, one must assume that there was a uniform decay rate not just for thousands but for billions of years, as well no contamination during that time and no daughter components initially. In the potassium-argon method, for example, you must assume that it was all potassium-40 in the beginning before it decayed to argon-40.**** All these things you have to take on faith. If you try to measure anything “recent,” say only

* It should be added that, in many cases, carbon-14 dates do not agree with historically derived ages. For a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the carbon-14 dating method, see John Morris, *The Young Earth*, pp. 63–68.—ED.

** An interesting development for creationists since the late 1970s—with the development of accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS)—has been the discovery of carbon-14 in fossil-bearing parts of the geologic record with presumed ages extending to hundreds of millions of years. Since the half-life of C-14 is only about 5,700 years, any carbon-containing materials that are truly older than 100,000 years should be “carbon-14 dead,” that is, with C-14 levels below detection limits. Thus, the presence of detectable amounts of C-14 in materials of allegedly great ages raises a major challenge to the long-age assumption. See Don DeYoung, *Thousands ... Not Billions*, pp. 45–62; for a more thorough and technical treatment, see Larry Vardiman et al., *Radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth*, vol. 2, pp. 587–630 (these books are described on pp. 894–95 below). See also the comments of geologist Alexander Lalomov on the presence of C-14 in petroleum deposits presumed to be millions of years old, p. 878 below.—ED.

*** The only rocks that can normally be dated by radioisotope methods are igneous and metamorphic rocks. Since sedimentary rocks are made up of pieces of rock or other material that existed somewhere else, were eroded or dissolved, and were redeposited at their present location, no radioisotope dating of them could be considered accurate.—ED.

**** This is a big assumption. “Argon-40 is a very common isotope in the atmosphere and the rocks of the Earth’s crust. Indeed, argon is the twelfth most abundant chemical

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a million years ago, and use this system with a half-life of over a billion years, it is like trying to measure a millimeter with a yardstick: it is not very accurate even assuming it is valid. There have been numerous cases when they have applied this system to new rocks and have come up with ages of millions of years.* Therefore, the whole thing is very shaky. It requires that those millions of years exist in the first place.**

There are other kinds of tests which have been used at various times as, for example, the rate at which sodium and various chemicals are discharged into the ocean. You measure the amount of the elements that are now in the ocean, measure approximately how much of it goes into the sea every year, and from that you come up with a guess of how old the ocean must be; and probably the ocean is as old as the world. They did this with sodium and discovered the world was no more than 260 million years old.*** But it was found that you get different answers depending on which element you use: lead gives an age of 2,000

element on Earth, and more than 99 percent of it is argon-40. There is no physical or chemical way to tell whether any given sample of argon-40 is the residue of radioactive decay or was present in the rocks when they were formed" (Richard Milton, *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism*, p. 47). See pp. 862–67, 869–70 below.—ED.

* For example, igneous rocks known to have formed less than 200 years ago from the Kilauea Volcano in Hawaii were found to give potassium-argon ages of up to 21 million years, while rocks formed less than 1,000 years ago from the same volcano were dated at up to 43 million years (C. S. Noble and J. J. Naughton, "Deep Ocean Basalts: Inert Gas Content and Uncertainties in Age Dating," *Science*, vol. 162, no. 3850 [Oct. 11, 1968], p. 265; and G. B. Dalrymple and J. G. Moore, "Argon 40: Excess in Submarine Pillow Basalts from Kilauea Volcano, Hawaii," *Science*, vol. 161, no. 3846 [Sept. 13, 1968], pp. 1132–35). Fifty-year-old lava flows at Mount Ngauruhoe, New Zealand, produced model ages as high as 3.5 million years (see pp. 863–66, 870 below).—ED.

** Dr. John D. Morris explains that radiometric dating (in this case the uranium decay method) is based on "the assumption that the earth is at least old enough for the present amount of radiogenic lead [i.e., the "daughter" component] in a specimen to have been produced by present rates of uranium decay. If we knew that the earth was old, the possibility exists that radioisotope dating could help to determine exactly how old, but it is useless in testing between old earth and young earth. It assumes an old earth" (John Morris, *The Young Earth*, p. 54).—ED.

*** More recent studies have indicated a maximum age of 62 million years. See Steven A. Austin and D. Russell Humphreys, "The Sea's Missing Salt: A Dilemma for

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years, others give 8,000 years, some 18,000 years, some 11 million—there is absolutely no uniformity.⁵

There are other tests. For example, a test was done based on the rate at which helium is entering the atmosphere; this indicated that the atmosphere of the earth is but several thousand years old.^{6*}

Therefore, these tests are very unsure; and some of them make it very dubious that the world could be anything like 5 billion years old.

When it comes down to it, it depends what your faith is. Some scientists think the earth is very old because evolution is unthinkable unless the earth is very old. If you believe in evolution, you must believe the earth is very old, since it is obvious that evolution does not work on a short time scale. But as far as scientific proof goes, there is none whatsoever that the earth is 5 billion years old, or 7,500 years old—it could be either. It depends on what kind of suppositions you start with.

So evolution is not, in fact, a scientific problem; it is a *philosophical* question. We have to realize that the theory of evolution is acceptable to certain scientists, philosophers, and other people because they have been prepared for it.

4. *The Theory of Evolution Is Understandable Philosophically***

[Let us look now at the philosophical antecedents of the theory of evolution in Western society. As we have seen, the idea of evolution

Evolutionists,” *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Creationism*, vol. 2 (1991), pp. 17–33.—ED.

* Taking into account the rate of escape of helium from the atmosphere to space, more recent studies give two million years as an upper limit of the age of the atmosphere, which is still two thousand times shorter than the presumed age of the earth. In 1987, J. W. Chamberlain, a NASA astronomer and expert in planetary atmospheres, stated that this problem “will not go away, and it is unsolved” (Chamberlain and Hunten, *Theory of Planetary Atmospheres*, 2nd ed., p. 372). See Larry Vardiman, *The Age of the Earth’s Atmosphere* (1990), and John Morris, *The Young Earth* (2007), pp. 87–89.—ED.

** The following section, which provides historical background to the present discussion, has been condensed from previous lectures of Fr. Seraphim’s “Survival Course.” Some additions, indicated by brackets, have been made by the editor for the sake of clarity.—ED.

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arose at the end of the eighteenth century, which was the end of the Enlightenment and the beginning of the Revolutionary Age—our own age. The Enlightenment was characterized by a stable worldview, but, as we shall see, that stability could not last, and had to give way to the evolutionary worldview.]

One of the classical works on the Enlightenment, *The European Mind* by Paul Hazard, states:

[In this period] a moral clash took place in Europe. The interval between the Renaissance, of which it is a lineal descendant, and the French Revolution, for which it was forging the weapons, constitutes an epoch which yields to none in historical importance.⁷

The Enlightenment was the classical age of modern Europe. This period between the Renaissance and modern times was the first real attempt to make a harmonious synthesis of the new forces let loose by the Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation,* without losing the spiritual base of some kind of Christianity.

The first aspect of this new classical age, this new harmony, was *the dominance of the scientific worldview*, which took the form of the world-machine of Isaac Newton.** The age of Newton, the early Enlightenment, was a time when science and rational religion seemed to agree that all was right with the world, and the arts flourished in a way in which they were never again to flourish in the West.

* Fr. Seraphim showed in a previous lecture that, with the Schism of Western Christianity from the Orthodox Church, the Western tendency toward rationalism went unchecked. This was seen very soon after the Schism with the rise of Scholasticism.—ED.

** Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) professed belief in God as Lord and Creator of all, but, like later Enlightenment thinkers such as Thomas Jefferson, he sought to re-interpret the Christian Faith along rationalist lines. He rejected the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ's Divine nature, and did not believe in the immortality of the soul or in the existence of a personal devil and actual demons. To the end of his life he kept his heretical views hidden so as to avoid public censure. (See Stephen D. Snobelen, "Isaac Newton, Heretic," *British Journal for the History of Science*, vol. 32 [1999], pp. 381–419.)—ED.

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Before this time, the West had known several centuries of intellectual ferment and even chaos as the medieval Roman Catholic synthesis collapsed and new forces made themselves felt, leading to heated disputes and bloody warfare. The religious wars for all practical purposes ended with the close of the Thirty Years' War in 1648, which devastated Germany. Protestantism had rebelled against a complexity and corruption in Catholicism; there was a renaissance in ancient pagan thought and art; a new humanism had discovered the natural man, which pushed the idea of God ever more into the background; and, more significant for the future, science replaced theology as the standard of knowledge, and the study of nature and its laws came to seem the most important intellectual pursuit.

By the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, however, a certain equilibrium and harmony were reached in Western thought. Christianity was not, after all, overthrown by the new ideas, but rather adapted itself to the new spirit, and the difficulties and contradictions of modern naturalistic and rationalistic ideas had not yet made themselves felt. Particularly in the most enlightened part of Western Europe—England, France, and Germany—it almost seemed that a golden age had come, especially in contrast with the religious wars which had ravaged these countries up to the middle of the seventeenth century. The enlightened man believed in a God whose existence could be rationally demonstrated, was tolerant of the beliefs of others, and was convinced that everything in the world could be explained by modern science, whose latest advances he eagerly followed. The world seemed to be a vast machine in perpetual motion whose every movement could be described mathematically. It was one great harmonious universe, ordered as a uniform mathematical system. The classical work expressing these ideas, Newton's *Principia Mathematica*, was greeted with universal acclaim when it appeared in 1687, showing that the educated world at that time was thoroughly ripe for this new gospel.

In the new synthesis [of the Enlightenment], "Nature" replaced God as the central idea—even though God was not thrown out until the very end of this period. The age of the Newtonian system was also the age of the religion of Reason. Religion was now subjected to the same standard as was science: to the study of the outward world, that

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is, the standard of reason. Thus continued the process which had begun with Scholasticism soon after the Schism, when reason was placed above faith and tradition. The Enlightenment was the time when men dreamed of a religion of reasonableness.

[In terms of religion,] deism was perhaps the most typical movement of the eighteenth century. The idea of deism is that God exists, but He's quite irrelevant; that is, He creates the world and steps back. Newton himself believed that he could not calculate quite everything correctly, as for instance the paths of comets; he had the idea that the universe was like a great watch which God made and then stepped back, and that once in a while He had to step in and correct it, wind it up again. But later astronomers said that no, this is not true; one can actually have a unified theory which explains everything including all irregular movements, and so God is necessary only at the beginning. God becomes extremely vague. Thus miracles and prophecy began to be called into question, and many writers already began to say that they were just superstition. In this the French became more radical than the English....

[Looking at the Enlightenment worldview,] one can see what a harmonious idea it appeared to be—of Nature ruling over everything, the mysteries of Nature being discovered, God still being in heaven (although not doing much), and scientific knowledge progressing over the whole world.

This brings us to the second main aspect of the Enlightenment, which was *a faith in human progress*. In his book *The Making of the Modern Mind*, J. H. Randall, Jr., writes:

It was from the spread of reason and science among individual men that the great apostles of the Enlightenment hoped to bring about the ideal society of mankind. And from there they hoped for a veritable millennium. From the beginning of the [eighteenth] century onward there arose one increasing pæan of progress through education. Locke, Helvétius, and Bentham laid the foundations for this generous dream; all men, of whatever school, save only those who clung ... to the Christian doctrine of original sin, believed with all their ardent natures in the perfectibility of the human race. At last

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mankind held in its own hands the key to its destiny: it could make the future almost what it would. By destroying the foolish errors of the past and returning to a rational cultivation of nature, there were scarcely any limits to human welfare that might not be transcended.

It is difficult for us to realize how recent a thing is this faith in human progress. The ancient world seems to have had no conception of it; Greeks and Romans looked back rather to the Golden Age from which man had degenerated. The Middle Ages, of course, could brook no such thought. The Renaissance, which actually accomplished so much, could not imagine that man could ever rise again to the level of glorious antiquity; its thoughts were all on the past. Only with the growth of science in the seventeenth century could men dare to cherish such an overweening ambition.... All the scientists, from Descartes down, despised the ancients and carried the day for the faith in progress.⁸

Why did the Enlightenment worldview collapse? Its philosophy now seems hopelessly naive, its art a golden age impossible to revive.

There are several causes, and they all perhaps overlap each other. One cause is that which [the Russian philosopher] Ivan V. Kireyevsky spoke about: Once reason is exalted above faith and tradition, its critical approach produces its own destruction.* The faith in human reason that first produced Scholasticism then produced the Reformation, because reason criticized religion itself. The Reformation was a criticism of medieval Catholicism, and then a criticism of Protestantism produced the atheist/agnostic philosophers of the nineteenth century. Finally, the critical approach of reason produced the actual suicide of reason. Once one trusts reason as the standard of truth, one must follow it all the way on its destructive course. One has no argument against it.

* According to Orthodox Patristic teaching, the faculties of the human intellect have been corrupted since the fall (see pp. 472–73 above and pp. 697–99, 713–14 below); therefore, human reason must be submitted to faith and revelation and thus raised to a higher level. In a previous lecture of his “Survival Course,” Fr. Seraphim spoke about how the contrary occurred in the West after the Schism: human reason became autonomous and was exalted above Christian faith and tradition.—ED.

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Since the Middle Ages, rationalism had reduced the sphere of knowledge as it criticized every tradition and the reality of the spiritual world—everything except the outward world. With the English philosopher David Hume in the latter part of the eighteenth century, autonomous reason finally went as far as it could go: it destroyed all certain knowledge, even of the outward world. Hume said we cannot know absolute truth through our reason; we can only know what we experience.... He wrote:

Reason is a subjective faculty which has no necessary relation with the “facts” we seek to know. It is limited to tracing the relations of our ideas, which themselves are already twice removed from “reality.” And our senses are equally subjective, for they can never know the “thing in itself,” but only an image of it which has in it no element of necessity and certainty—“the contrary of every matter of fact is still possible.”⁹

This, in fact, is a deep thing in our modern thinkers of the last two hundred years: this despair at never being able to know anything, which dissolves the very fabric of life. Believe in rationalistic philosophy and start thinking things through, and you come against Hume and other thinkers like him, and suddenly the whole world dissolves. Thus, with justice one writer on the philosophy of the Enlightenment has the following thing to say about Hume:

To read Hume’s dialogues after having read with sympathetic understanding the earnest deists and optimistic philosophers of the early part of the eighteenth century, is to experience a slight chill, a feeling of apprehension. It is as if at the high noon of the Enlightenment, at the hour of the siesta when everything seems to be quiet and secure all about, one was suddenly aware of the short, sharp slipping of the foundations, a faint far-off tremor running under the solid ground of common sense.¹⁰

(This, of course, later produced the great earthquakes of our own times.)

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The experimental ideal in science had a function similar to that of reason in destroying the stability of the Enlightenment worldview. Being itself based in rationalism, this ideal is never satisfied; it never stops, but always waits to test its conclusions and come to new ones. That is why scientific ideas are constantly changing, and why the scientific synthesis at the time of Newton was overthrown.

Finally, the idea of progress helped to dissolve the old synthesis. In the Renaissance, as we have seen, the ancients were looked to as the true standard. It was thought that, if only we could get back to them and away from the Middle Ages and superstition, we would be fine. Then when the sciences became the dominant mode of thought, the scientific worldview arose. People began to see that anyone living today has more scientific knowledge than anyone living in antiquity. Now science for the first time has moved forward dramatically with its experiments, etc.

The very idea of progress—that the present is building upon the past, that the future generations will improve upon us, and that man will go constantly ahead—this obviously obliterates the idea that there is one constant standard.* One's existing standard is left to the fate of the future people who are going to improve upon it. After a while, people begin to realize that this is a philosophy of constant change, constant movement. Then the soul begins to be upset. It senses there is no peace, no security. [By the end of the eighteenth century] this idea of progress had given birth to the “evolutionary” worldview, which was quite different from the stable worldview of Newton, and which rose to the fore in the nineteenth century.

And so the eighteenth century began with great optimism, but most people did not realize that by the end of the century the most advanced philosophers would destroy any possibility of any real knowledge of the external world and any constant standard of truth. It takes time for deep ideas like that to filter down to the people, but when they do they produce disastrous effects.

These disastrous effects were seen in the French Revolution of 1789, which was the revolutionary application of rationalistic ideas to

* Just as in Hume's subjectivism, everything becomes relative.—AUTH.

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the changing of society and the whole outward order of life. The end of the eighteenth century brought with it the end of the Old Order—the end of an age of stability when human institutions and art and culture were based on at least a remnant of Christianity and Christian feeling. The outbreak of the French Revolution coincided with the end of Christian civilization. Before 1789 it was still the “Old Regime”; after that, it is the age of Revolution, our own times.

In view of all this, the theory of evolution is understandable philosophically. It arose out of *a search for a scientific law of progress to justify the modern Revolutionary advance.**

5. Scientific Faith

J. H. Randall, Jr., who is himself an evolutionist, is sophisticated enough to admit that the theory of evolution is a faith, not a proven fact:

At present biologists admit that we do not, strictly speaking, know anything about the causes of the origins of new species; we must fall back upon the scientific faith that they occur because of chemical changes in the germ plasm.¹¹ **

* As noted above, Charles Darwin's grandfather Erasmus proposed his theory of evolution in 1794—only five years after the French Revolution. Many of Erasmus Darwin's friends and associates were sympathizers with the French revolutionaries. Erasmus was a founder of the Lunar Society, which included these revolutionary sympathizers, and whose membership overlapped that of the “Revolution Society” led by the radical Charles Stanhope (3rd Earl Stanhope). Erasmus especially admired Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the chief philosopher to pave the way for the Revolution. He was also a Freemason (member of the Canongate Kilwinning Lodge No. 2, Edinburgh, Scotland), as was his son Robert, Charles Darwin's father.—ED.

** Randall wrote this in 1926, when the “germ plasm theory” of August Weismann (1834–1914) was the commonly accepted version of evolutionary theory. Since the modern evolutionary synthesis of 1937–1950 (see p. 823n below), the basic tenets of Weismann's theory have remained central to neo-Darwinism, though they are no longer expressed in the same terms.

The new synthesis notwithstanding, some thoughtful evolutionists since Randall's time have acknowledged along with him that evolution is a faith. In an

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Evolutionists must fall back upon this faith because, as they say, "Anything else is unthinkable"—the "anything else" being that God created the world 7,000 or 8,000 years ago.

Randall continues, describing the effect of evolution on the world:

In spite of these difficulties, the beliefs of men today have become thoroughly permeated with the concept of evolution. The great underlying notions and concepts that meant so much to the eighteenth century, Nature and Reason and Utility, have largely given way to a new set better expressing the ultimate intellectual ideas of the Growing World. Many social factors conspired to popularize the idea of development and its corollaries....

Perhaps the fundamental emphasis brought by Evolution into men's minds has been upon the detailed causal analysis of the specific processes of change. Instead of seeking to discover the end or purpose of the world-process as a whole, or to discern the ultimate cause or ground of all existent things—the fundamental task of earlier science and philosophy—men have come to examine just what the process is and just what it does in its parts. They have rejected the ... contemplation of a fixed and static structure of Truth, and adopted instead the aim of investigating all the little truths which experimentation can reveal. Not that Truth which is the source of all truths, lifting man's soul above all human experiences to the realm of the eternal ... but the patient, tireless, and endless search after an infinity of finite truths in our experience—this is the present-day goal of all scientific and philosophical endeavor.¹²

Randall mentions how the changing human institutions—the different ideas of morality, etc.—enforce one's faith in evolution:

introduction to a 1971 edition of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*, for example, leading British evolutionary biologist Professor L. Harrison Matthews stated: "The fact of evolution is the backbone of biology, and biology is thus in the peculiar position of being a science founded on an unproven theory—is it then a science or a faith?... Belief in evolution is thus exactly parallel to belief in special creation—both are concepts which believers know to be true but neither, up to the present, has been capable of proof."—ED.

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The conception of man as an organism reacting to and acting upon a complex environment is now basic. All ideas and institutions are today thought of as primarily social products, functioning in social groups and springing from the necessity of effecting some kind of adaptation between human nature and its environment. All the fields of human interest today have undergone this general sociologizing and psychologizing tendency; the example of religion and theology will be a sufficient illustration. Whereas the eighteenth century thought of religion and theology as a deductive and demonstrative set of propositions, men now consider religion as primarily a social product, a way of life springing from the social organization of men's religious experiences, and theology as a rationalization of certain fundamental feelings and experiences of human nature.* We no longer prove the existence of God, we talk of the "meaning of God in human experience"; we no longer demonstrate the future life, we investigate the effect of the belief in immortality upon human conduct.¹³

We see very clearly that this is the next stage beyond Hume, who destroyed all these things. You can no longer believe in those old ideas. This is the next stage, and it has nothing to do with the "scientific discovery" of evolution—it is simply what is in the air. Once reason continues its march, it will end in its own suicide.

Randall continues:

Evolution has introduced a whole new scale of values. Where for the eighteenth century the ideal was the rational, the natural, even the primitive and unspoiled, for us the desirable is identified rather with the latter end of the process of development, and our terms of praise are "modern," "up-to-date," "advanced," "progressive." Just as

* Incidentally, this feature of the modern Western *zeitgeist* has exerted an influence on certain Orthodox writers from the late nineteenth century onwards, who have tended to rationalize theological dogmas in terms of human psychology, morals, feelings, and experiences. See a critique of this theological approach in [Fr.] Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, part 2, chap. 11, "The Theology of 'Moral Monism,'" pp. 199–215.—ED.

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much as the Enlightenment we tend to identify what we approve with Nature, but for us it is not the rational order of nature, but the culmination of an evolutionary process, which we take for our leverage in existence. The eighteenth century could think of nothing worse to call a man than an “unnatural enthusiast”; we prefer to dub him an “antiquated and outgrown fossil.” That age believed a theory if it were called rational, useful, and natural; we favor it if it is “the most recent development.” We had rather be modernists and progressives than sound reasoners. It is perhaps an open question if in our new scale of values we have not lost as much as we have gained....

The idea of evolution, as it has finally come to be understood, has reinforced the humanistic and naturalistic attitude.¹⁴

6. The Conflict between Christian Truth and Evolutionary Philosophy

Now we must look to see what Orthodoxy says about the question of evolution, where it touches upon philosophy and theology.

According to the theory of evolution, man is coming up from savagery, and that is why books show Cro-Magnon Man, Neanderthal Man, etc., looking very savage, ready to beat someone over the head and take his meat. This is obviously someone's imagination; it is not based upon the shape of the fossils or anything else.

If you believe that man came up from savagery, you will interpret all past history in those terms. But according to Orthodoxy, man fell from Paradise. In evolutionary philosophy there is no room for a supernatural state of Adam. These are obviously two different systems which cannot be mixed. Those who want to keep both Christianity and evolutionism are forced to stick an artificial Paradise onto an ape-like creature. What finally happens, however, is that the people who do this (including many Catholics in recent decades) see that it results in the two systems becoming muddled, and therefore they come to accept that evolution must be right and Christianity a myth. They begin to say that the fall of man is only a fall from cosmic immaturity: that when ape-like creatures, being in a state of naïveté, evolved into

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human beings, they acquired a guilt complex—and that is the fall. Furthermore, they come to believe that originally there was not just one pair of human beings, but many. This is called polygenism—the idea that man came from many different pairs.

Once you give in to the idea that Genesis and the origin of man must be inspected rationalistically—on the basis of the naturalistic philosophy of modern thinkers—then Christianity has to be put away. Naturalistic philosophy is a realm of relative truths. In the teaching of the Holy Fathers, on the other hand, we have truths which are revealed and are given to us by God-inspired men.

In the writings of the Holy Fathers, there is a great deal of material about evolution, although one wouldn't think so. If one thinks through what evolution is philosophically and theologically and then looks up those questions in the Holy Fathers, there is a great deal of information to be found. We cannot go into much of it right now,* but we will cover a few points in order to characterize evolution according to Patristic teaching.

First, we should note that, according to the Holy Fathers, creation is something quite different from the world we see today; an entirely different principle is involved. This goes against the thinking of modern "Christian evolutionists." One such evolutionist, the noted conservative Greek theologian Panagiotis Trempelas, writes that "it appears more glorious and divine-like and more in harmony with the regular methods of God which we daily see expressed in nature to have created the various forms by evolutionary methods."¹⁵

(We will note here that oftentimes theologians are quite behind the times. In order to apologize for the scientific dogma, they often come up with things which the scientists have already left behind, because the scientists are reading the literature. The theologians often are scared that they are going to be old-fashioned or say something which is not in accordance with scientific opinion. So, often they can quite unconsciously fall for an evolutionary idea by not thinking the whole thing through, by not having a thoroughgoing

* A more thorough examination of this subject is found in parts 1 and 2 above.—ED.

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philosophy, and not being aware of scientific evidence and scientific questions.)

The idea that Panagiotis Trempelas sets forth—that creation is supposed to be in accordance with the methods which God uses all the time—has certainly nothing Patristic about it, because creation is when the world came into being. Every Holy Father who writes about this will say that those first Six Days of Creation were quite different from anything else that ever happened in the history of the world.

Even Blessed Augustine says that the creation is a mystery. He says we really can't even talk about it because it's so different from our own experience: it's beyond us. We simply cannot project present-day laws of nature back into the past and come up with an understanding of the creation. Creation is something different; it's the *beginning* of all this, and *not* the way it is now.

Some rather naive theologians try to say that the Six Days of Creation can be indefinitely long periods, that they can correspond to the different geological strata. This, of course, is nonsense because the geological strata do not have six easily identifiable layers, or five or four or anything of the sort. There are many, many layers, and they do not correspond at all to the Six Days of Creation. So that is a very weak accommodation.

As a matter of fact—even though it looks as though it might be terribly fundamentalistic to say it—the Holy Fathers do say that those Days were twenty-four hours long. St. Ephraim the Syrian even divides them into two periods, twelve hours each. St. Basil the Great says that, in the book of Genesis, the First Day is called not the “first day” but “one day” because that is the one day by which God measured out the entire rest of the creation; that is, this First Day, which he says was twenty-four hours long, is exactly the same day which is repeated in the rest of creation.*

If you think about it, there is nothing particularly difficult in that idea, since the creation of God is something totally outside our present knowledge. The accommodation of days to epochs does not make any

* See pp. 138, 442, 442n above.—ED.

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sense; you cannot fit them together. Therefore, why do you need to have a day that is a thousand or a million years long?*

The Holy Fathers say again with one voice that the creative acts of God are *instantaneous*. St. Basil the Great, St. Ambrose the Great, St. Ephraim and many others say that, when God creates, He says the word and it *is*, faster than thought.

* Some modern commentators, attempting to place the Genesis account within the evolutionary time scale, have tried unsuccessfully to attribute to the Holy Fathers the “Day-Age” theory that was first popularized in the nineteenth century: i.e., the idea that the Six Days of Creation are to be identified as vast ages. One of the passages these commentators most frequently cite in this regard is St. Basil the Great’s statement: “Whether you say ‘day’ or ‘age’ you will express the same idea” (*Hexaemeron* 2.8, FC 46, p. 35). An examination of the context of this quotation reveals that St. Basil was here speaking of the First Day of Creation as being an “image of eternity,” but not of its actually *being* eternity. In fact, it was shortly before the passage in question that St. Basil, far from equating a day with an age, laid out his teaching that the length of the First Day of Creation defined the measure of a twenty-four hour day, as Fr. Seraphim noted above.

Other attempts to attribute the modern “Day-Age” theory to the early Fathers focus on the teaching, found in various Patristic writings, that the days of the Creation Week are an image of “seven ages of the world.” The idea that world history is comprised of seven ages, corresponding to the seven days of the Creation Week, is an ancient one, found even in pre-Christian times (see Damian Thompson, *The End of Time*, pp. 7, 29, and Francis C. Haber, *The Age of the World*, pp. 19–21); but according to this idea the seven ages come *after* the Creation Week. St. Symeon the New Theologian makes this clear in his discussion of the Six Days of Creation and the Seventh Day of God’s rest: “God, Who knows everything beforehand, brought creation into being with order and harmony, and established the seven days as a type of the seven ages which would come later” (*Ethical Discourses* 1.1, PPS 14, p. 24).

Likewise, when St. John Damascene writes that “this world is said to have seven ages,” he makes clear that these “ages” refer to world history after the Creation Week, for he goes on to explain that “the seven ages of the present world include many ages in the sense of the generations of men” (*On the Orthodox Faith* 2.1, FC 37, p. 204). St. Damascene’s intended meaning becomes even more evident in a later chapter of the same work, in which he writes specifically about the Six Days of Creation, showing that he regards the length of these Days—even the first three Days, before the sun was made—as corresponding to the length of solar days, “365 and a quarter” of which make up “the twelve solar months” (*ibid.* 2.7, p. 221).

On the modern “Day-Age” theory, see pp. 663, 663–64n, 668–69, 668–69n below.—ED.

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There are many Patristic quotations about this, but we will not go into them here. None of the Holy Fathers say that the creation was slow. There are Six Days of Creation, and they describe this not as a long process. The idea that man has been evolving from something lower is totally foreign to any Holy Fathers. Rather, they say that the lower creatures came first in order to prepare the realm for the higher creature who is man, who must have his kingdom already created before he comes. St. Gregory the Theologian says that man was made by God on the Sixth Day and entered into the newly created earth.*

There is a whole Patristic teaching concerning the state of the world and of Adam before the fall. Adam was potentially immortal. As Blessed Augustine says, he was created with the possibility of being either mortal or immortal in the body, and he chose by his fall to be mortal in the body.**

The creation before the fall of Adam was in a different state. About this the Holy Fathers do not tell us very much; it is really beyond us. But certain Holy Fathers of the most contemplative sort, such as St. Gregory the Sinaite, do describe the state of Paradise. St. Gregory says that Paradise exists now in the same state it was in then, but that it has become invisible to us. It is placed between corruption and incorruption, so that when a tree falls in Paradise, it does not rot away, like we see around us, but is turned into the most fragrant substance. This is a hint which tells us that Paradise is beyond us, that some other law exists there.

We know of people who have been to Paradise, like St. Euphrosynus the Cook, who brought back three apples from there. These three apples were kept for a little while; the monks divided them up and ate them, and they were very sweet. The account says that they ate them like holy bread, which means this had something to do with *matter*, and yet it was something different from matter. Nowadays people are speculating about matter and antimatter,

* See p. 440 above.—ED.

** Blessed Augustine, *City of God* 13.1–2, NPNF 1 2, pp. 245–46. See also the citations by other Holy Fathers on pp. 692–93, 692n below.—ED.

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about what is the source or root of matter—they don't know any more. So why should we be surprised that there is a different kind of matter?*

We know also that there will be a different body, a spiritual body. Our resurrected body will be of a different kind of matter than we know now. St. Gregory the Sinaite says it will be like our present body, but without moisture and heaviness. What that is we do not know, because, unless one has seen an angel, one has not had experience of this.

We do not have to speculate about exactly what kind of matter this is, because that will be revealed to us when we need to know it, in the next life. It is enough for us to know that Paradise, and the state of the whole creation before the fall of Adam, was quite different from what we know now.

The law of nature we know now is the law of nature that God gave when Adam fell; that is, when He said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake" (Gen. 3:17) and, "In pain thou shalt bring forth children" (Gen. 3:16). Adam brought death into the world, so it is very likely that no creature died before the fall. Before the fall, Eve was a virgin. God made male and female knowing man would fall and would need this means of reproducing.

There is an element of great mystery in the state of creation before the fall of Adam, which we do not need to pry into because we are not interested in the "how" of creation. We know that there was a creation of Six Days, and some Holy Fathers say they were twenty-four-hour days. There is nothing surprising about this—that the acts were instantaneous: God wills and it is done, He speaks and it is done. Since we believe in God Who is Almighty, there is no problem whatsoever. But how it looked, how many kinds of creatures there

* Elsewhere Fr. Seraphim quoted Professor I. M. Andreyev of Holy Trinity Seminary on how matter changed at the fall: "Christianity has always viewed the present state of matter as being the result of a fall into sin.... The fall of man changed the whole of nature, including the nature of matter itself, which was *cursed* by God" (Gen. 3:17) (Andreyev, "Scientific Knowledge and Christian Truth" [in Russian], in *St. Vladimir National Calendar for 1974*, p. 69). See also Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, pp. 103–4.—ED.

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were—for example, whether there were all the different kinds of cats we see or whether there were five basic types—we don't know, and it's not important for us to know.*

To add to the theory of evolution the idea of God, as some Christian evolutionists do, gives no help at all. Or rather, it gives only one help: it gets you out of the problem of finding out where everything came from in the first place. Instead of a great tapioca bowl of cosmic jelly, you have God. That is more clear; it is a straight idea. If you have the tapioca jelly in space somewhere, it is very mystical and difficult to understand. If you are a materialist, it makes sense to you, but that is purely on the basis of your prejudices.

But apart from this—the question of where everything came from to begin with—there is no particular help to be derived from adding God to the idea of evolution. The difficulties in the theory are still there, no matter if God is behind it or not.

The modern philosophy of evolution and Orthodox teaching differ in their understanding not only of the past of man, but also of man's future. If the creation is one great filament which evolves and is transmuted into new species, then we can expect the evolution of "Superman"—which we will discuss shortly.** If, however, the creation is made up of distinct creatures, then we can expect something different. We do not have to expect creatures to change or to rise up from the lower to the higher.

Concerning the transmutability of "kinds" of creatures, the Holy Fathers have quite a definite teaching. (The Holy Fathers use the word "kinds," according to the word used in Genesis; "species" is a very arbitrary concept, and we do not have to take it as a limit.) Briefly we will quote a few Holy Fathers about this.

St. Gregory of Nyssa quotes his sister St. Macrina on her deathbed, when she was speaking about this very question, opposing the idea of

* As Phillip E. Johnson points out, the understanding of creation scientists "has always been that God created basic kinds, or types, which subsequently diversified" (*Darwin on Trial*, p. 68). On the impossibility of knowing the exact biological limits of the original created kinds, see p. 184n above.—ED.

** See the next chapter: "Christian Evolutionism."—ED.



St. Macrina the Younger
(324–379) and her brother
St. Gregory of Nyssa
(ca. 335–394).

the preexistence and transmigration of souls, which was taught by Origen. She says, in the words of St. Gregory:

Those who would have it that the soul migrates into natures divergent from each other seem 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 excluding 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,

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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.¹⁶

This shows very clearly that the Holy Fathers believed in an orderly arrangement of distinct creatures. There is not, as Erasmus Darwin would have it, a single filament which runs through all beings. Rather, there are distinct *natures*.

One of the basic works of Orthodox teaching is *The Fount of Knowledge* by St. John Damascene.* This great work of the eighth century is divided into three parts. The first part is called *On Philosophy*,** the second is *On Heresies*, which tells exactly what the heretics believed, and why we do not believe that; and the third part is *On the Orthodox Faith*, which is one of the standard books of Orthodox theology. In *On Philosophy*, St. John begins with chapters which go into such things as “what is knowledge?” “what is philosophy?” “what is being?” “what is substance?” “what is accident?” “what is species?” “what is genus?” “what are differences?” “what are properties, predicates?” The entire Orthodox philosophy he presents is based on the idea that reality is quite distinctly divided up into different beings, each of which has its own essence, its own nature, and not one of them is confused with another. St John Damascene meant that this part be read, and this philosophy understood, before one undertook to read his book of Orthodox theology, *On the Orthodox Faith*.

There are a number of basic books by Orthodox Fathers which deal with the kinds of creatures. There are books called *Hexaemeron*, which means “Six Days”: these are commentaries on the Six Days of Creation. There is one by St. Basil the Great in the East, one by St. Ambrose of Milan in the West, and other, lesser ones. There are commentaries on the book of Genesis by St. John Chrysostom and St.

* This entire work is contained in St. John of Damascus, *Writings*, FC 37.—ED.

** Or *Philosophical Chapters*.—ED.

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Ephraim the Syrian, and there are many writings on these subjects scattered in the writings of many other Holy Fathers. The recent Holy Father St. John of Kronstadt also wrote a *Hexaemeron*.

These books are very inspiring, because they are not mere abstract knowledge; they are full of practical wisdom. The Holy Fathers use a love of nature and the splendor of God's creation to give examples for us human beings. There are many quaint little examples of how we should be like the dove in its love for its mate, how we should be like the wiser animals and not be like the dumber animals, etc. In our own monastery, we can take an example from our squirrels. They are very greedy. We are not supposed to be like that; we should be gentle like the deer. We have all around us examples like that.

In his *Hexaemeron*, St. Basil quotes God's words in Genesis, "Let the earth bring forth." "This brief command," says St. Basil, "was immediately a mighty nature and an elaborate system which brought to perfection more swiftly than our thought the countless properties of plants."¹⁷ Elsewhere, about God's commandment, "Let the earth bring forth vegetation" (Gen. 1:11), St. Basil says, "At this saying all the dense woods appeared; all the trees shot up ... all the shrubs were immediately thick with leaf and bushy ... all came into existence in a moment of time."¹⁸

In the Ninth Homily of his *Hexaemeron*, St. Basil has a quote on the very question of the succession of creatures, one after the other. He quotes Genesis: "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth" (Gen 1:24). St. Basil says about this:

Consider the Word of God moving through all creation, having begun at that time, active up to the present, and efficacious until the end, even to the consummation of the world. As a ball, when pushed by someone and then meeting with a slope, is borne downward by its own shape and the inclination of the ground and does not stop before some level surface receives it, so too 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

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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 effaced, but, as if established just recently, nature, ever fresh, moves along with time.¹⁹

This is a statement not of science but of philosophy. This is the way God created creatures: each one has a certain seed, a certain nature, and transmits that to its offspring. When there is an exception, then it is a monstrosity; and this does not invalidate the principle of the natures of things, each one of which is quite distinct from the other. If we do not understand the whole variety of God's creation, that is our fault, not God's.

St. Ambrose has a number of quotations along the same line. His *Hexaemeron* is very close to St. Basil's in spirit.

We have other quotes from Holy Fathers which show us a very interesting thing: that they were combating in ancient times something akin to the modern theory of evolution. This was the heretical idea that the soul of man was created *after* his body. The same idea is taught today by "Christian evolutionists," although of course the ancient heresy is not the same as the modern theory. Those who taught the ancient heresy based their idea on a misinterpretation of Genesis 2:7: "And God formed man of the dust from the earth, and breathed into his face the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Even today, "Christian evolutionists" seize on this passage and say, "That means man was something else first, and then he became human."

In ancient times, this false idea (that the soul was created after the body) was contrasted by the opposite—and equally false—idea of the preexistence of souls. The Holy Fathers, in refuting both these theories, clearly stated that the soul and body of man were created *simultaneously*. Thus, St. John Damascene writes:

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.²⁰

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St. Gregory of Nyssa goes into greater detail in refuting both heresies. First, he describes Origen's idea of the preexistence of souls, that is, that souls "fell down" into our world:

Some of those before our time who have dealt with the question of "principles" think it right to say that souls have a previous existence as a people in a society of their own, and that among them also there are standards of vice and of virtue, and that the soul there, which abides in goodness, remains without experience of conjunction with the body; but if it does depart from its communion with good, it falls down to this lower life, and so comes to be in a body.²¹

Then St. Gregory describes the other heresy, which corresponds to the ideas of modern "Christian evolutionists":

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 argument they prove that the flesh is more noble than the soul, that which was previously formed [more noble] than that which was afterwards infused into it. For they say that the soul was made for the body, that the thing formed might not be without breath and motion, and that everything that is made for something else is surely less precious than that for which it is made.²²

Surely this theory, although it is in a different climate of ideas, is very close to the modern evolutionists' idea that matter indeed is the *first* thing, and the soul is secondary.

St. Gregory of Nyssa refutes this theory as follows:

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

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his existence is one, common to both parts, so that he should not be found to be antecedent and posterior to himself, as if the bodily element were first in point of time and the other were a later addition. For we are to say that in the power of God's foreknowledge (according to the doctrine laid down earlier in our discourse), all the fullness of human nature had preexistence. (And to this the prophetic writing bears witness, which says that God "knoweth all things before they be" [Susanna 42]). And in the creation of individuals, we are not to place the one element before the other: neither the soul before the body, nor the contrary, that man may not be at strife against himself by being divided by the difference in point of time. For as our nature is conceived as twofold, 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 completely sufficient for the whole task at once, but dividing the work, and busying itself with each of the halves in turn.²³

Of course, the whole basis for an idea of evolution is that you do *not* believe that God is powerful enough to create the whole world by His word. You are trying to help Him out by letting Nature do most of the creating.

The Holy Fathers also talk about what it means that Adam was created from the dust. Some people take the fact that St. Athanasius the Great says in his writings, "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,"* and they say, "That means Adam could have been descended from some other creature. He didn't need to be taken from literal dust. You don't have to take that part of Genesis literally." But it so happens this very point is discussed in great detail by many Holy Fathers. They come up with many different ways of expressing it, and make it absolutely clear that Adam and Cain are two different kinds of people. Cain was born of man, whereas Adam had

* On the intended meaning of this passage, see pp. 117–18, 117nn above.—ED.

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no father. Adam was created of the dust, directly by the hand of Christ. Many Fathers taught the same: St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. John Damascene, and others.*

When we come to the question of what is to be interpreted literally in Genesis and what is to be interpreted figuratively or allegorically, the Holy Fathers set forth for us very clear teachings. In his commentary, St. John Chrysostom even points out in certain passages exactly what is figurative and what is literal. He says those who try to make it all allegorical are trying to destroy our faith.**

For the most part, the truths in the book of Genesis are on two levels: there are literal truths, and there are also—many times for our spiritual benefit—spiritual truths. In fact, there are systems of three or four levels of meaning; but it is sufficient for us to know that there are many deeper meanings in the Scriptures, and very seldom is the literal meaning destroyed. Only occasionally is the meaning entirely figurative.

In general, we can characterize evolution in its philosophical aspect as a naturalistic “heresy”*** which comes closest of all to being the opposite of the ancient heresy of the preexistence of souls. The “preexistence of souls” idea is that there is one kind of soul nature which runs throughout creation, while evolution is the idea there is one kind of material being which runs throughout creation. Both of these ideas destroy the idea of the distinct natures of created beings.

The idea of evolution was a heresy that was lacking in ancient times. Usually Orthodoxy is midway between two errors: for example,

* See the passages of Sts. Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory the Theologian, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Damascene on the two different types of coming-into-being in Adam and in his offspring, pp. 144n, 430–32, 431n above. The Fathers also point out that, while their modes of coming-into-being are different, Adam and his children share a common human nature (see pp. 430–31, 431n).—ED.

** See pp. 122–24 above.—ED.

*** Fr. Seraphim was using this word loosely here. As he explains elsewhere (p. 497 above), “Evolution is not *strictly speaking* a heresy, but ... an ideology that is profoundly foreign to the teaching of Orthodox Christianity, and it involves one in so many wrong doctrines and attitudes that it would be far better if it were simply a heresy and could thus be easily identified and combatted.”—ED.

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between the doing away with the Divine Nature by Arius, and the doing away with the human nature by Monophysitism. In this particular case, the other heresy (evolution) was not incarnated in ancient times.* This heresy “waited” until modern times to make its appearance.

We will see much more clearly the philosophical side of evolutionism when we look at a few of the so-called Christian evolutionists.

* While the modern theory of evolution did not exist in ancient times, as we have seen (pp. 132n, 503–4n above) some ancient Greek thinkers set forth naturalistic theories of origins which were later refuted by Orthodox Holy Fathers. Moreover, in modern times it has been alleged that ideas of a specifically evolutionary character can be found among the sayings of pre-Socratic Greek philosophers. For example, Anaximander of Miletus (ca. 610–ca. 546 B.C.) taught that human beings originally took form from fishes or fishlike animals. As the early Christian apologist St. Hippolytus (A.D. ca. 170–236) recorded, Anaximander “asserted … that man was, originally, similar to a different animal, that is, a fish” (*The Refutation of All Heresies* 1.5, ANF 5, pp. 13–14). (See also the description of Anaximander’s teaching in *De Die Natali* 4.7, by the Roman writer Censorinus [third century A.D.].)

Another idea singled out as a forerunner of modern evolutionary theory was taught by Empedocles (ca. 490–430 B.C.). According to this Greek philosopher, body parts such as heads, arms, and eyes once existed in disembodied states, “separated by evil Strife”; but “as divinity was mingled yet more with divinity, these things kept coming together in whatever way each might chance.... Many creatures arose with double faces and double breasts, offspring of oxen with human faces, and again there sprang up children of men with oxen’s heads; creatures, too, in which were mixed some parts from men and some of the nature of women.” In Empedocles’ view, these chance combinations of body parts finally resulted in the formation in suitable human bodies, both male and female, as well as the bodies of the other creatures (Empedocles, *Fragments* 2.241–57).

While these pre-Socratic ideas do have notable similarities to today’s theory of evolution, the differences between the ancient and modern theories are just as obvious; hence Fr. Seraphim’s assertion that evolutionism is a truly modern error.—ED.

CHAPTER THREE

“Christian Evolutionism”

EDITOR’S NOTE: This chapter is a composite drawn from three sources: (1) a transcription of a lecture that Fr. Seraphim gave during his “Orthodox Survival Course” in 1975 (a continuation of the lecture contained in the preceding chapter); (2) Fr. Seraphim’s writings for a chapter on “Christian Evolutionism” that he was working on with Alexey Young; and (3) Fr. Seraphim’s miscellaneous notes on Teilhard de Chardin. While giving his lecture for the “Orthodox Survival Course,” Fr. Seraphim relied heavily on Alexey Young’s contribution to the “Christian Evolutionism” chapter. In this regard, the present chapter may be seen as a collaborative effort of Fr. Seraphim and Alexey.

1. Introduction

THERE ARE FORMS of evolutionary philosophy, most notably the Marxist,* which loudly proclaim themselves to be an all-sufficient philosophy of life, replacing the “disproved” philosophy of Christianity. The arguments of these atheist evolutionists are naive in the extreme and full of self-contradictions, and there is no need to concern ourselves with them; even many contemporary atheists (outside the Soviet orbit) realize that belief in God can neither be “proved” or

* Karl Marx was a devout Darwinist, who in *Das Kapital* called Darwin’s theory “epoch making.” He believed his reductionist, materialistic theories of the evolution of social organization to be deducible from Darwin’s discoveries, and thus proposed to dedicate his *Das Kapital* to Darwin. The funeral oration over Marx’s body, delivered by his collaborator Friedrich Engels, stressed the evolutionary basis of Communism: “Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history.”—ED.

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“disproved,” but is arrived at—or rejected—by means of a kind of evidence quite different from scientific proof.

However, there is nothing in the evolutionary view of the world in itself which requires it to be atheistic, and in fact the evolutionary theory makes much more sense to normal human reason if one has faith in at least some kind of God who puts the process in motion, guides it, etc. The philosophy of the world as a “chance” play of atoms, which themselves came into existence by “chance,” is satisfying only to the most limited and stunted minds.

The outlook of the Orthodox Christian toward evolution, therefore, is by no means the simple one of the rejection of a philosophy which is openly anti-religious or anti-Christian; the more sophisticated evolutionists are all “religious” to some degree, and there are many “Christian evolutionists,” some of them even having the reputation of being “Orthodox theologians.” Here we shall examine the views of some of these “Christian evolutionists,” all of them either claiming to be Orthodox Christians or at least having their evolutionary views recommended by Orthodox Christians. In this way we shall be able to see the evolutionary philosophy at its best, “reconciled” with Orthodox theology, as it were; and so we shall be able to begin to see whether the philosophy of evolution is really compatible with Orthodox Christianity. Here we shall not subject the views of these “Christian evolutionists” to detailed criticism, but will rather look to see what questions these views raise for Orthodox faith. These questions will then be examined in detail in our final section on the Orthodox Patristic view of creation.*

In the last few years there have been articles—small articles, and some longer ones—in the Orthodox press on this very question of evolution. The official Greek Archdiocese newspaper, *The Orthodox Observer*, printed several articles which are quite surprising in that they are so far from Orthodoxy. One of these, “Evolution: A Heresy?,” quotes the “well-known Orthodox theologian, Panagiotis Trempelas”:

It appears more glorious and divine-like and more in harmony with the regular methods of God which we daily see expressed in nature

* Parts 1 and 2 of the present book.—ED.

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to have created the various forms by evolutionary methods, Himself remaining the first and supreme creative Cause of the secondary and immediate causes to which are owed the development of the variety of species.¹

This is the view of all “Christian evolutionists,” and it raises the extremely important question of whether it is possible to attain knowledge of God’s creation by means of “the regular methods of God which we daily see expressed in nature”; this is by no means as simple a question as it might appear. And another, no less important question is raised by this view: What is it, then, that God created in the beginning (for evolution by definition is a process *in time*, and must have a beginning)? Did He create only the “cosmic blob” to which atheist philosophers reduce the origin of the evolutionary process? Or must we be totally agnostic about this “beginning,” as many atheist philosophers tell us we must be?

The article concludes:

As long as Christians recognize the creative power of God in the process of Evolution, it is both bold and hasty to call Evolution a heresy.

This conclusion reveals rather clearly the simple-minded approach to the whole question of the philosophy of evolution which prevails in “Christian evolutionists” who have not given serious and critical thought to the real problems which this philosophy presents for Orthodox faith. The whole point of this article, which seems to present the viewpoint of many of the Orthodox clergy in America (i.e., those who have been raised in an “evolutionary” atmosphere without giving much thought to it), is this: if “God” is added to the theory of evolution, it becomes acceptable to Orthodox Christians; we are only against evolution if it is atheistic. But this is surely a very naive answer to a rather complicated question! What of the philosophy of evolution itself? Is it compatible with Orthodox Christian theology and philosophy, even with “God” added to it? All of the great heretics of history have also believed in “God”: indeed, “the demons also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). More rigorous thinking than this is re-

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quired before an Orthodox Christian can know what to think of evolution.

The article in the Greek Archdiocese newspaper says that evolution cannot really be a heresy because there are many Christians who believe in it. Besides Trempelas, it refers to two other “Christian evolutionists”: Lecomte du Noüy and Teilhard de Chardin. Let us look for a moment at Lecomte du Noüy and his views.

2. Pierre Lecomte du Noüy

Pierre Lecomte du Noüy was born in Paris in 1883 and died in New York in 1947. A widely known and respected scientist, mathematician and physiologist, he wrote several books on scientific philosophy. His popular book, *Human Destiny*, sets forth his conclusions about evolution. It turns out he was not much of a Christian, for he believed that man created his own God, who is actually “a formidable fiction.”² He was very patronizing toward Christianity: he believed that Christianity has been misunderstood and misinterpreted, but it is still good for the masses, and is a useful tool for man’s continuing evolution on a moral and ethical plane. It has no objective, absolute truth. Christ is not God, but He’s perfect man. Christian tradition, however, somehow helps to educate the race toward further evolution. He says:

We are at the beginning of the transformations which will end in the superior race....³ Evolution continues in our time, *no longer on the physiological or anatomical plane, but on the spiritual and moral plane.* We are at the dawn of a new phase of evolution.⁴

It is difficult enough to find scientific evidence for physical evolution, but it is impossible to find evidence for *spiritual* evolution. Nevertheless, he believes in it. He says:

Our conclusions are identical with those expressed in the second chapter of Genesis, provided that this chapter is interpreted in a new way and considered as the highly symbolical expression of a truth

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which was intuitively perceived by its redactor or by the sages who communicated it to him.⁵

Of course, the book of Genesis was not written through mere human intuition. On the contrary, the Holy Fathers say that Moses heard from God the truths contained in it. St. John Chrysostom says the book of Genesis is a *prophecy of the past*; that is, Moses saw an exalted vision of what the world was in the beginning.

St. Isaac the Syrian describes how such a vision can take place: how the soul of a holy man can ascend 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.⁶

Monsieur Lecomte du Noüy continues:

Let us try ... to analyze the sacred text as though it were a highly symbolical and cryptic description of scientific truths.⁷

This, of course, is extremely patronizing—as if poor Moses tried his best to get a scientific picture of the way things were, and all he came up with were these images.

Lecomte du Noüy explains:

The omnipotence of God is manifested by the fact that man, descended from the marine worms, is today capable of conceiving the future existence of a superior being and of wanting to be his ancestor. Christ brings us the proof that this is not an unrealizable dream but an accessible ideal.⁸

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That is, Christ is some kind of Superman, and this is the ideal to which man is now evolving.

Lecomte du Noüy gives us a new “criterion of good and evil” which he says is “absolute with respect to Man”:

Good is that which contributes to the course of ascending evolution.... Evil is that which opposes evolution.... The respect of human personality is based on the recognition of man’s dignity as a worker for evolution, as a collaborator with God....⁹ The only goal of man should be the attainment of human dignity with all its implications.¹⁰

He goes on to say that there are “thinking men” in all religions, and therefore all religions have a “unique inspiration,” a “spiritual kinship,” an “original identity.” He says:

The unity of religions must be sought in that which is divine, namely universal, in man....¹¹ No matter what our religion, we are all like people at the bottom of a valley who seek to climb a snowy peak that dominates the others. We all have our eyes fixed on the same goal.... Unfortunately we differ on what road to take.... One day, provided they never stop ascending, they must all meet at the top of the mountain ... the road to it matters little.¹²

Of course, the top of the mountain is not the salvation of the soul; it is not the Kingdom of Heaven, but is precisely the chiliastic New Age.

It may be seen with little difficulty that Lecomte du Noüy’s views are not at all Orthodox, or even vaguely Christian, but deistic. It is useful for us to know these views, however, because, behind the surface of a religious relativism which no Orthodox Christian can accept, du Noüy’s “evolutionary” views are by no means untypical of contemporary “Christian evolutionists,” including many Orthodox Christians, and they raise philosophical and religious questions which any thinking Orthodox Christian must be prepared to answer. Let us mention here two groups of these questions.

1. As a corollary to the universality of evolution, which all evolutionists accept (everything in the world evolves, nothing is excepted

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from this natural process), he sees in the future of human evolution the coming of a “Superman” or “superior race.” Also, he speaks of the future of human evolution as on the “moral and spiritual” plane. Can an Orthodox Christian believe in such things? If not, what reason does he have to exempt man from the otherwise universal natural process?

2. The book of Genesis, Lecomte du Noüy believes, must be “interpreted in a new way,” symbolically. Specifically, the transgression of Adam was not an historical event, but simply “the symbol of the dawn of human consciousness.” Can an Orthodox Christian believe this? How does Orthodox Christianity understand the book of Genesis?

3. Fr. Anthony Kosturos

Let us return now to the views on evolution of other Orthodox Christians. In another article of the Greek Archdiocese’s *Orthodox Observer* (Feb. 6, 1974), Fr. Anthony Kosturos answers a question sent in by a reader: “If Adam and Eve were the first humans, where did their son Cain get his wife? Does our Church shed any light on this question?” Fr. Kosturos replies:

Man’s origin is too far back in history for any person or group to know how man began. [What, then, is the book of Genesis for?] Science is still groping for answers. The word Adam denotes earth. The word Eve, life. Generally, and only generally, our traditional theologians take the view that all of us stem from one male and one female.... There are others who feel that humankind appeared in clusters, a few here and a few there.... No theologian has the definitive answer on the subject of man’s origin and his development.... The dawn of human history is a mystery.¹³

According to Fr. Kosturos, it is “science” that is trying to find the answer to this question. Evidently, the Orthodox interpretation of Genesis is quite symbolical and allegorical; we do not really know whether such a person as “Adam” ever existed. This is the view presented by the official Greek Archdiocese newspaper.

And what of the Orthodox theology of Adam the first-created

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Contemporary Greek icon of the Feast of the Holy Forefathers. Front row, left to right: Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Second row: Jeremiah, Elijah, Melchizedek, Noah, and Zachariah.

Third row: Samuel, Ezekiel, Elisha, and Moses. Fourth row: Isaiah, David, Daniel, Azarias, Ananias, Misael, Aaron, and Joshua.



man? What of the Orthodox feast devoted to Adam and the other Forefathers?* What of those who have Adam for their patron Saint? Is it a matter of indifference to an Orthodox Christian that the Church, if the “Christian evolutionists” are correct, may have been mistaken all these centuries in her teaching on this subject, and that this teaching may now have to be revised if “science,” after all, does come up with the answer to the question of man’s origin? Is it an exaggeration to say that *it is extremely important for an Orthodox Christian to have a very*

* The Feast of the Holy Forefathers of the Old Testament, beginning with Adam, is celebrated by the Orthodox Church on the Sunday that falls between December 11 and 17: the second Sunday before the Feast of the Nativity of Christ. In the Orthodox service for this feast, the Church sings: “Adam the first let us revere, who was honored by the hand of the Creator and was the forefather of us all” (Canon, Canticle 1).

In addition, on Cheese-fare (Forgiveness) Sunday—the Sunday immediately preceding Great Lent—the Church commemorates the falling away of first-created Adam from the food of Paradise. On March 20 the Church commemorates Adam and Eve’s son Abel, the first martyr in the history of mankind.—ED.



Holy Forefather
Adam.
*Russian fresco of the
eighteenth century.*

clear view of the Church's teaching on the origin of man, as well as a clear understanding of the limits of science in exploring this question?

Later, in another answer to a reader's question, Fr. Kosturos says:

Perhaps there are many Adams and Eves who appeared concurrently in different areas, and then met. How man was created and how man procreated initially is a mystery. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. Our Church gives you the opportunity to ponder the subjects you mention and come up with your own speculation about them.¹⁴

(The Orthodox answer to the question, "Where did Cain get his wife?" is actually very easy: Adam and Eve had many children who are not mentioned by name in Genesis.* The account in Genesis is only the basic outline of the story.)

* On this question, see pp. 302–4, 303n, 304n above.—ED.

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Adam and Abel. *Russian icons of the seventeenth century.*

4. Karl Rahner

Fr. Kosturos mentions the possibility that “humankind appeared in clusters.”¹⁵ This is a reference to the evolutionary theory of “polygenism.” The prominent Jesuit “theologian” Karl Rahner (who until recently was rather “conservative” in his views on evolution)* has examined this question and has made a “reconciliation” of the evolu-

* Karl Rahner (1904–1984) is widely considered to have been the leading Roman Catholic theologian of the twentieth century. He served as an official papal theological expert before and during the Second Vatican Council.—ED.

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tionary view with the Christian doctrine in a way that will doubtless be imitated by “Orthodox evolutionists” in the future. (In general, the Orthodox modernists are always one step behind the Roman Catholics in this process of “updating” the Church’s views.) In an article entitled “Original Sin, Polygenism, and Freedom” (summarized in *Theology Digest*, Spring 1973), Rahner posed two questions:

1. How is evolution compatible with the doctrine of Adam’s preternatural gifts?
2. Can we seriously think that the first man to evolve was capable of the first sin...?

He answers:

Scientists prefer to conceive hominization [i.e., the making of man] as having taken place in many individuals—a “population”—rather than in a single pair.

(Actually, some scientists think that and some don’t.) He says that it is the first group of recognizable men (“original man”) that committed the first transgression:

Grace could be offered to the original group and, upon being rejected by that group’s free and yet mutually influencing choice, be lost to the whole of succeeding humanity.

Rahner then asks:

In the *first* man or group such as paleontology reveals to us, how could there have been a degree of freedom sufficiently developed to have made possible such a fateful choice as original sin? How can we attempt to reconcile the supernatural or preternatural paradise-situation of “Adam” (individual or group) with what we know of the origins of the biological, anthropological, cultural world?

He answers his question by saying:

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It is not easy to determine precisely where and when an earthly creature actually became spirit and thus free.... We may serenely reckon with the fact that original sin really happened, but at a moment which cannot be more accurately determined. It was “sometime” within a fairly long time span during which many individuals may have been already existing and capable of performing the guilty act “simultaneously.”¹⁶

In other words, the whole thing becomes very vague. Obviously the next generation of thinkers is going to do away with some of this double-talk.

5. Stephanus Trooster

A recent book by another Jesuit sums up well the attitude of the “enlightened Christian” toward Adam and Paradise. Stephanus Trooster is a Dutch Jesuit who, in his book *Evolution and the Doctrine of Original Sin*, states forthrightly: “Those who take the scientific doctrine of evolution seriously can no longer accept [the] traditional presentation.” Therefore, we must find “an interpretation that is relevant to our times.”¹⁷

“The proponents of the doctrine of evolution,” he says,

visualize mankind as a reality which, in the course of history, only very gradually matured to achieve a degree of self-realization. Its earliest emergence must be conceived of as fumbling transitional forms appearing next to extremely primitive levels of human existence. Such primitive intermediate forms of human life still must have been intimately fused with their prehistoric animal state.... But in this evolutionary theory there is no room for a “paradisaical” existence of this prehistoric man. To place an extremely gifted and highly privileged spiritual man at the beginning of human life on earth appears in complete contradiction to modern scientific thought on this matter.¹⁸

This, of course, is true. Trooster continues:

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Acceptance of the modern viewpoint, however, eliminates the possibility of accounting for the genesis of evil in the world on the basis of sin committed by the first man. After all, how could so primitive a human being have been in a position to refuse God's offer of salvation; how could such a primitive being have been capable of a breach of covenant with God?¹⁹

Since for Trooster the fall of Adam is not an historical event, he "explains" the existence of evil by giving it a new name: "the phenomenon of cosmic immaturity."²⁰ Adam actually is not one man; he is "Everyman."²¹ And the book of Genesis is

an *idealized image* ... of a world without sin; the author [of Genesis] knows quite well it does not correspond to reality.... He specifically did not mean to say that the original state of grace of Adam and Eve in all its purity was once upon a time an actual reality in the history of mankind.²²

Of course, if you believe in evolution, it makes no sense to talk about Paradise. You're only fooling yourself if you try to combine these two different forms of thinking.

Since "Christian evolutionists" have thus far been fellow travelers with other modern evolutionists, Trooster doubtless represents the "next step" in the unfolding of "enlightened Christianity." Doubtless others will soon begin to proclaim (as does the dust jacket of Trooster's book) that "Eden did not exist and evolution proves it did not," that "evolution has utterly destroyed the Eden-myth and the Adam-myth," and that therefore man has not "fallen from perfection (Eden)" nor have "pain and death come into the world as the result of sin."

"Theologians" like Trooster have drawn thoroughgoing conclusions from the message of evolution; is it possible to believe in evolution and not draw these conclusions?

6. The Roman Catholic View of Original Man

The Roman Catholics in the past have had some problems about knowing when man began, if one accepts evolution. There are different theories depending on what one thinks. I don't know what is allowed now, but in the old days you were not allowed to believe that man's soul could evolve from matter. You had to believe that man was given a soul at a particular moment. At that moment he became man, and therefore he was no longer subject to all the laws of evolution.*

Obviously, this attempt to make evolutionary theory correspond with Christian belief is another case of sticking in an “epicycle.” Such a reconciliation does not work. Either you believe in evolution—in which case man was once a very primitive creature and came from the beasts**—or else you believe that man descended from a being who

* Commenting on Pope John Paul II's statement to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on October 22, 1996 (http://www.newadvent.org/library/docs_jp02tc.htm), that “the theory of evolution is more than a hypothesis,” Cardinal Thomas J. Winning of Scotland summarized the Roman Catholic Church's position on evolution as follows: “The Church leaves the believer free to accept or reject the various evolutionary hypotheses so long as they do not insist that the mind and spirit of man simply emerged from the forces of living matter with no room for God” (*The Glasgow Herald*, Jan. 11, 1997, p. 19).

Despite the statement of Pope John Paul II and similar pronouncements by his successor, Pope Benedict XVI (see, for example, <http://cathnews.com/news/704/52.php>), there are many Roman Catholics who remain opposed to evolutionism, including accomplished scientists who have written books and papers against it. Among these are Guy Berthault (geology) and Dr. Jean de Pontcharra (physics) in France, Dr. Maciej Giertych (dendrology) in Poland, Dr. Roberto Fondi (paleontology) and Dr. Giuseppe Sermonti (genetics) in Italy, Dr. Josef Holzschuh (geophysics) in Australia, and Dr. Dean Kenyon (biophysics) and Dr. Wolfgang Smith (physics, mathematics) in the United States. In 2000, the Kolbe Center for the Study of Creation was founded in order to defend the traditional Christian teaching on creation within the Roman Catholic Church. Located in Mount Jackson, Virginia, the Center has both scientists and theological scholars on its advisory council (www.kolbecenter.org).—ED.

** This is a definite view. The textbooks on evolution will tell you that man still has the savage inside of him, and all the pictures show him evolving from a monkey-like creature.—AUTH.

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was greater than we are now, who was actually perfect man in his own way and was not subject to corruption. The Holy Fathers even tell us that Adam did not void faecal matter. He had the tree of life to eat from, but he did not eat as we do now.

In his "Conversation with Motovilov," St. Seraphim of Sarov has a whole section on the state of Adam: how he was not subject to being injured or hurt. He was quite invulnerable to the elements, he could not be drowned, etc.*

It is interesting that, even in the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas asked precisely these questions and tried to solve them: What was the state of Adam, did he void faecal matter, how was it that he could not be harmed? He has elaborate explanations. First of all, he says that Adam did void faecal matter because we cannot believe that he would be of a different material than we are now. Secondly, he was never harmed and was impervious to drowning not because it was impossible, but because God arranged to take all the boulders out of the way, never to have the stream rise too high, etc. In other words, God arranged the world correctly so that Adam walked very carefully and never happened to get hurt.

The Roman Catholics teach that the state of man in Paradise was a *supernatural* state, that man actually was just like we know him today—mortal man—but God gave him an extra gift, a special state of grace. When he fell, he simply fell away from that extra grace which had been added to him; and therefore his nature was not changed.

The Orthodox Church, on the other hand, believes that man was originally incorrupt and immortal according to his *natural condition*. Abba Dorotheus says this in the very first chapter of his discourses, where he sets forth for us the image of Adam, the first man, to give us an inspiration of what we have to strive for and get back to.** We are meant to live eternally in the body, and that is the way it was in the beginning. Only after falling did we lose that natural condition—that blessed state in which Adam was beholding God. Our very nature was

* See pp. 250, 485–86 above.—ED.

** See pp. 250–51, 472–73 above; see also p. 475.—ED.

changed and ruined at the fall.* Christ is the new Adam; and in Him we are restored to our old nature.

Some Fathers, like St. Symeon the New Theologian, discussed the question: Why, then, did we not immediately become immortal when Christ died and resurrected? St. Symeon gave this answer: “It is not fitting for the bodies of men to be clothed in the glory of the resurrection and to become incorrupt before the renewal of all creatures.”²³ The creation is waiting for us to achieve our salvation, when it too will rise up to the state in which it was before the fall—in fact, even to a higher state.

All this is filled with mysteries; it’s beyond us, but still we know enough of it from the Holy Fathers. St. Symeon has a long passage on the state of man before the fall.** The whole of creation, he says, was incorrupt just like man, and only after the fall did the creatures begin to die. When the new world comes, “the new heaven and the new earth” (Apoc. 21:1), then “the meek … will inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). What earth is that? It is this earth you see right here, only it will be burned up and restored so that all the creatures now will be incorruptible. That is what the whole creation is striving for, what the creatures are groaning after. When St. Paul said they “were subject to futility” (Rom. 8:20), this means they were subject to corruption, through the fall of man.

7. Theodosius Dobzhansky

Let us turn now to an “Orthodox Christian evolutionist” whose ideas are quite in harmony with recent Roman Catholic thought on the subject of evolution, and who brings up still other implications of the evolutionary theory which any Orthodox Christian must study closely.

* See pp. 472–97, 475n, 482n, 494–95n above and pp. 712–25, 715n, 734–41, 741n below on the change in human nature that occurred at the fall. Although the Orthodox Holy Fathers employed the word “nature” in various ways when referring to man, they shared the same teaching that man’s physical condition—including his bodily functions and processes—was fundamentally altered at the fall. This teaching, as Fr. Seraphim points out, contrasts with the Roman Catholic view that it was not man’s intrinsic bodily condition but only certain outward effects that changed at the fall.—ED.

** See pp. 463–64 above.—ED.

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Theodosius Dobzhansky is a Russian Orthodox scientist who is often quoted by other “Christian evolutionists.” A well-known geneticist, he is presently professor of genetics at the University of California at Davis. I think he still has his fruit flies, and is continuing to make experiments on them to prove evolution.* He was born in Russia in the year of the canonization of St. Theodosius of Chernigov [1900], in answer to prayer from his parents; and that is why he was called Theodosius. He came to America in the twenties and has been an American since that time.**

He has been absolutely prohibited in Soviet Russia, although the Soviet scientists know about him. Once when a film was accidentally presented at one scientific meeting in Russia which showed him in it, all the scientists cheered; but the film was withdrawn. He is considered nonexistent, a non-person because he left Russia.

Although he was baptized Orthodox, when his wife died he had her cremated, took the ashes and scattered them in the Sierras.*** As far as one can see, he never goes to church; he's quite beyond religion. Nevertheless, for his Christian evolutionist views he was granted an honorary doctorate of theology by St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary in New York in 1972. At the same time, he gave an address to the Second International Theological Conference of the Orthodox Theological Society of America, which was attended by all the renowned theologians of the various Orthodox bodies. His ideas on evolution, from what he and many official representatives of Orthodoxy in America apparently be-

* Fr. Seraphim is referring to Dobzhansky's attempt to create a new species by exposing fruit flies to radiation so as to cause mutant offspring. Ian Taylor, in his book *In the Minds of Men*, writes about such attempts: “Experimentation with fruit flies began in the 1920s with Thomas Hunt Morgan and today is still a minor ‘industry’ among researchers. The stubborn fruit fly has endured every genetic indignity possible, but so far not one has ever produced anything except another fruit fly” (*In the Minds of Men*, p. 158). See p. 528, 528n above.—Ed.

** One of the principal architects of the modern evolutionary synthesis, Dobzhansky was hailed by Stephen Jay Gould as “the greatest evolutionist of our [twentieth] century” (Gould, “Darwinism Defined,” *Discover*, Jan. 1987, p. 65). Dobzhansky reposed in 1975, the same year that Fr. Seraphim gave the lecture from which this chapter has been taken.—Ed.

*** Cremation is forbidden in the Orthodox Church.—Ed.

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lieve to be an Orthodox viewpoint, are set forth in two Orthodox periodicals, *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, and *Concern*.*

In an article which was well publicized and summarized without comment in many Orthodox periodicals in America, “Evolution: God’s Method of Creation” (*Concern*, Spring 1973), Dobzhansky says that opposition to the theory of evolution is blasphemous, since evolution is the way God brought everything into being. He says in this article:

Natural selection is a blind and a creative process.... Natural selection does *not* work according to a foreordained plan.

Dobzhansky notes the extraordinary variety of life on the earth, and calls it “whimsical and superfluous.” He says:

* Although Dobzhansky has been held up as a shining example of a “Christian evolutionist” both by Christians (Orthodox and non-Orthodox) and by atheist evolutionists (e.g., Ernst Mayr and Stephen Jay Gould) trying to placate religious believers, it is doubtful that he could be called a Christian in any real sense. His student and most prominent successor in the field of evolutionary biology, Francisco J. Ayala (a former Dominican priest), said in a eulogy: “Dobzhansky was a religious man, although he apparently rejected fundamental beliefs of traditional religion, such as the existence of a personal God and of life beyond physical death. His religiosity was grounded on the conviction that there is meaning in the universe. He saw that meaning in the fact that evolution has produced the stupendous diversity of the living world and has progressed from primitive forms of life to mankind. Dobzhansky held that, in man, biological evolution has transcended itself into the realm of self-awareness and culture. He believed that somehow mankind would eventually evolve into higher levels of harmony and creativity” (Ayala, “Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution: Theodosius Dobzhansky: 1900–1975” *The Journal of Heredity*, vol. 68 [Jan.–Feb. 1977], pp. 3, 9).

Ayala’s view that his teacher did not believe in a personal God finds corroboration in Dobzhansky’s published writings. When, for example, Dobzhansky stated that “evolution is God’s, or Nature’s, method of creation,” he was effectively indentifying his conception of God with Nature (Dobzhansky, “Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution, *American Biology Teacher*, vol. 35 [1973], p. 127). Elsewhere, Dobzhansky disavowed any claim that the “intervention of supernatural forces” was necessary in the process of human evolution (Dobzhansky, “Ethics and Values in Biological and Cultural Evolution,” *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science*, vol. 8, nos. 3–4 [Sept.–Dec. 1973], p. 263).—ED.

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What a senseless operation to fabricate a multitude of species *ex nihilo* [from nothing], and then let most of them die out! ... What is the sense of having as many as two or three million species living on earth?... Was the Creator in a jocular mood? Is the Creator ... playing practical jokes?

No, Dobzhansky reasons:

The organic diversity becomes, however, reasonable and understandable if the Creator has created the living world, not by gratuitous caprice but by evolution propelled by natural selection. It is wrong to hold creation and evolution as mutually exclusive alternatives.

What he means by this is that it actually makes no difference whether you have a God or not. He says that God makes two or three million species by means of natural selection. Is that any less silly than saying He created the original kinds all at once?

According to Dobzhansky, there is no plan to it; it is all just a blind process. For an Orthodox Christian, this raises the question: Does God begin the process of evolution, and then have no control over its end? What of God's Providence, without which not a hair of our head falls (cf. Matt. 10:29–30; Luke 12:6–7, 21:18)?

In this point of "Christian evolutionary" philosophy we see how false is the very question which the evolutionist is striving to answer. The creative activity of God is *not a sufficient explanation* for him of the diversity of the visible creation;* there must be a *better explanation*—one based on the clearly un-Christian presupposition that God is not in control of His own creation, that His Providence does not exist! The "God" of this kind of evolutionary philosophy is clearly *deistic*, and

* Elsewhere Dobzhansky applied his evolutionary worldview to the origin of man, to human nature, and to moral law: "Man has evolved from ancestors that were not human.... There is no single human nature common to everybody but as many variant human natures as there are men.... Since the creation of God's image in man is not an event but a process, the moral law is a product of an evolutionary development" (Dobzhansky, "Ethics and Values in Biological and Cultural Evolution," *Zygon*, vol. 8, nos. 3–4 [Sept.–Dec. 1973], p. 261).—ED.

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the view of this “Christian evolutionist” is not to be distinguished from that of the “semi-Christian” (or non-Christian) Lecomte du Noüy.

Dobzhansky is filled with the usual liberal Christian ideas that Genesis is symbolical, that man’s awareness is the cause of the tragic meaninglessness in the world today, and that the only escape is for man to realize that he can cooperate with the enterprise of creation, for participation in this enterprise makes mortal man part of God’s eternal design. And he says:

The most gallant and by far the most nearly successful attempt to do this—cooperate with God’s eternal design—has been that of Teilhard de Chardin.²⁴

8. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

We will now look into this last evolutionist, who is the great evolutionist “prophet” of our times: Teilhard de Chardin. He is obviously the “Christian evolutionist” of the twentieth century, widely revered by Orthodox, and considered by some “Orthodox theologians” (as we shall see) as being in the same spirit as the Orthodox Holy Fathers.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) was a French Jesuit priest, “theologian” and paleontologist, who was present at the discovery of many of the great fossil “men” of our century. He took part with two other people in the “discovery” of the fraudulent Piltdown Man.* He discovered the tooth, which was dyed. It is not known whether he had a part in the fraud. One of the other men has been accused of being the one who fabricated the Piltdown Man; and it has been hushed up that Teilhard de Chardin had anything to do with it. But it is already known from the earlier books that he discovered the tooth.**

Teilhard was present at the new discoveries of Java Man, and also at

* In 1953 it was discovered that the skull of Piltdown Man skillfully combined the jaw of an ape with the skull of a modern man. See pp. 384, 384nn, 469 above.—ED.

** Phillip E. Johnson notes: “Many persons familiar with the evidence (including [evolutionists] Stephen Jay Gould and Louis Leakey) have concluded that Teilhard was probably culpably involved in preparing the Piltdown fraud, although the evidence is not conclusive” (*Darwin on Trial*, p. 203). See pp. 384, 384nn, 469 above.—ED.

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many discoveries of Peking Man, though not at the very beginning.* He was also around when the fossils of Peking Man disappeared.** We have no fossils of Peking Man left; only drawings and models exist.

Above all, Teilhard was the one who was chiefly responsible for the *interpretation* of all these findings. As he himself said,

I had the good fortune, unusual in a scientific career, of happening to be on the spot when ... cardinal finds in the history of fossil men had come to light!²⁵

He fit these together into evidence for human evolution. We won't go into this evidence now, except to say that it is very shaky. One writer has said:

One of the prime difficulties is that really significant human fossil skulls are exceptionally rare: everything which has been found to date could be tucked away in a large coffin. All the rest must be referred to something else.²⁶

And we just don't know what the relation is of these pieces to each other.

Teilhard de Chardin was both a scientist and a "mystic."*** The surprising thing is not so much that he was a combination of these two

* On Java Man and Peking Man, see pp. 469–70, 470nn above.—ED.

** In 1941 the Peking Man fossils disappeared in China, apparently en route from Beijing to the port city of Qinhuangdao. Teilhard was in Beijing at the time.—ED.

*** In his spiritual autobiography, *The Heart of Matter*, written five years before his death, Teilhard endeavored to describe his "mystical" experience of the universe as Divine, of matter evolving into Spirit: "Crimson gleams of Matter, gliding imperceptibly into the gold of Spirit, ultimately to become transformed into the incandescence of a Universe that is Person—and through all this there blows, animating and spreading over it a fragrant balm, a zephyr of Union—and of the Feminine. The Diaphany of the Divine at the heart of a glowing Universe, as I have experienced it through contact with the Earth—the Divine radiating from the depths of a blazing Matter: this it is that I shall try to disclose and communicate in what follows."

At the end of the same work, Teilhard appended one of his early compositions, "The Spiritual Power of Matter" (dated Aug. 8, 1919), in order to "express more

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(he was a Jesuit, after all), but rather that he is quite respected both by theologians—Roman Catholic theologians, and in fact many Orthodox so-called theologians—and by scientists. His book *The Phenomenon of Man* has an introduction by Julian Huxley, the grandson of Darwin's famous contemporary and proponent, T. H. Huxley. Julian Huxley is an absolute atheist evolutionist. He cannot fully agree with Teilhard's attempt to reconcile Catholicism and evolution, but basically he agrees with his philosophy.*

sucessfully than I could today the heady emotion I experienced at that time from my contact with Matter.” Evidently dramatizing a “mystical” experience through which he had recently passed, Teilhard writes of a man “walking in the desert, followed by his companion, when the Thing swooped down on him.... The man fell prostrate to the ground; and hiding his face in his hands he waited.... Then, suddenly, a breath of scorching air passed across his forehead, broke through the barrier of his closed eyelids, and penetrated his soul. The man felt he was ceasing to be merely himself; an irresistible rapture took possession of him as though all the sap of all living things, flowing at one and the same moment into the too narrow confines of his heart, was mightily refashioning the enfeebled fibers of his being. And at the same time the anguish of some superhuman peril oppressed him, a confused feeling that the force which had swept down upon him was equivocal, turbid, the combined essence of all evil and all goodness.” The Thing spoke to him: “You called me, here I am.... You had need of me in order to grow; and I was waiting for you in order to be made holy. Always you have, without knowing it, desired me; and always I have been drawing you to me. And now I am established on you for life, or for death. You can never go back, never return to commonplace gratifications or untroubled worship. He who has once seen me can never forget me: he must either damn himself with me or save me with himself. Are you coming?” The man then asked the Thing, “O you who are divine and mighty, what is your name?” The Thing replied, “I am the fire that consumes and the water that overthrows ... power, experiment, progress—matter: all this am I.” Teilhard ends his account with the man falling to his knees and raising up a “Hymn to Matter,” in which he proclaims, “Blessed be you, mighty matter, irresistible march of evolution, reality ever new-born; you who, by constantly shattering our mental categories, force us to go ever further and further in our pursuit of the truth” (*The Heart of Matter*, pp. 16, 61, 67–69, 75).—ED.

* In his introduction to Teilhard's book, Julian Huxley wrote: “As I discovered when I first met Père Teilhard in Paris in 1946, he and I were on the same quest, and had been pursuing parallel roads ever since we were young men in our twenties” (*The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 11).—ED.

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This brings us to a subject we discussed earlier:^{*} man's expectation of the merging of religion and science. The earlier scientists in the West, at the birth of modern science during the Renaissance, were all mystically oriented. They were filled with Pythagorean philosophy. Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), who is considered a forerunner of modern science and philosophy, was a mystical pantheist. He believed that the whole world is God, that God is the soul of the world, and that "Nature is God in things." His philosophy combined religion and science in a single pantheistic vision.

In the nineteenth century, the socialist prophet Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon said the time is coming when not only will the social order be a religious institution, but science and religion will come together, and science will no longer be atheistic. Teilhard de Chardin was the kind of thinker he was looking for: one who would bring together science and religion.^{**}

Also in the nineteenth century, the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke about the very same thing. Since he faced a situation in which man's faith had been divorced from knowledge because of modern enlightenment, he called for the restoration of unity in man, and spoke of how we can get faith and knowledge back together. He says this in his essay "Nature":

The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself. He cannot be a naturalist until he satisfies all the demands of the spirit. Love is as much its demand as perception.... Deep calls unto deep. But in actual life, the marriage is

* That is, in earlier sections of Fr. Seraphim's "Survival Course," from which this discourse has been taken.—ED.

** In a letter, Fr. Seraphim commented further on how the "New Christianity" of Saint-Simon (the term comes from his 1825 book of that title) anticipated the thought of Teilhard de Chardin: "I think that S. has overestimated Teilhard's *direct* influence on the 'New Christianity.' That phrase was coined (I think) by Saint-Simon 150 years ago, and much preparation was made for it before Teilhard. Probably Teilhard appeared at just the right time to take advantage of the modernist current and make everyone start to think of it in connection with his name" (letter to Alexey Young, Feb. 15, 1974).—ED.

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not celebrated. There are innocent men who worship God after the tradition of their fathers, but their sense of duty has not yet extended to the use of all their faculties. [That is, they are dutiful to their own religion, but they do not dutifully pursue science and philosophy.] And there are patient naturalists, but they freeze their subject under the wintry light of the understanding. [That is, they divorce philosophy from religion.] ... But when a faithful thinker, resolute to detach every object from personal relations and see it in the light of thought, shall, at the same time, kindle science with the fire of the holiest affections, then will God go forth anew into the creation.²⁷

Again, Teilhard de Chardin is a “prophet” who promises to fulfill these expectations, who discovers that science and religion are once more compatible.

In *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* and *Concern*, Theodosius Dobzhansky summarizes what Teilhard de Chardin tried to do in his books. Teilhard, he says, describes three stages through which evolutionary development has passed, making use of his own technical terms:

First, there is cosmogenesis, the evolution of inanimate nature; second, biogenesis, biological evolution; and, third, noogenesis, the development of human thought.

Teilhard also speaks of “spheres”: the “biosphere,” the sphere of life; and the “noosphere,” the sphere of thought. He says the whole of the globe now is being penetrated by a web of thought which he calls the “noosphere.”*

“Up to here,” continues Dobzhansky,

* Again recalling his “mystical” experiences, Teilhard wrote of how he discovered this “noosphere”: “There was something more: around this sentient protoplasmic layer [i.e., the biosphere], an ultimate envelope was beginning to become apparent to me, taking on its own individuality and gradually detaching itself like a luminous *aura*. This envelope was not only conscious, but thinking, and from the time when I first became aware of it, it was always there that I found concentrated, in an ever more dazzling and consistent form, the essence or rather the very Soul of the Earth” (*The Heart of Matter*, p. 32).—ED.

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Teilhard stands firmly on a foundation of demonstrable facts. To complete his theology of nature he then embarks on *prophecy based on his religious faith*. He speaks of his “conviction, strictly undemonstrable to science, that the universe has a direction and that it could—indeed, if we are faithful, it should—result in some sort of irreversible perfection.”²⁸

Dobzhansky quotes with approval the following statement of Teilhard de Chardin about what evolution is:

Is evolution a theory, a system, or a hypothesis? It is much more—it is a general postulate to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must henceforward bow and which they must satisfy in order to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light which illuminates all facts, a trajectory which all lines of thought must follow—this is what evolution is.^{29*}

That is, evolution becomes in Teilhard’s thought—which many, many people follow, whether they’re Christian, atheist, or whatever—a kind of new universal revelation for mankind. And everything, including religion, must be understood in terms of evolution.**

The writings of Teilhard de Chardin are so filled with a jargon of

* Teilhard’s words “evolution is a light” were used by Dobzhansky as the basis for the title of an article he wrote in 1973, “Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution” (*American Biology Teacher*, vol. 35, pp. 125–29), in which he ridiculed creationists who did not believe in evolution and again claimed that their position leads to blasphemy. The phrase that forms the title is now commonly brought forth as a dictum by opponents of creationism, including apologists of atheism such as Richard Dawkins. Some evolutionists, however, have acknowledged that the dictum is misleading. In 2005 Dr. Marc Kirschner, head of the Department of Systems Biology at Harvard Medical School, repeated Dobzhansky’s phrase only to follow it with the frank admission that, “in fact, over the last hundred years, almost all of biology has proceeded independent of evolution, except evolutionary biology itself. Molecular biology, biochemistry, physiology, have not taken evolution into account at all” (Peter Dizikes, “Missing Links,” *The Boston Globe*, Oct. 23, 2005).—Ed.

** In another article written in 1973, Dobzhansky echoed Teilhard’s pronouncement that evolution is a postulate of universal portent: “Evolution has taken place on

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his own invention that it is easy to dismiss—or accept—him without understanding the full significance of his thought. Above all, one must understand what it is that has inspired his thought, for it is this basic inspiration and worldview that has captured the fancy of the modern intellectual, “Christian” and atheist alike, despite the difficulty of his language.

That which inspired Teilhard de Chardin, and inspires his followers, is a certain *unitary view* of reality, a joining of God and the world, of the spiritual and the secular, into a single harmonious and all-encompassing process which can not only be grasped by the modern intellectual, but can be *felt* by the sensitive soul that is in close contact with the spirit of modern life; indeed, the next step of the process can be *anticipated* by the “modern man,” and that is why Teilhard de Chardin is so readily accepted as a “prophet” even by people who do not believe in God: he announces, in a very “mystical” way, the future which every thinking man today (save for conscious Orthodox Christians) hopes for.*

There are two sides to this unitary thought of Teilhard de Chardin: the worldly (by which he attracts and holds even total atheists such as Julian Huxley), and the spiritual (by which he attracts “Christians” and gives a “religion” to unbelievers).

Teilhard’s own words leave no doubt that first and foremost he was passionately in love with the world, with the earth:

The world (its value, its infallibility, and its goodness)—that, when all is said and done, is the first, the last, and the only thing in which I believe.³⁰

Now the earth can certainly clasp me in her giant arms. She can swell me with her life, or take me back in to her dust. She can deck herself out for me with every charm, with every horror, with every

the cosmic, biological, and human levels, and these three kinds of evolution are parts of one grand process of universal evolution” (Dobzhansky, “Ethics and Values in Biological and Cultural Evolution,” *Zygon*, vol. 8, nos. 3–4, p. 276).—ED.

* That is, every person who is in the tradition of rationalism, coming from the age of the Enlightenment, and ultimately from the Middle Ages in the West after the Schism.—AUTH.

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mystery. She can intoxicate me with her perfume of tangibility and unity.³¹

In this belief he certainly leaves Orthodox Christianity behind. He believed, as one of his biographers accurately reports, that “salvation was no longer to be sought in ‘abandoning the world,’ but in active ‘participation’ in building it up.”³² He consciously abandoned the “old” forms of Christian spirituality in favor of new, secular ones. He disdained

all those goody-goody romances about the saints and the martyrs! Whatever normal child would want to spend an eternity in such boring company?³³

He believed that “what we are all more or less lacking at this moment is a new definition of holiness.”³⁴ He wrote:

The modern world is a world in evolution; hence, the static concepts of the spiritual life must be rethought and the classical teachings of Christ must be reinterpreted.³⁵

This is a reflection of the overthrowing of the old universe of Newton. Teilhard wants to put Christianity into the same category, because it also is bound up with the classical, static way of thinking. Now we have a new way of thinking; and therefore, just as we have a new physics, we must have a new Christianity.

But Teilhard’s philosophy is no mere secularization of Christianity; his most powerful and influential vision is that of the *spiritualization of the world* and worldly activity. Teilhard was not merely in love with the world and all “modern progress” and scientific development; his distinguishing mark was that he gave these things a distinctly “religious” significance. He wrote:

Then, is it really true, Lord? By helping on the spread of science and freedom, I can increase the density of the divine atmosphere, in itself as well as for me: that atmosphere in which it is always my one desire

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to be immersed? By laying hold of the earth I enable myself to cling closely to you....

May the world's energies, mastered by us, bow down before us and accept the yoke of our power.

May the race of men, grown to fuller consciousness and great strength, become grouped into rich and happy organisms in which life shall be put to better use and bring in a hundredfold return.³⁶

“God,” for him, is to be found only in the midst of the world:

I am not speaking metaphorically when I say that it is throughout the length and breadth and depth of the world in movement that man can attain the experience and vision of his god.^{37*}

* While Teilhard extolled what he called “Christian pantheism” (*Christianity and Evolution*, p. 171) (pantheism being the belief that there is no God outside the energy, matter, and laws of the existing universe), his doctrine could more precisely be termed panentheism (the belief that the Godhead includes the world as a part though not the whole of its being—see p. 60n above). That Teilhard’s teaching is better described by the latter term is clear from his statement that the world “is a part, an aspect, or a phase of God” (*Science and Christ*, p. 180). Speaking of the “part of God” which is the evolving cosmos, he says, “We must be careful to note that under this evolutive facet Omega only reveals *half of itself*” (*The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 270). Teilhard believed that, since the world is God, and since the world is evolving, God too is in a process of evolution—or at least that “part” of God which is the world. He wrote that “the World ... ‘endomorphizes’ God,” and that “God... ‘transforms himself’ as He incorporates us.... All around us and within our own selves, God is in the process of ‘changing’ ... his brilliance increases, and the glow of his coloring grows richer” (*The Heart of Matter*, pp. 52–53). Rejecting what he called “the earlier conception that God could create instantaneously,” Teilhard believed that God, as both the Evolver and the object of evolution, “cannot create except evolutively” (*Christianity and Evolution*, p. 179). As against the traditional Christian belief in an omnipotent, impassible God Who creates effortlessly, Teilhard wrote that “God’s power has not so free a field for its action as we assume: on the contrary,... it labors to produce,... it is always obliged, in the course of its creative effort, to pass through a whole series of intermediaries and to overcome a whole succession of inevitable risks” (*ibid.*, p. 31). In the evolution of human consciousness, Teilhard asserted, the new “cosmogenesis-God” he heralded would naturally replace “the Father-God of two thousand years ago” (*ibid.*, p. 202).—ED.

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In perfect harmony with his secular yet “searching” times, he declares that

the time has passed in which God could simply impose Himself on us from without, as master and owner of the estate. Henceforth the world will kneel down only before the organic center of its own evolution.³⁸

“Evolution” for him is not an idea destructive to religion, but a religious idea in itself:

Christianity and evolution are not two irreconcilable visions, but two perspectives destined to fit together and complement each other.³⁹

He ardently believed and taught that “evolution has come to infuse new blood, so to speak, into the perspectives and aspirations of Christianity.”⁴⁰ “Evolution,” indeed, according to Teilhard, is preparing the way for a new revelation of God:

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.⁴¹

Evolution, for Teilhard, is a process which involves the “building of the cosmic body of Christ in which *all things* are united with God.”⁴²

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 striking idea of the “*Transubstantiation* of the earth.”*

As our humanity assimilates the material world, and as the Host [i.e., the Roman Catholic eucharist] assimilates our humanity, the

* Teilhard wrote about this while in China in 1926–1927, after having celebrated Mass in the Gobi Desert.—AUTH.

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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.⁴³

In this process of evolution, the “Body of Christ” is being formed in the world—not the Christ of Orthodoxy, but the “universal Christ” or “Super-Christ,” which Teilhard defines as “a synthesis of Christ and the universe.”^{44*} This “evolving Christ” will bring about the unity 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.⁴⁵

Christianity for him is not the unique Truth, but only “an emerging phylum of evolution,”⁴⁶ subject to change and transformation like everything else in the “evolving” world. Like recent popes, Teilhard does not wish to “convert” the world, but only to offer the papacy as a kind of mystical center of man’s religious quest, a super-denominational Delphic Oracle. As one of his admirers summarizes his view:

If Christianity ... is indeed to be the religion of tomorrow, there is only one way in which it can hope to come up to the measure of today’s great humanitarian trends and assimilate them; and that is

* In an essay completed only a month before his death, Teilhard went so far as to make the blasphemous statement: “It is Christ, in very truth, who saves—but should we not immediately add that at the same time it is Christ who is saved by Evolution?” (“The Christic,” in *The Heart of Matter*, p. 92). Having examined this and other such proclamations by Teilhard, Dr. Wolfgang Smith has remarked in his valuable study *Teilhardism and the New Religion*: “It is literally true that Teilhard has deified evolution” (p. 219).—ED.

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through the axis, living and organic, of its Catholicism centered on Rome.⁴⁷*

At the same time that the universe is “evolving” into the “Body of Christ,” man himself is reaching the pinnacle of his evolutionary development: “Super-humanity.” Teilhard writes:

Evidence obliges our reason to accept that something greater than the man of today is in gestation upon the earth.

Like Lecomte du Noüy, and indeed all thinkers who have a “religious” view of evolution, Teilhard identifies the evolving “Super-humanity” with Christ, and conversely, interprets Christ in terms of “Super-humanity”:

In order to be able to continue to worship as before we must be able to say to ourselves, as we look at the Son of man [not *“Apparuit humanitas,”* but] *“Apparuit Super-Humanitas”* [“Super-Humanity has appeared”].⁴⁸

Here Teilhard’s thought becomes “mystical,” and he does not state clearly whether human personality is preserved in “Super-humanity,” or whether it is simply merged in the universal “Super-Christ.” In the words of his biographer:

Humanity would reach a point of development when it would detach itself altogether from the earth and unite with Omega.... “A phenomenon outwardly similar to death perhaps (writes Teilhard), but in reality, simple metamorphosis and accession to the supreme synthesis.”⁴⁹

* Teilhard himself wrote: “Everything goes to show that if Christianity is in truth destined to be, as it professes and as it is conscious of being, the religion of tomorrow, it is only through the living, organic axis of its Roman Catholicism that it can hope to measure up to the great modern humanist currents and become one with them” (*Christianity and Evolution*, p. 168).—ED.

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The “supreme synthesis,” the pinnacle of this evolutionary-spiritual process, is what Teilhard called the “Point Omega”:

One day, the Gospel tells us, the tension gradually accumulating between humanity and God will touch the limits prescribed by the possibilities of the world. And then will come the end. Then the presence of Christ, which has been silently accruing in things, will suddenly be revealed—like a flash of light from pole to pole. The spiritual atoms of the world will be borne along by a force generated by the powers of cohesion proper to the universe itself, and will occupy, whether within Christ or without Christ (but always under the influence of Christ), the happiness or pain designated for them by the living structure of the Pleroma [the fullness of things].⁵⁰

This “Point Omega” is not an otherworldly goal, but is only the end of “the movement of the universe to its evolutionary goal”; “the climax of evolution is identified ... with the risen Christ of the Parousia.”⁵¹ All men, Teilhard believes, should desire this goal, for it “is an accumulation of desires that should cause the Pleroma to burst upon us.”⁵² Again, he writes:

To cooperate in total cosmic evolution is the only deliberate act that can adequately express our devotion to an evolutive and universal Christ.⁵³

Nevertheless, with or without man’s will, the Parousia will come, for it is the culmination of a *natural* process:

The unique business of the world is the physical incorporation of the faithful in Christ, who is of God. This major task is pursued with the rigor and harmony of a natural process of evolution.⁵⁴

Of course, he is completely doing away with all ideas of Christianity which have existed hitherto. Christianity is not an individual trying to save his soul; it is everybody in the world evolving by a natural process up to the Omega Point.

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Christians should not fear the natural process of evolution, Teilhard believes, because it only brings them inexorably to God:

Though frightened for a moment by evolution, the Christian now perceives that what it offers him is nothing but a magnificent means of feeling more at one with God and of giving himself more to him. In a pluralistic and static Nature, the universal domination of Christ could, strictly speaking, still be regarded as an extrinsic and superimposed power. In a spiritually converging world, this "Christic" energy acquires an urgency and intensity of another order altogether.⁵⁵

9. The Chiliasm of Teilhard de Chardin*

There are a few more views of Teilhard de Chardin which we should mention. Interestingly, he looks for a state which will take us beyond the dead end of Communism. During World War II he wrote that Communism, fascism, and democracy were all fighting each other, and that we must go beyond that:

The great affair for modern mankind is to break its way out by forcing some threshold of greater consciousness. Whether Christians or not, the men who are animated by this conviction form a homogeneous category....

The great event which we are awaiting [is] the discovery of a synthetic act of adoration in which are allied and mutually exalted the passionate desire to conquer the World, and the passionate desire to unite ourselves with God; the vital act, specifically new, corresponding to a new age of Earth.⁵⁶

One can see that, in Teilhard, chiliasm is very strong: the New Age emerges. He writes that

in Communism, at any rate in its origins, faith in a universal human organism reached a magnificent state of exaltation.... On the other

* "Chiliasm," that is, in its more general sense. See p. 34n above.—ED.

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hand, in its unbalanced admiration for the tangible powers of the Universe, it has systematically excluded from its hopes the possibility of a spiritual metamorphosis of the Universe.⁵⁷

In other words, if you add spirituality to Communism, you have the answer.* Teilhard goes on to say:

We must unite. No more political fronts, but one great crusade for human advancement.... The democrat, the communist, and the fascist must jettison the deviations and limitations of their systems and pursue to the full the positive aspirations which inspire their enthusiasm, and then, quite naturally, the new spirit will burst the exclusive bonds which still imprison it; the three currents will find themselves merging in the conception of a common task; namely, to promote the spiritual future of the World.... The function of man is to build and direct the whole of the *Earth*.... We shall end by perceiving that the great object unconsciously pursued by science is nothing else than the discovery of God.⁵⁸

That is how mysticism comes right into the middle of science. Science nowadays is losing all of its bearings; it has become indeterminate, positing a whole universe of antimatter, which mixes scientists up.** It all ends in mysticism.

* Commenting on the Jesuit and Dominican “worker priests” who in the 1940s and 1950s joined Communist and socialist parties (and most of whom subsequently left the priesthood), Teilhard wrote: “Priest-workers find in the face of a humane Marxism not only justice but hope and a feeling for the Earth which is stronger than ‘evangelical humanity’” (quoted in Malachi Martin, *The Jesuits*, p. 290). Elsewhere he said: “Marxists *believe* in the future of mankind while present-day Christians do not” (quoted in Joseph V. Kopp, *Teilhard de Chardin: A New Synthesis of Evolution*, p. 70).—ED.

** According to naturalistic assumptions, the observable universe should have formed with equal parts of matter and antimatter; in fact, however, it is made up almost entirely of matter. In secular circles, the asymmetry of matter and antimatter is currently considered one of the greatest unsolved problems of physics. One solution

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Teilhard writes:

The only truly natural and real human Unity is the Spirit of the Earth.... A conquering passion begins to show itself, which will sweep away or transform what has hitherto been the immaturity of the Earth.... The call towards the great Union [i.e., the universal unity of mankind] whose realization is the only business now afoot in Nature....—On this hypothesis, under which (in conformity with the findings of psychoanalysis) Love is the primitive and universal psychic energy, does not everything around us become clear?... The Sense of Earth is the irresistible pressure which will come at the right moment to unite them [all humanity] in a common passion....

The Age of Nations is past. The task before us now, if we would not perish, is to shake off our ancient prejudices, and to build the Earth....

The great conflict from which we shall have emerged will merely have consolidated in the World the need to believe. Having reached a higher degree of self-mastery, the Spirit of Earth will experience an increasingly vital need to adore; *out of universal evolution God emerges* in our consciousness as greater and more necessary than ever....

At what moment in the Noosphere has there been a more urgent

was posited in 1956 by the Austrian-American physicist Maurice Goldhaber. The universe, he speculated, divided into two parts after its formation: the universe that we live in, and an alternate universe of antimatter that cannot be observed by us.

Even more radical ideas of multiple universes—also known as “the multiverse”—include the “many-worlds interpretation of quantum mechanics” (which sees all possible alternate histories and futures as real, each representing an actual “world” or “universe”) and the “string theory landscape” (which posits 10^{500} or more possible universes, each with a different collection of particles and forces). In recent years, the multiverse hypothesis has been brought up by opponents of intelligent design in order to account for the fact that our universe is marvelously fine-tuned for supporting conscious life on earth. According to the laws of chance, our universe should not be so fine-tuned, but given a large or even an infinite number of universes, the fine-tuning of our universe becomes more plausible to those who do not believe in an intelligent Creator.—ED.

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need to find a Faith, a Hope to give meaning and soul to the immense organism we are building?⁵⁹

Here he means that the whole modern revolution has lost itself. When it tries to build a new Paradise, it destroys everything; therefore, it needs to have a religious meaning added to it; and this Teilhard provides. All the things in modern life, he says, are good. Only add to them this: the idea that they are all heading for a new, spiritual kingdom.

Teilhard says further:

In us the evolution of the World towards the spirit becomes conscious....* We cannot yet understand exactly where it will lead us, but it would be absurd for us to doubt that it will lead us towards some end of supreme value.⁶⁰

In this he is trying to be a prophet, but he is not really quite sure where it is all going.

The generating principle of our unification is not finally to be found in the single contemplation of the same Truth or in the single desire awakened by *Something*, but in the single attraction exercised by the same Someone....⁶¹

* Elsewhere Teilhard writes: “Man discovers that *he is nothing else than evolution become conscious of itself*” (*The Phenomenon of Man*, p. 220). Here he acknowledges a debt to his friend Julian Huxley, who coined the expression and later used it in his famous speech at the Darwin Centennial in 1959 (see p. 23 above). The phrase would also be repeated by Teilhard’s admirer Theodosius Dobzhansky (Dobzhansky, “Changing Man,” *Science*, vol. 155, no. 3761 [Jan. 27, 1967], p. 409).

At around the same time Huxley began speaking about conscious evolution, the idea began to be propagated by others who would, along with Teilhard, come to be regarded as the forerunners of today’s New Age movement. In 1957, for example, the occultist Alice Bailey wrote that, “for the first time,” humanity is “intelligently participating in the evolutionary process” (*The Externalization of the Hierarchy*, p. 685). The idea continues to be very popular in New Age circles; see, for example, Andrew Cohen and Ken Wilber, “A Kosmic Roller-Coaster Ride,” *Enlightenment Next: The Magazine for Evolutionaries*, no. 40 (May–July, 2008).—ED.

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In spite of all the apparent improbabilities, we are inevitably approaching a new age in which the World will cast off its chains, to give itself up at last to the power of its internal affinities....

With two thousand years of mystic experience [of Roman Catholicism] behind us, the contact which we can make with the personal Focus of the Universe has gained just as much explicit richness as the contact we can make, after two thousand years of Science, with the natural spheres of the World. Regarded as a "phylum" of love, Christianity is so living that, at this very moment, we can see it undergoing an extraordinary mutation by elevating itself to a firmer consciousness of its universal value.*

Is there not now under way one further metamorphosis, the ultimate, the realization of God at the heart of the Noosphere [the mental world], the passage of the circles [i.e., of all the spheres] to their common Center, the apparition at last of the "Theosphere" [i.e., when man and the world become God]?⁶²

This longing is very deep in modern man—this is what he wants. All modern philosophical, chiliastic, socialistic systems have as their end the idea that God is thrown out, Christianity is thrown out, and the world is Divine. The world is somehow the body of God, and man wants to be a god. Now man has lost God; God is dead; the Superman wants to be born. Teilhard expresses modern man's desire for what Dostoyevsky depicted in "The Grand Inquisitor." He tries to unite the

* In a letter Teilhard spoke of his role in effecting this mutation of Christianity and thus bringing into being what he called a "new religion": "As you already know, what dominates my interest and my preoccupations is the effort to establish in myself and to spread around a new religion (you may call it a better Christianity) in which the personal God ceases to be the great neolithic proprietor of former times, in order to become the soul of the world; our religious and cultural stage calls for this" (*Letters to Leontine Zanta* [in French], p. 127). Elsewhere Teilhard exulted that this new religion "is burgeoning in the heart of modern man, from a seed sown by the idea of evolution" (*Activation of Energy*, p. 383). "A religion of the earth," he wrote, "is being mobilized against the religion of heaven" (*Science and Christ*, p. 120).—ED.

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spiritual side with the scientific side, and with a New Order which will be political. He is a prophet of Antichrist.

And so with this, the modern rationalism in our time comes to an end. Reason finally comes to doubt or even to deny itself.* Science is upset; it does not know what matter is, what it can know and what it cannot know. Relativism pervades all spheres. For some, this doubt and relativism lead to the philosophy of the absurd.**

It turns out that, having gone through all these experiments of the apostasy, *man cannot develop anything more for himself*. He tried everything and each time he was confident that he had finally found the answer. As he did this, however, he overthrew more and more from the past. And always whatever he made was overthrown by the next generation. Now he comes finally to doubting even whether the world exists, and what he is. Many people commit suicide. Many destroy. What is left for man? There is nothing left except to *wait* for a new revelation. And modern man is in such a state—having no value system and no religion of his own—that he cannot but accept whatever comes as being this new revelation.

10. Teilhardism in the Light of Orthodoxy

The evolutionary philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin is, strictly speaking, the product of the meeting of modern philosophy with Roman Catholicism. However strongly Teilhardism might seem to break with certain aspects of the ultramontane Roman Catholicism of yesterday, there can be no doubt that it is in profound harmony with and admirably expresses the deepest “spiritual” current of apostate Rome: the

* Earlier in his “Survival Course,” Fr. Seraphim spoke of how faith in “pure reason” was undermined toward the end of the Enlightenment by the philosophers David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and others. Some of this discussion has been included in the previous chapter, pp. 537–43.—ED.

** A reference to the writers Camus, Kafka, Ionesco, etc. In the early 1960s, Fr. Seraphim wrote an essay called “The Philosophy of the Absurd,” which was published posthumously in *The Orthodox Word* no. 106 (1982), and in Eugene (Fr. Seraphim) Rose, *Nihilism: The Root of the Revolution of the Modern Age* (2nd ed., 2001).—ED.

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use of “otherworldliness” for a this-worldly, chiliastic end, or as recent popes have expressed it, the “sanctification of the world.” Within Roman Catholicism, Teilhardism is a new “revelation” quite as justified and as “traditional” as the revelation of several centuries ago of the “Sacred Heart of Jesus,” which itself inspired one of Teilhard’s “mystical” meditations in a monologue with God:

Two centuries ago, your Church [Roman Catholicism] began to feel the particular power of your heart.... But now [we are becoming] aware that your main purpose in this revealing to us of your heart was to enable our love to escape from the constrictions of the too narrow, too precise, too limited image of you which we had fashioned for ourselves. What I discern in your breast is simply a furnace of fire; and the more I fix my gaze on its ardency the more it seems to me that all around it the contours of your body melt away and become enlarged beyond all measure, till the only features I can distinguish in you are those of the face of the world which has burst into flame.^{63*}

The “revelation” of the “Sacred Heart,” in this view, is thus merely a preparation for the still more universal revelation of “evolution” in our own times. Even in the nineteenth century, the “reactionary” Pope Pius IX, far from condemning the evolutionary views of St. George Jackson Mivart, conferred on him an honorary doctorate of philosophy after their publication (1876).⁶⁴

* As Teilhard noted in his spiritual autobiography, devotion to the “Sacred Heart” in fact played a “central, seminal part” in his religious formation. Recalling the days of his youth, he wrote: “The moment I saw a mysterious patch of crimson and gold delineated in the very center of the Savior’s breast, I found what I was looking for—a way of escaping from everything that so distressed me in the complicated, fragile and individual organization of the *Body* of Jesus. It was an astounding release!... The whole physical and spiritual reality of Christ was visibly condensed for me into a well-defined, compact object from which all accidental and restrictive particularity disappeared: the first approach of a Christic beyond Christ, disclosing a remarkable homology between this new ‘milieu’ and the Metallic or Mineral which, at the very same time, were dominant in me” (*The Heart of Matter*, p. 43).—ED.

In Teilhardism, Roman Catholicism has come virtually to the farthest limit of its blasphemy against the true teaching of the Church of Christ. That which is called “Christ” in this philosophy is precisely what the Orthodox Church knows as *Antichrist*: the “emerging” pseudo-Christ who promises mankind a “spiritual” *kingdom of this world*. In this philosophy the concept of and taste for the *other world*, the possession of which distinguishes Orthodox Christians from other men, is totally obliterated.

As we have seen, Teilhard is deeply in harmony *both* with the modern outlook *and* with Roman Catholicism, both of which are now “converging” in a new worldview. He rightly saw that evolution, if it is true, cannot be kept in one compartment of human thought, but profoundly affects the whole of thought. He was unconcerned to “reconcile” evolution with single points of Christian tradition and dogma, because he rightly saw that there is no possible reconciliation. Evolution is a “new revelation” to man, and it is the single most important part of the worldview of the “Third Age of the Holy Spirit” which is now coming upon the last humanity.* In the light of evolution everything must change—not just the “static worldview” of Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers, but one’s whole outlook toward life, God, and the Church.

The simple Orthodox believer who may accept the idea of “evolution” innocently because he has been told it is “scientific,” will doubtless be bewildered at the Teilhardian idea of “evolution” and wonder what possible connection it has with the “scientific facts” which “everyone accepts” today. It is time, then, finally, to approach the answers to the questions about evolution and Christian faith which this

* A reference to the chiliastic prediction of Joachim of Fiore, the twelfth-century Latin abbot who saw the two ages of the Father (Old Testament) and the Son (New Testament) giving way to a final “Third Age of the Holy Spirit.” This teaching was taken up in the thirteenth century by the Franciscan Spirituals, who viewed Joachim as their prophet. In the nineteenth century it was revived by the un-Orthodox Russian thinker Nicholas Berdyaev, who predicted the advent of “a new and final Revelation”: “the New Age of the Holy Spirit” characterized by “a new spirituality and a new mysticism; in it there will be no more of the ascetic worldview.” See Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, 5th ed., p. xxxiii.—ED.

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study of “Christian evolutionism” has raised. Not everyone who believes in some form of evolution can accept the pseudo-mysticism of Teilhard de Chardin; but this blasphemous “mysticism” is only a most logical deduction from views whose full implications are entirely unrealized by those who accept evolution “in some form.” Unknown to most Orthodox Christians, the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church have set forth a clear teaching on the nature of the world, God’s creation, and the first-created man which answers all the questions that modernist Orthodox “theologians” think are so uncertain and difficult.

Teilhard’s monstrous view of the “Omega” was made possible precisely because evolutionary philosophy first obscured the “Alpha”—that is, the Orthodox doctrine of the creation of the world and man. Orthodox theology in our own time has come so much under the influence of this modern philosophy that most “Orthodox theologians” no longer teach the Orthodox doctrine of God’s creation. The ideas expressed in the official organ of the Greek Archdiocese of America, by the “conservative” theologian Panagiotis Tremperas (if he has been correctly quoted), and by Theodosius Dobzhansky and St. Vladimir’s Theological Seminary which awarded him an honorary doctorate—are so far from Orthodoxy that one can only marvel at the “Western captivity” that has enchainèd these Orthodox Christians who are, after all, free to read the Holy Fathers and think for themselves.

Before approaching the teaching of the Holy Fathers themselves, let us examine briefly the views of “Orthodox theologians” who accept *even the teaching of Teilhard de Chardin himself as “Orthodox,”* and reveal thereby their captivation by a teaching totally and utterly foreign to Holy Orthodoxy.

11. “Orthodox” Followers of Teilhard de Chardin

Teilhardism seems to have made a deep impression on Russian Orthodox “liberals” after the translation and publication (significant in itself) of *The Phenomenon of Man* in Moscow in 1965—the first book of a “Christian thinker” (if one excepts the propaganda volume of Hewlett Johnson, the “Red Dean of Canterbury”) to be published in the

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USSR.* After this publication, Fr. John Meyendorff of the American Metropolia [Orthodox Church in America] wrote:

The Christocentric understanding of man and the world which, according to Teilhard, are in a state of constant change and striving towards the “Omega Point,” that is, the highest point of being and evolution, which is identified by the author with God Himself, connects Teilhard with the profound intuition of the Orthodox Fathers of the Church.⁶⁵

More specifically, the editor (presumably Nikita Struve) of the Orthodox periodical from Paris, *Messenger of the Russian Student Christian Movement*, writes: “It should be noted that the chief characteristic of Teilhardism is not at all the acceptance of evolution—this has been no novelty for a long time among theologians and religious philosophers. The soul of the teaching of the French thinker is a new approach to the problem of the world and creation.” In his teaching on this Teilhard “only sets forth in contemporary language the teaching of the Apostle Paul concerning nature, which is not excluded from the plan of Salvation.” When reflecting on “the Mass of the World” Teilhard’s experiences “were for him something like a cosmic Liturgy which is invisibly performed in the world. Here is the very heart of the Teilhardian proclamation, which restores to us the forgotten, immemorially Christian understanding of the universe and the Divine Incarnation. Precisely it illuminated for Teilhard the meaning of evolution as the movement of the whole cosmos toward the Kingdom of God and enabled him to overcome the negative approach to the world which is deeply rooted among Christians.”⁶⁶

* That this book was allowed to be published at the height of the Soviet regime should not be surprising in light of Teilhard’s favorable view of Marxism, noted above (p. 591n). In his book *The Jesuits* (1987), Fr. Malachi Martin comments: “For Teilhard, Marxism presented no real difficulty. ‘The Christian God on high,’ he wrote, ‘and the Marxist God of Progress are reconciled in Christ.’ Little wonder that Teilhard de Chardin is the only Roman Catholic author whose works are on public display with those of Marx and Lenin in Moscow’s Hall of Atheism” (*The Jesuits*, p. 290).—ED.

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The *Messenger's* major “Orthodox” article on Teilhardism is by a Polish Orthodox priest, Fr. George Klinger, and is entitled “Fr. Teilhard de Chardin and Orthodox Tradition.”⁶⁷ This author finds that Teilhard’s “thought so often uncovers points of approach to the best traditions of Orthodoxy,”⁶⁸ and he then proceeds to quote these “best traditions of Orthodoxy,” which are: the third-century heresy of Montanism (“the evolutionism of Eastern thought is confirmed in the study of Montanism, which saw the appearance of the three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity in three successive epochs of human history”);⁶⁹ the twelfth-century Latin monk Joachim of Fiore, with his prophecy of the coming “Third Age of the Holy Spirit” to replace the ages of the Old and New Testaments; and the whole “Paris-modern” school of Bulgakov, Berdyaev, and their followers. (He does quote a few genuine Fathers also; but not one of these quotes is supportive of the idea of evolution.) Indeed, no one will doubt that there is a kinship between these sources and evolutionary philosophy, nor that the whole charismatic-ecumenical “new Christianity” of our own times has deep roots precisely in the doctrine of evolution—but all this has nothing whatever to do with Orthodoxy and the Holy Fathers of the Church! Fr. George Klinger is so far from Orthodoxy that he does not hesitate to follow Teilhard de Chardin into his dizzying vision of the “cosmic” or “super” Christ:

Fr. Teilhard speaks much on the cosmic role of Christ, of the Divine Milieu, and very little of the Church. In this case too he “converges” with tendencies akin to him in Orthodox theology.... In Fr. Teilhard, the Church is identified with the working of Christ in the cosmos.⁷⁰

And again:

According to Fr. Teilhard, through communion of the Holy Mysteries the world being sanctified becomes the Body of Christ.... These thoughts are possibly the profoundest that have been said in recent times on the question of the central sacrament of Christianity.⁷¹

Enough has been said to show how far the “Orthodox” followers of Teilhard de Chardin wander from sound Orthodox doctrine. The Patristic illiteracy of our own day is so great that any “theologian” can say virtually anything and attribute it to a “Holy Father” and not be corrected. Particularly with regard to evolution it is allowed to make extremely vague statements which seem to give a “Patristic” justification for belief in this modern doctrine. “The Greek Fathers had a cosmic view”—which makes them akin to Teilhard de Chardin! “The Fathers didn’t interpret Genesis literally”—which means we are free to interpret it in terms of evolution! “Genesis lends itself to an evolutionary interpretation”—according to our modern wise men who do not know the Fathers! “The *Hexaemeron* of St. Basil is favorable to evolution.” One could multiply such examples of loose thinking.

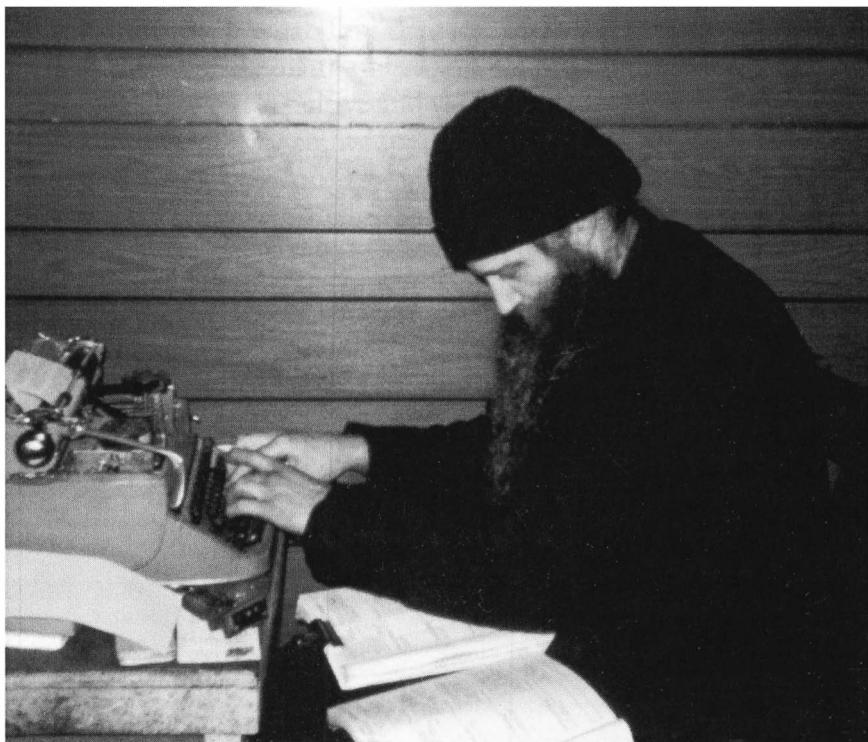
We have seen enough of these feeble speculations of modern thinkers; it is time now to go to the Fathers themselves to reveal what they have to say on the questions affecting the doctrine and philosophy of evolution. What are the spheres of science and theology? How must an Orthodox Christian interpret the book of Genesis? Who was the first man, when did he live, what was his origin and nature? What was the state of the first-created world? Who is able to see things as they were “in the beginning”? We shall seek answers to such questions not of one or two of the Fathers only, not of dubious Fathers or in obscure works, not by taking quotes out of context so as to fit preconceived notions. Rather, we shall ask the Fathers of undisputed authority in the Orthodox Church and seek to find what the “Patristic mind” is on this question. We shall investigate the commentaries on Genesis of St. John Chrysostom and St. Ephraim the Syrian; the commentaries on the Six Days of Creation by St. Basil the Great and St. Ambrose of Milan; the catechetical works of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. John Damascene; the Homilies on Adam and the first-created world by St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory the Sinaite; the theological writings of St. Macarius the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Isaac the Syrian, St. Abba Dorotheus, St. Gregory Palamas, and other Fathers; as well as the witness of the Divine services of the Orthodox Church. We shall find there much that is new to many Orthodox Christians, especially since many of these writings

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have not been translated into English. We shall find there not just many “details” concerning things which are beyond us, but a precise and coherent doctrine of that which we need to know. We shall find that the most pressing questions raised by the doctrine of evolution are answered for us. We shall find there the inspiring Patristic doctrine of the first creation, the nature of Adam, and the final state of all creatures—which makes repulsive and vain for us the “Omega” of Teilhard de Chardin and all the empty speculations of those who have not that *knowledge* of the first and last things which God has revealed to His chosen people, Orthodox Christians.

PART IV

Selections from Letters



Fr. Seraphim, during Great Lent of 1972, typing in the refectory of the
St. Herman of Alaska Monastery, Platina, California.

EDITOR'S NOTE

For a background to these excerpts from Fr. Seraphim's letters, see the editor's preface as well as the editor's note on p. 417.

Section titles have been supplied by the editor. Names have been abbreviated to protect the privacy of living persons.

According to the style adopted by Fr. Seraphim, the letters are dated with the traditional Church (Julian) calendar date followed by the civil (Gregorian) calendar date.

1. A Key in the Program of Anti-Christianity

(To Alexey Young, August 16/29, 1972)

AS FOR EVOLUTION, which is a hoax and fraud if ever anything was, we have long wanted to have a good objective exposé (because of its devastating anti-Christian religious overtones and even foundation), but have never had the chance to go into it ourselves. The statements of Fr. L. which you quoted on it sound naive in the extreme. Over a year ago Fr. N. mentioned he was going to print an article on the subject by Kalomiros, but we assumed it would be entirely critical and expose the whole fraud of it. We know of no conceivable watering down or modification of the evolutionary hypothesis which would make it acceptable either to theology, philosophy, or science—certainly the more sophisticated scientists today no longer take it seriously, and recognize that it became popular solely by an act of faith and highly rigged evidence!...

Well, I think it's beyond us to start "interfering" with other fellow Orthodox publications and argue over what we think they should print, unless of course we have some facts or information they don't have, or unless they ask us to give our opinion. But surely we have the right to accept or reject what they do say, and even (if we feel it is necessary) to publish something that contradicts it—withouth, of

course, publicly “fighting” with them. I guess we’ll just have to wait and see (there’s usually more noise than ever comes out of the “grape-vine” into public view). We can’t imagine that Fr. N. or Fr. P. would publish anything really pro-evolution, but even a vague middle-of-the-road article would be harmful enough, in view of the fact that evolution seems to be such a key in the whole program of anti-Christianity.

2. Theistic Evolution

(To Alexey Young, January 31/Feb. 13, 1973)

The “Evolution” article for the next issue looks very good to us, quite comprehensive and to the point, and also I don’t think there’s anything there to which Fr. P. and others could object (I’ll tell you what I gathered from them below). However, the article could be improved by expanding a little on several points:

1. At the bottom of p. 1 you mention *“any form of evolution,”* and at the end of that paragraph you specify: “atheistic physical evolution, or theistic physical evolution, or spiritual evolution.” However, your article is really addressed almost entirely against atheistic physical evolution and its absurdities, and some people might take advantage of this to say you haven’t really considered more “refined” forms of theistic or spiritual evolution. In such a short article, of course, it’s really not possible to go into them, but perhaps a sentence or two more on them will show *why* they can’t be taken seriously either and are not at all more “refined” (just more vague and confused!). Thus, “theistic” evolution, as I understand its motives, is the invention of men who, being *afraid* that physical evolution is really “scientific,” stick “God” in at various points of the evolutionary process in order not to be left out, in order to conform “theology” to the “latest scientific discoveries.” But this kind of artificial thinking is satisfactory only to the most vague and confused minds (for whom, apparently, “God” supplies the energy and order that can’t be explained according to the second law of thermodynamics): it is satisfactory neither for theology nor for science, but just mixes the two realms up. Again, “spiritual” evolution applies the “conclusions” of atheistic physical evolution to the “spiritual” realm

and comes to results which are monstrous and unacceptable either from the scientific or the theological point of view: a mix-up and confusion which can only disguise itself in fantastic jargon à la Teilhard de Chardin. Both these kinds of evolution depend entirely on acceptance of physical evolution, and if that is shown to be unsound they fall; and in addition they are self-contradictory because the whole purpose and intent of the theory of physical evolution is *to find an explanation of the world without God*; i.e., physical evolution is *by its nature atheistic*,* and it's only ridiculous when "theologians" run after the latest "scientific" theory in order not to be left behind by the times.

I'm afraid I'm wasting too many words on this point, but you really should tell the reader a little more as to why other kinds of evolution are no more satisfactory. The central point, of course, is that evolution is not at all "scientific," but rather a kind of science-fiction theology, the product of *faith* (an atheistic faith, but nonetheless faith). That it is still so widely accepted surely shows how low not only theology, but just plain commonsense thinking have fallen today. (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.")

2. On Piltdown, Peking, Java Man, etc. on p. 3: Isn't Piltdown the only one that is universally accepted as a fraud? If so, it would be wisest to emphasize it (citing the book on the subject, if you have the reference at hand) and mention the great doubts and questions surrounding the others, so as not to be accused of racing ahead of the evidence!

3. The second law of thermodynamics:** you'd better give a brief definition at the beginning (see also the enclosed clipping, showing what brought a Soviet scientist to God).

4. You end with a reference to the "Gospel of foolishness"—which

* On the inherent godlessness of the theory of physical evolution, see pp. 36–37n, 100–101 above.—ED.

** For a discussion of the second law of thermodynamics (the universal law of increasing entropy) relative to the theory of biological evolution, see chapters 7 and 8 of *The Mystery of Life's Origin* (1984) by Charles B. Thaxton, Walter L. Bradley and Roger L. Olsen.—ED.

might inadvertently lead some readers to think that, after all, you admit that evolution somehow makes sense and you have to be higher and more spiritual to see that it doesn't. No—on every level, from common sense on up, evolution is nonsense! Behold what real, unredeemed foolishness they fall into who try to do without God!

The article, though short, is excellent, with a very good use of quotes from Darwin and others. Probably you will get lots of discussion on this. Perhaps one day you could put together a longer, more detailed article on evolution, with ample citations both from evolutionists (showing their naive faith and sloppy thinking) and their sound critics (I recall a good book I read some years ago by an ornithologist: Douglas Dewar, *Difficulties of the Evolutionary Theory*),* to serve as a reference source for those who care to think seriously on the subject. In general, people are so afraid of challenging scientists "on their own ground" that they're afraid to get into this subject; a little clear thinking such as your short article already reveals can dispel a lot of this fear and the fog that surrounds the question....

Fr. P. mentioned a little the question of evolution (I didn't mention your forthcoming article on the subject), enough for me to see his basic attitude and fears, I think. His concern about "fundamentalism" seems to stem from a fear that the Orthodox battle against evolutionism might get bogged down *on the same level* as the "supposed" scientific arguments for it, and there thus might be endless arguments on fossil evidence, the precise meaning of the "Six Days," etc. He is of course right that our Orthodox approach to the subject should not be on the scientific but rather on the theological level; but I also gathered that he is not fully aware of the flimsiness of the "scientific" evidence in favor of evolutionism, which makes him perhaps over-cautious and fearful on the whole subject. Yes, we should keep our basic approach high and theological; but we can also blow up that "scientific" evidence which

* Douglas Dewar was a leader of the Evolution Protest Movement that began in England in 1932. His valuable contributions, contained in his books *Difficulties of the Evolutionary Theory* (1931) and *More Difficulties of the Evolutionary Theory* (1938), continue to be cited. His description of the hypothetical evolution of the whale is quoted in Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (1986), pp. 217–18.—ED.

just doesn't make sense and which is really the result of blind prejudice and false theologizing in the guise of science.

3. A Rival Thought-Pattern to Orthodoxy

(To Fr. N., April 5/18, 1973)

The most important point, regarding evolution:

a. First of all, let us shock you right off by saying that we read the article before publication,* made many suggestions (which were all incorporated into the article), and fully approved it; and now rereading it after receiving your letter we find nothing seriously wrong with it—except that it is much too short and concise. Of course, now with your letter it becomes obvious also that the approach was perhaps too abrupt and direct for many Orthodox readers today, and more preparation of them should perhaps be made.

b. Therefore, there is obviously some deep disagreement between your views and ours on this subject. I have always regarded evolution, in all its ramifications, as an important part of the “American modern” intellectual baggage which I left behind when I became Orthodox, and it never before 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 modern outlook.**

* The article on evolution by Alexey Young, which Fr. Seraphim speaks about in the previous letter.—ED.

** As noted above, one of the fathers of modern evolutionary theory, Erasmus Darwin, was a Freemason, as was Charles Darwin's “bulldog,” T. H. Huxley (see Leonard Huxley, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, vol. 3, p. 92). Nevertheless, Fr. Seraphim is referring here not necessarily to a *formal* connection between Freemasonry and ecumenism on the one hand and evolutionism on the other, but rather to the “universalist” character that these philosophies share (see his notes on this subject on pp. 654–55 below).

Also, as mentioned above (pp. 35–36), certain evolutionist thinkers and Christian ecumenists share a chiliastic belief that, in the inevitable course of progress, all

We were frankly astonished at your objection to the article, and have been thinking long and hard to try to find your thinking on this subject. Then it occurred to us: apparently you regard “modern” ideas as being of two types: those that directly attack the Church, which must be confronted and uprooted mercilessly (Masonry, ecumenism); and those which do not directly attack the Church and are not directly theological (evolution).

Is this true? Nonetheless, I don’t see how it can be denied that “modern” ideas are after all one whole: they are formed first outside the Church, develop in atheist-agnostic minds, and then move through the whole of society until they reach the Church, changing form in the meantime to fit in with each current of ideas. “Evolution” is one such idea (but it’s not really an “idea”—see below) that has not yet directly attacked Orthodoxy. But look what it has already done to Roman Catholicism: is it not true that the whole dissolution of Roman Catholicism in the last decade is directly bound up with the “unleashing” of Teilhardism (whose books were more or less banned up to then) in that same period, a process which was presented for popular consumption ten years ago in a rather cheap but symptomatic novel, *The Shoes of the Fisherman*? By this I do not mean that a certain number of Teilhardian theses were opposed to so many Roman Catholic theses and conquered them: for his evolution is not really a “heresy” (we will agree that this term applied to him, especially from the Orthodox side, is imprecise!), but rather a whole *rival thought-pattern* offering a whole different approach to life (and, consequently, religion); and being already so much a part of the “spirit of the age,” its approach was persuasive not by argument but by fitting in with unconscious attitudes of people who were outwardly Roman Catholic.

We were rather surprised when you (and Fr. E., too, as I recall) mentioned that you haven’t read Teilhard and weren’t familiar with

previous standards are subject to revision. In 1970, having read the pronouncements of prominent “Orthodox ecumenists,” Fr. Seraphim noted that they derived from “the concept that we are entering entirely new historical circumstances, an entirely new *kind* of time, in which the concepts of the past are no longer relevant” (letter to Fr. M., Sept. 2, 1970). Such an idea, of course, also forms the basis of modern evolutionary philosophies such as that of Teilhard de Chardin.—ED.

his ideas; i.e., you are waiting for the wave to hit Orthodoxy before you start thinking of the subject. But really, Teilhardism is the “Christianity” (and “Orthodoxy”) of the future, or rather its metaphysical foundation (it fits very nicely in with “charismatic” phenomena), and it is by no means too early to find out what is hitting us! Here it may well be that Alexey’s position (as a layman in the midst of the world, and having come from that which is outside of Orthodoxy and has already been completely captured by “evolutionary” spirituality and philosophy) has enabled him to be aware of something that the more “sheltered” Orthodox (clergy, monks, lifelong Orthodox) simply don’t see yet. How overjoyed I myself was to find this “shelteredness” when I became Orthodox, because I saw that in this “world-to-itself” I would be able to change completely my mental orientation (not to mention spiritual) and no longer think at all in terms of the reigning despotism of ideas (in which evolution has a key place). I did notice, however, that other converts didn’t seem to grasp this point, and some of them began to discuss how this or that modern current can be understood or accepted or criticized in terms of Orthodoxy—a false outlook, because there are two quite separate mental worlds involved, and the difference is rather greater than that between two totally unrelated languages....

We fully agree with Alexey that “evolution is one of the most dangerous concepts that faces the Orthodox Christian 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. If we understand you and Father E. aright, you regard it as merely an “idea” which one can take or leave, and which can involve one in endless modernist-fundamentalist discussions which are totally pointless (how many “hours” in the first “seven days”? etc.). We certainly agree on the pointlessness of such discussions, but now the issue is much deeper than that; “evolution” is a whole mind-set that is quite incompatible with Orthodoxy. But that is a treatise in itself. Alexey’s article, as I said, is much too brief, but perhaps it will have the good effect of inspiring a thorough treatment of the subject (*not* a “modernist-fundamentalist” fight, but also not what Fr. E. apparently wants to do, to stand so far above the issue that one can’t even discern that evolution

is a crucial question, and destructive of Orthodoxy not so much because of its theses as because of its intellectual-spiritual orientation).

Significantly, the same mail that brought your letter brought also *Concern*, with the article of Theodosius Dobzhansky (who just received a Doctorate honoris causa from St. Vladimir's Seminary) on "Evolution: God's Method of Creation." Well, here are the arguments of an "Orthodox evolutionist," and they are the same as all other evolutionary arguments, emotional faith with not one shred of genuine evidence to support it (although he presents material that *looks* very formidable and "scientific"). But more important: read between the lines and answer: does this man believe in God as a true Orthodox Christian believes in Him? He does not! He believes in Him as "modern" man believes; he is a deist. And very revealing is his conclusion: "One of the great thinkers of our age, Teilhard de Chardin, wrote the following: 'Is evolution a theory, a system, or a hypothesis? It is much more—it is a general postulate to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must henceforward bow and which they must satisfy in order to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light which illuminates all facts, a trajectory which all lines of thought must follow—this is what evolution is.'"

This indeed is Teilhardism, and by "all theories and systems" he means in particular theology and spirituality, as being part of the highest evolutionary layer, the "noosphere," which is just now converging in the evolutionary apex called the "Omega Point" or "Super-Christ." I hate to appear "fundamentalist," but this mammoth structure rests on just a few little "fundamental" facts (or fabrications), which most people seem afraid to get near because they seem so "scientific," beginning with the transition of one species into another and so up the ladder.

To sum up: Whatever weaknesses Alexey's article on evolution may have, it is an attempt to answer a *real problem* which we cannot avoid: that ideological orientation and value-system which is taught in all public schools *as fact* and which poisons and stupefies Orthodox minds without ever attacking Orthodoxy *as such*. Alexey's response is sound, even if it is not (of course) perfect. We Orthodox are not afraid to be "narrow" on the question of ecumenism; why should we be afraid to be "narrow" on the question of evolution? The two issues, after all, are very closely bound up with each other.

4. A Deep-Seated Primordial Force

(To Alexey Young, April 5/18, 1973)

Just a note. We received Monday a rather shocking letter from Fr. N. expressing extreme displeasure with your “evolution” article. He apparently sent you a letter, too, a copy of which he said he was enclosing in his letter to us (but he didn’t).

After reading his letter, we read your article together once again—and neither of us find anything wrong with it, except that it is much too short and concise. After looking in vain for any other source of Fr. N.’s displeasure, we can only conclude that Fr. N. and Fr. E. apparently are just not aware of the whole issue of evolution, whether in its scientific side or in its religious-theological implications. Obviously your article has touched something very deep (frankly we are astonished that people 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)....

We must be “wise as serpents and gentle as doves” in what we do and say now, and by no means must we allow ourselves to be dragged into an argument on “modernist-fundamentalist” lines. Maybe they are “modernists,” I don’t know; but we certainly are not fundamentalists. The truth lies much deeper than either of these merely rational positions, and it will not be easy to present it so that it will be properly understood, judging from Fr. N.’s first response. I don’t think either you or we should “argue” at all, but prepare for a more thorough presentation of the whole subject. Frankly, we want to really persuade them, and the way to do that is to go into the subject deeply, especially the spiritual implications.

What we must keep in mind and get across, I think, is not really evolution as a *heresy* or wrong idea, on the same level with other ideas, and therefore go out fighting with the ordinary weapons of polemics. Evolution is not *that* kind of idea—but rather a kind of 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

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been drilled into everyone from the cradle, and therefore is very hard to bring out and look at rationally.) It's a *rival thought-pattern* to Orthodoxy, not just another idea.

Your article, beyond any doubt, is going to make you "unpopular" in places. Do not let this discourage you, or force you into a "defensive" posture. Your article is probably going to do something very painful at first but ultimately positive: bring out into the open some attitudes which have long been hiding in the shadows.

5. The Argument against Evolution Is Not Scientific but Theological

(To Fr. N., Palm Sunday [April 9/22], 1973)

(By the way, in case I didn't make it clear in my last letter, the argument against the supposed "scientific" theory of evolution is not itself scientific, since "science" itself can neither prove nor disprove it, and for science it's only guesswork. The argument against it is theological: that it involves implications which are entirely unacceptable for Orthodoxy, and these implications can't be escaped, and every propounder of evolution uses them, the theists and spiritualists being worse than the atheists.)

6. The Real Intellectual Problems of Today

(To Alexey Young, June 29/July 12, 1973)

We received Fr. E.'s "Open Letter" today, together with your note. Yes, we found too that he completely missed the point, and all the very nice quotes from the Fathers on the different degrees of knowledge mean nothing when one stops to realize that you are not at all attacking scientific *knowledge*, but only pseudoscientific, pseudo-religious philosophy masquerading as science, and you are using scientific knowledge not to defend theology but only to destroy the self-contradictory theories of the pseudoscientists. Are these points really so difficult to understand or impossible to defend?

Unless we are crazy, Fr. E. has gone off somewhere in the clouds and is not at all in contact with what is going on in the world today,

intellectually—which is very much of concern to Orthodox Christians who live in this world. Fr. E., in trying to stand so far “above” the whole question, does *not* give the impression that he speaks from the heights of the third degree of knowledge (which seems to be what he is trying to hint at?), but rather uses this exalted knowledge for rather rationalistic purposes. We are very disappointed to see such narrowness. And the reply of the mother to the Orthodox “high school youth” (this apparently sums up his “answer” to the whole problem of evolution!)—how naive and spineless!* Can Fr. E. really be so unaware of the anti-Christian purposes of such “scientific” education? His reply is an open invitation to the youth to accept whatever the school teaches him—because we poor Orthodox Christians, alas, having such high knowledge, can’t “know any better.” I’ll tell you frankly (but don’t quote me!)—this isn’t theology, it’s hogwash. There’s a real and pressing problem here, and you’ve attacked it honestly, freshly, and well (considering the short space you had); if there are deficiencies or mistakes in what you’ve said, they can be talked about in a friendly manner. But alas, his only aim is to discredit you and put you in your place....

Any reply you make to Fr. E. should be brief and to the point. He has obviously taken unfair advantage of you in order thoroughly to discredit you, based on the reputation of the monastery as against you, a “nobody.” He is riding on a current of intellectual fashion, and this will pass, and it will not be for the good of the monastery that it has allowed itself to do this and not face the *real* intellectual problems of the day....

It will not be easy to get the *point* of your longer study on evolution across to people who think like Fr. E., but with God’s help it can be done. There is something deep and important here—a rather “academic” approach to theology that does not come to grips with the *anti-theology* of our day.

* Fr. E. had written that, if an Orthodox youth comes home from school telling his mother that he learned that man evolved from a lower species, the mother’s best reply would be, “My boy, God could have created us by any manner He wished, and no one will ever be able to explain or comprehend His ways. All we can do is thank Him for creating us.”—ED.

7. Such “Theology” We Do Not Need

(To Alexey Young, July 4/17, 1973)

Just a note. Fr. E.’s letter has sunk in a little deeper, and it makes us even more disturbed than at first. This is *not* an answer to *anything*, and is a disservice to English-speaking Orthodox Christians. Such “theology” we do not need. We thought of writing a note to him ourselves, but there is no point, since he already has read our letters to Fr. N. defending you and speaking of the need for all of us to get rid of our “American modern” intellectual baggage re: evolution, etc.

Without entering into a public debate with him, we should by all means try to present sound Orthodox views on those points where he is obviously off the beam. Your “evolution” booklet will be very important from this point of view, and we are writing out a number of points which we hope to see treated or mentioned there, and also some suggestions on how to avoid being placed into certain stereotyped categories, by which people can be persuaded not even to listen to what you say. Do you have a general outline of the article yet?

We’ve written Dr. Kalomiros a letter, and hope to receive confirmation of our suspicion that he is quite wrongly used as virtually a proponent of evolution.

8. A Product of the “Spirit of the Times”

(To Fr. N., August 19/September 1, 1973)

Thank you for your new letter. On “evolution”: what can we say in reply? We will tell you just what we think: the “Exetastes”* article by no means is an “objective Orthodox presentation on evolution”—it is rather a simple-minded “liberal” presentation, in no way different from what any Protestant or Catholic magazine might publish. The article does not even raise the most serious questions which

* “Exetastes” (Greek for “Examiner”) was the column title printed above the article “Evolution: A Heresy?” in the newspaper *Orthodox Observer* (Aug. 8, 1973), mentioned above, p. 559.—ED.

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“evolution” poses, much less answer them. It is an absolutely typical product of the “spirit of the times.”

Apparently you think rather differently. But Father, let there be peace among us! “Evolution” is an extremely complicated question, all aspects of it considered, and not one of us is in a position to know “all about it” and give a definitive judgment on all its aspects. Calling it a “heresy,” of course, is a great simplification, for it is much more complex than that, and it is evident that different people have quite different things in mind when they hear the word “evolution,” which complicates matters even more. Alexey’s article was intended not for theologians but for simple people, and therefore its tone and presentation are admittedly somewhat simplistic and sharp. There are disadvantages to this, the first of which is that it obviously didn’t say anything to *you* and apparently others of a similar outlook. Obviously, for such people a much more thorough presentation should be made, and I think this would make it much easier for you to see how inadequate the “Exetastes” article is, as we think. If you had read the grotesque, satanic “theology” of Teilhard de Chardin, you would certainly get a funny feeling from an article in which he is held up as an example of a reasonable approach to this question.

9. Looking Forward with an Open Mind

(To Alexey Young, September 8/21, 1973)

Yesterday we finally received a reply from Alexander Kalomirov to our letter inquiring as to his views on evolution—and he promises soon to send a detailed reply in English, with quotes from the Holy Fathers. We look forward to this with open mind and some expectation!

10. Quibbling over Words

(To Alexey Young, Week of November 6/19, 1973)

Concerning evolution: Fr. E. is quibbling over words, because he simply does not understand the whole question. He obviously misun-

derstands both St. Nectarios (who certainly is not trying to make a “scientific” statement, but is only, quite properly, ridiculing the pseudoscientists who find man’s origins in the ape-kingdom)* and St. Basil (who is scientifically *correct* in his statement on pines and oaks, and he certainly did not intend to say that the *seed* of one produces the other, since the whole *Hexaemeron* emphasizes that each kind of creature reproduces *only according to its kind*).** But it is futile to make an answer to these points: rather, the whole discussion must be placed in a different, more serious context. Hopefully, this will be what your future article on evolution will do (whenever God wills!).

11. The Holy Fathers as the Answer to Medieval Scholasticism

(To Alexey Young, January 9/22, 1974)

Interestingly, just before receiving your letter I was reading and thinking about Khomiakov’s close friend Kireyevsky, who thought very similarly and is even better because of his close connection with Optina and the Holy Fathers.... Kireyevsky’s thoughts on the difference between the Catholic-Western mentality and Orthodoxy might well serve as an article or pamphlet also, which would be very instructive especially for converts today. The answer to Medieval scholasticism, he says, is the great Orthodox Fathers who lived at the same time—namely, St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Gregory the Sinaite, St. Gregory Palamas.

And speaking of this contrast, my research into the Fathers concerning evolution has turned up something remarkable—the Catholic and Orthodox doctrines of Adam and creation are significantly different, and “evolution” can be fitted rather nicely precisely into the Catholic doctrine, but not at all into the Orthodox! This point can be made pretty well by comparing several passages of the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas (I always wondered why I kept that book!) with the passage from St. Symeon which you have, and another from St. Gregory the Sinaite. The whole discussion of “evolution,” if it is

* See pp. 495, 497 above and pp. 797–99 below.—ED.

** See pp. 424–27 above.—ED.

presented just right, can be very important for giving our genuine Orthodox outlook on contemporary science and “wisdom.”

I've also found commentaries on Genesis by St. Ephraim the Syrian and St. John Chrysostom, and some more isolated statements in other Fathers. There can be no doubt at all how the Fathers understood Genesis—quite “literally”! I was at first a little uncertain about a quote from St. Gregory the Theologian, showing that he regarded the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a symbol; and some Fathers, such as St. Gregory of Nyssa, are full of such symbols, leading a scholar like Florovsky to ask: does he understand the account of creation as entirely symbolic or not? And then, to resolve my uncertainty, leafing through a French translation we have of St. Gregory Palamas, I found that, in opposing those who say that the Uncreated Light of Mount Tabor is only a “symbol,” he cites the very passage from St. Gregory the Theologian about the tree of knowledge, and says that *of course* he also accepted it as having an existence of its own! All of these quotes put together should do much to give our Orthodox people the sound Orthodox approach to Genesis and creation, which I think many are now afraid of, due to the prestige of “science.”

12. The Philosophy of the Age

(To Alexey Young, January 24/February 6, 1974)

Here are some more notes on evolution, specifically your chapters which we are returning herewith....

Presumably your conclusion at the end of this chapter [on the popular science textbook *Early Man* by F. Clark Howell] will *not* be: “Evolution is proved false and special creation true,” but rather: evolution, presented popularly as “fact” and “truth,” has no coercive scientific evidence whatever to support it. All the supposed “proofs” of evolution can equally be used to “prove” another theory, depending on your presuppositions. Here you should set down in summary form all the major “proofs” of evolution (preferably quoting some major evolution textbook, or perhaps *Encyclopedia Britannica*—the eleventh edition lists eight evidences), showing that they presuppose a whole *philosophy*

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of nature which is not at all derived from “proofs” but from the intellectual climate of the age. (See, for example, the enclosed booklet,* p. 67.) Here you should also have some quotes from evolutionists themselves showing how they realize that there is no actual coercive *proof* of evolution; but that it “makes more sense,” or “the alternative is unthinkable”—i.e., God’s creation; or other similar quotes. And when you thus quote evolutionists “against themselves,” as it were, you should be careful not to “pounce” on them and say “Aha, they disprove themselves”—but rather continue in a serene tone, *not* taking maximum advantage of their admissions—because you are going to let all their self-incriminating evidence speak for itself, until it piles up and at the end becomes absolutely self-evident, and then your own summation of this evidence will be very powerful!

And then, *here* is where you should give the intellectual “context” of evolution.... It is too much for most readers to understand the whole movement of Humanism, etc.; besides which, they are still not disposed to think you are giving them the real story about it. It would be good to quote an authoritative, objective source at this point. So: enclosed find five pages of quotes from a good textbook on modern “intellectual history.”** The author is himself “modern” and believes in evolution, and so does not have your “prejudices”; yet he is quite precise and aware on the whole. These excerpts show accurately the change from the Newtonian mechanistic universe*** to the evolutionary universe of our times. Some quotes like these, perhaps with a few comments in between, may be all you need to establish the “intellectual climate” in which evolution developed.

Now you are ready to enter the area of philosophy and theology: for the lack of strict *scientific proof* of evolution means that these questions basically are *not scientific*, but come from faith. At the same time you disengage yourself from the dead-end of trying to “disprove” evo-

* Kenneth N. Taylor, comp. and ed., *Evolution and the High School Student* (1972).—ED.

** John Herman Randall, Jr., *The Making of the Modern Mind: A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age* (1926).—ED.

*** On Isaac Newton and the Newtonian universe, see pp. 534–36, 534n, 539, 584 above.—ED.

lution: by science it can be neither proved nor disproved; it is a question of a different order than science.

I don't know what or how much you planned to write on "Orthodox evolutionists" and Teilhard, but I think it might be possible to combine them in a single chapter called "Christian evolutionism." (Rather in the same way that, in our "charismatic" article, we combined testimony from Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox charismatics—both because the testimony of all groups reinforce each other, and because there is really no difference between them; so also, "Orthodox evolutionism" is exactly the same as "Catholic evolutionism.") This also would give more punch to the section which I am compiling to follow the Patristic quotes, and which might be called, effectively I hope: "Latin Scholasticism: The Theological Foundation of 'Christian Evolutionism.'"

In such a chapter on "Christian evolutionism," a basic thing to show will be that adding "God" to evolution does not at all change its basic philosophical-theological outlook and intent. God becomes a *deus ex machina* for saving evolution when the absurdity of believing in it without God, as a pure chance process, becomes too evident. Thus, quoting Dobzhansky and others, you can show how they believe in the same *naturalistic* universe, without God's interference, as do the atheistic evolutionists: the denial of God's Providence, etc.

As the climax to this section: Teilhard de Chardin as extremely symptomatic of the "spirit of the age"—a "religious" thinker who has come into fashion, favored even by Julian Huxley and the Soviet Union! (I'll send some material from Russia on Teilhard.) You might look at Lecomte du Noüy also, since the Greek Archdiocese article mentions him together with Teilhard de Chardin....

An important part of this "Christian evolutionism" chapter: quote Teilhard de Chardin (the passage quoted by Dobzhansky at the end of his article) on evolution as absolutely "universal"—by this time the mere quoting of this passage will already show the reader how much such a view is dependent on simply absorbing the "spirit of the times." This quote shows the blind faith of some "religious" figures in the latest current of scientific faith; and it offers an exact parallel to the blind faith of Alexander Pope in a *different* scientific faith: his adoration of

Newton and his mechanical-deist universe of perfect order, which was mocked a century later by Voltaire in *Candide*, a satire on the “best of all possible worlds” (the phrase is Leibniz’s, but it sums up the faith of the whole seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century philosophical “establishment”). Pope’s words ... will perhaps make your readers begin to see that one should not place so much faith in *any* scientific philosophy-faith.

Alexander Pope, “Essay on Man”:

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
 Whose body Nature is, and God the soul ...
 All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;
 All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
 All discord, harmony not understood;
 All partial evil, universal good:
 And, spite of pride, in erring reason’s spite,
 One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.

And in another place in Pope’s works:

Nature and Nature’s laws lay hid in night:
 God said, *Let Newton be!* and all was Light.

Voltaire mocked this philosophy because it had become *out of date*; and thus your reader is warned, the suggestion is made: maybe evolution too is such a passing faith that will become out of date one day, or is already becoming so! And this inevitably happens if Christian philosophy accepts the philosophy of the “spirit of the age,” which comes and goes. In general it will be a good idea to contrast the Newtonian universe with the evolutionary: this contrast will give the reader probably all the intellectual “context” of evolution he needs, and in a very painless way, without forcing him to understand the whole history of modern thought. Many people simply aren’t aware that there has ever been a “science” that wasn’t “evolutionary,” and the contrast between Newton and evolution shows how one scientific theory gives way to the next. Thus you will undermine the scientific “faith” of your readers! (In our theological section, we will also be quoting St. Basil the

Great and Fr. Michael Pomazansky on this subject.)... The climax of the whole article will then be in presenting the Orthodox theology of creation and of Adam, which is totally independent of all scientific fashions.

For Orthodoxy DOES NOT FOLLOW THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE AGE, because it has its own philosophy based on revelation. The Holy Fathers have a complete theology of the origin of man and creation which is not bound up with any intellectual fashion that passes away.* This doctrine is not modified with every passing philosophy, is not bound up either with the static universe of perfect harmony of Newton (which departed from Orthodoxy by making the universe purely *naturalistic*—and evolution is actually just the present philosophy of the *naturalized* universe divorced from God and His action), or with the developing universe of Teilhard de Chardin and other fashionable thinkers today. Our philosophy is NOT OF THIS WORLD, and it is THE ANSWER to the vain speculations of modern man!

Above all, the whole study should be as simple and as much to the point and as “objective” as possible. If one accepts the principle of objectivity, and believes in the Holy Fathers—then the whole study, even in a very low key, should gradually build itself up to a devastating and convincing conclusion.

By the way, in your “scientific” chapters I hope you have a good account of the “carbon dating system” and whatever “evidence” there is for “millions of years”; also, you must be prepared for answers in several points of the “history of mankind”—how do you explain Neanderthal Man, for example?...**

We've received Fr. N.'s newest comments on evolution, where he tries to identify anti-evolutionism with the sectarian fringe. Why such pointless comments? One senses that he somehow feels *unsafe* on evolution, is somehow *threatened* by anti-evolutionism. Actually, he only

* See above (p. 467n), where St. Gregory Palamas contrasts secular wisdom, which is always subject to refutation, with the unconquerable truth of Divine revelation.—ED.

** On Neanderthal Man, see pp. 385, 385n, 469–70, 470n, 527 above and p. 837 below.—ED.

confuses more those people who are already uncertain enough what to believe about evolution.

And then yesterday we received from the “Zion Orthodox Hermitage” a copy of the letter to Fr. N. which you had already showed us, together with an article which we hadn’t seen, called “The Creation Narrative.” Seeing the quote from St. Hippolytus on page 1, we looked forward to some Patristic documentation. But alas, the author doesn’t come through with this, and he turns out to be quite vague on the whole subject himself! In the next to last paragraph of p. 2 he quite loses himself in wild “speculations” which are not only unscriptural (I’ve never heard of *anyone* who threw *dinosaurs* in before the Six Days of Creation) but are also doctrinally unsound (the suggestion that there could have been evil in the visible creation before Adam’s transgression).* In a word, the author is quite naive, and in his fear that “science might be right” about the “millions of years” he already has quite a lot in common with many present-day evolutionists.

13. At Last the Real Battle Begins

(To Alexey Young, February 25/March 10, Second Sunday of Great Lent, 1974)

We received yesterday the long-awaited epistle of Dr. Kalomiros on “evolution”—forty pages long! I must confess 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 for fear of offending “weak consciences” which are under “Western influences.”

I have written him a short letter saying I wish to make a long and detailed reply to him and to start a “dialogue” with him on this subject.

* These ideas are actually derived from the “Gap” theory, which posits that there were billions of years of earth history before the Six Days. See p. 664, 664n below.—ED.

I believe that if we can answer him point by point, and raise the points he doesn't mention, we can make the forthcoming publication a very powerful one.

I must confess to being rather disappointed in the *tone* of his letter, which is somewhat in the “elevated” tone of Fr. E., with repeated comments about “Western rationalists,” etc. However, he ends very nicely and begs us to tell him where he is wrong—*so we must do this*. Frankly, I would like to “convert” him completely. But God only knows what is possible, and how much his mind is still open. The most encouraging thing is that he, like us, regards the matter as *extremely important*, as opposed to those who think it's unimportant and that everyone can believe as he wishes. With Dr. Kalomiros at last the real battle begins.

You can read the letter on your next visit (I'm beginning now on my reply to it), but in general this is my feeling about it (Fr. Herman hasn't read it yet):

1. Patristically it is very weak. Very few Fathers are quoted, and the *only* really “evolutionary” quote is a passage from St. Gregory of Nyssa—a passage which I noted a few weeks ago, by the way, and thought at the time: “I'd better use this and explain it, because one who already *believes* in evolution will be sure to think it ‘proves evolution.’” It does not, of course—it is merely a general statement of the orderly progression of God's creation from the lowest to the highest, with the most perfect creature, man, coming last. Nothing is said about man or any creature “evolving,” and in another part of the same book (*On the Making of Man*) St. Gregory says explicitly that Adam was *ungenerated*, but was created directly by Christ.

2. There is a long “theological” discourse on man's nature, which is very partial and one-sided, but will require a solid answer with quotes from Holy Fathers—for evolution above all involves a false *anthropology*, doctrine of man.

3. It is quite obvious that Kalomiros has gone to the Fathers *already knowing* that evolution is a “fact.” He obviously has *not* given deep thought to examining the presuppositions of the “fact” of evolution, so we will have to challenge him to start thinking and *not* bring to the Holy Fathers his preconceptions based on modern Western “wisdom.”

4. He is *very* imprecise on the very meaning of the word “evolution”—he thinks the development from embryo to mature man is “evolution,” and that the existence of different races of men is due to “evolution.” Very naive.

5. The man is *not* a theologian, but reads the Fathers by hit and miss.

14. Love for the Holy Fathers

(To Dr. Alexander Kalomirov,

February 25/March 10, Second Sunday of Great Lent, 1974)

We have received your letter concerning “evolution,” for which we thank you very much. I have read it, trying, as you said, to remove all Western conceptions from my mind. I hope, if God gives me the strength, to study your points carefully and write you a very long and detailed reply before too long, but for the present I wish to say only a few things.

I myself have been searching the Holy Fathers for some time seeking to find out their teaching on the questions which are raised by “evolution.” I have been compiling a great many passages from their writings, including most of the passages which you quote in your letter. I have tried very hard not to project into these passages any “preconceived” opinions of my own, but I must acknowledge that my conclusions regarding the teaching of the Holy Fathers are quite different from yours. I believe that I can show you that some of your interpretations of the Holy Fathers are incomplete—that is, that you have presented only a part of their teaching and have overlooked other parts that are quite essential to the question. I would also like to present to you Patristic texts on questions which you do not raise in your letter, but which I believe are also quite essential for understanding the questions raised by evolution.

I note also in your letter that your use of the term “evolution” is somewhat imprecise, and I would like to discuss this question also in some detail.

I agree with you that this subject is vital and extremely important. We have found very few people who are willing or able to think clearly on this subject, with the result that there is much confusion in the

minds of Orthodox faithful concerning it. We are therefore very grateful to you for writing your views so clearly and outspokenly.

Like you, we also do not want to have merely “our own opinion” on this subject, but only wish to accept the teaching of the Holy Fathers. So far we have not found any “evolutionist” or “anti-evolutionist” who sets forth the real Orthodox teaching on this subject, and that is why we ourselves have been doing research on it. The Protestant fundamentalist objections to evolution are mostly superficial and rationalistic (as you yourself have noted), being based on an interpretation of the book of Genesis that comes from “common sense,” and not from the Holy Fathers.

We are not theologians (and I will tell you frankly that we distrust people who call themselves “theologians,” for almost all of them seem to us to be just academic rationalists) but we dearly *love* the Holy Fathers and wish to live by their teaching, and we sense that you do also. May it be that by this love, with the help of God and by the prayers of these Holy Fathers, we may now begin a “dialogue” with you that will bring us all to the true Patristic teaching and be of help also to others.

Everything that I write will be read and criticized by my co-laborer Fr. Herman, to whom I am in obedience, and we will try also to obtain the opinions of some of our Russian theologians whom we respect.

15. The Power of This World and Its Fashionable Ideas

(To Alexey Young, March 2/15, 1974)

I have almost finished my “reply” to Dr. Kalomirov, and I think God has helped me to put all the Patristic material (or almost all) I have been collecting into a coherent presentation, and much more effectively than if I had gone ahead with the “sober and objective” presentation I had planned on. One of the Egyptian Elders once said to St. John Cassian (roughly!): “I’m glad you expressed this question so stupidly, because now I can clearly set forth the *true* doctrine.” Kalomirov has expressed “stupid evolutionism” so well (which others are afraid to do openly), that the reply to him almost writes itself! Although I know the Fathers only poorly, still their doctrine touching on

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“evolution” is so clear once one puts it all together, that I am simply amazed at the power “evolution” has over even educated Orthodox minds. Such is the power of this world and its fashionable ideas. I will send you a copy of my letter and Kalomirov’s letter also when I finish typing it—it is almost *twice as long* as Kalomirov’s letter to us and will probably be forty printed pages!

Of course, now that I’ve done this I don’t quite know what relation this letter has to our projected book—which is absolutely necessary to get out! It may be that the book might be most effective precisely in this letter form, only somewhat revised and divided up into chapters, and with all your scientific and philosophical material entered at the appropriate places. (You will notice that I mention this material at various points of the letter without going into it, as the letter is almost entirely Patristic.) Anyway, see what you think once you read the letter, and we will also see what Kalomirov replies....

Of course, many people will be upset that the evolution question is “raised” again and not kept quiet—but we agree with Kalomirov that it *should* be raised and the true Patristic teaching set forth. There is something very unsound about wishing to keep “quiet” about a question which remains so confused in most Orthodox minds....

Pray for us. Today I hope to finish the last and most important section of the letter to Kalomirov, concerning the nature of man—on which Kalomirov has expressed something perilously close to Augustinianism, based on a very wrong interpretation of the words of St. Seraphim of Sarov!

16. Unknowingly Harboring “Modern Ideas”

(To Alexey Young, March 9/22, 1974)

The objective scientific approach is very necessary—not enough to get bogged down in “scientific proofs,” but just enough to show that the scientific proofs cancel each other out, as it were, leaving the question of evolution in its real sphere of philosophy and theology.... The weakness of evolution as science and philosophy will only serve to emphasize the importance of the Patristic view, which is so definite and really powerful....

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By the way, I begin to see that I myself have been harboring some “modern ideas” on the Six Days of Creation. It’s true that this is not the most important question involved with evolution, but it’s not really a matter of indifference either; there is a profound Patristic teaching in this, as I indicate in my letter to Kalomiro. But it would be good to have further Patristic testimony on this—so please say if you know of any. We will continue to collect Patristic material for the final version of the book.

17. *Genuine Science*

(To Alexey Young, St. Thomas Tuesday, April 10/23, 1974)

For my own background I checked out two books from the Redding library: Raymond Dart’s *Adventures with the Missing Link*, which looks to be too popular to be of much use; and [Louis] Leakey’s *Adam’s Ancestors*, to which I find myself, after a few chapters, rather sympathetic, inasmuch as it seems to be rather careful and precise scientifically (of course, if one discounts the attempt to fit all the evidence into an “evolutionary” framework, which does indeed seem to be a philosophical intrusion)....

I’ve come across several references to the “fluorine dating system,” but no thorough discussion of it—Leakey mentions it as being in its infancy in the 1940s. It has to do apparently with the rate of absorption of fluorine, which seems to be vastly variant depending on moisture, etc. It would be good for us to give a kind of “philosophy” of the dating systems—i.e., showing that we do not reject them outright, but that their significance is relative and limited, somewhat helpful in the genuine study of paleontology (which we should also emphasize is a legitimate science), but not any absolute answer to anything. In general, we should communicate a very “friendly feeling” toward genuine science.

18. *Clearing Up Confusion*

(To Alexey Young, August 2/15, 1974)

I will be working on the final, Patristic section this fall, and God willing the whole study will be complete by the time Kalomiro sends

his promised reply, which should give us all the “Patristic arguments” of the supporters of evolution, making our study as complete as possible. I think the impact of this study will be considerable. I do not think most conscious Orthodox Christians are terribly prejudiced in favor of evolution; but they are somewhat confused as to what or how much to believe of what “science says.” Our study is supposed to give the “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.

19. The Genealogy of Christ

(To Alexey Young, September 22/October 5, 1974)

We received the two sections on Evolution. “Christian Evolution” I read over hastily, and it looks good—probably we can leave any final revisions until the whole article is ready for final form. The “scientific” part, however, Fr. Herman and I read together and found problems. Basically, everything we want to say is there, and the tone is good (it’s even a little *too* understated at times!); but the meaning doesn’t come through simple and clear, there being so many side questions—or rather, the side questions are not yet welded into the whole so as to leave one single, convincing impression: that evolution is philosophy, and science has nothing to do with it—with a strong hint (which comes from just presenting the evidence itself) that the scientific evidence if anything is *against* evolution. Therefore, I will try to rethink and re-outline and rearrange the material and see if the meaning can be made somehow more transparent.

As for the final Patristic section: I am still compiling citations and making notes, hoping to get as broad an attack as possible on the question. I seem to recall that in Fr. P.’s tape he mentions the fact that the Savior’s genealogy back to Adam might contain some “symbolical” names?—i.e., that there might be whole gaps of hundreds or thousands of years? That’s an important point. There is no doubt that the Holy Fathers regarded these names precisely as a list of *fathers*, but since no one ever doubted this before they don’t have many explicit

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statements on the subject. Incidentally, the Fathers were very concerned to reconcile the genealogy in Luke with that of Matthew, and the answer of St. Gregory the Theologian* and other Fathers is that the few differences in the two stem from the practice of the younger brother taking the older brother's wife to raise up offspring for him, if he was childless—and one genealogy calls the father the one who was the real father, and the other takes the one for whom he was a father, so to speak.** You might look in the Scriptural index of any Fathers you have and see if anyone comments on Luke 3:23ff.***

* Fr. Seraphim is referring here to St. Gregory the Theologian, *Dogmatic Poem 8: The Genealogy of Christ*, rendered in prose form and presented as a homily in *The Works of Our Father Among the Saints Gregory the Theologian* (in Russian), vol. 2, pp. 298–300. The original Greek is found in PG 37.480A–487A.—ED.

** The first extant source of this explanation is found in Julius Africanus (ca. 160–ca. 240), *Epistle to Aristides* 1–3. Besides St. Gregory the Theologian, other Holy Fathers who gave the same explanation include Blessed Augustine (*The Harmony of the Gospels* 2.3), St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke* 3.15; *On the Harmony of Matthew and Luke in the Genealogy of Christ*), St. John Damascene (*On the Orthodox Faith* 4.14), and Blessed Theophylact of Ohrid and Bulgaria (*Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke* 3.23–28).—ED.

*** In his notes, Fr. Seraphim translated a passage by the eleventh-century Biblical commentator Blessed Theophylact concerning why St. Luke the Evangelist carried the genealogy of Christ all the way back to Adam: “The nativity of the Lord, as being without seed, encountered mistrust. Therefore the Evangelist, desiring to show that at another time also a man was produced without seed, ascends from the lower (descendants) up to Adam and God. As it were he speaks thus: If you do not believe that the second Adam [Christ] was born without seed, then I beg you to turn in mind to the first Adam, and you will find that he was created by God without seed, and after this you will not be unbelieving” (quoted in the *The Gospel of Luke* by Bishop Michael [in Russian, 1899], p. 308; alternate English translation in Blessed Theophylact, *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke*, trans. Fr. Christopher Stade [1997], p. 46).

After Fr. Seraphim’s repose, an English translation of St. Ambrose’s commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke was published; it contains an extensive discussion of the genealogy of Christ back to Adam (St. Ambrose of Milan, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke*, trans. Theodosia Tomkinson [1998], pp. 81–111).—ED.

20. The Larger Idea of Naturalism

(To Alexey Young, February 14/27, 1976)

I myself would say ... that our basic *framework* of [making references to] popular and high school texts [on evolution] is the right one—for that is how it is taught and understood and where the evolutionary philosophy comes through loud and clear. But it would be good to strengthen our position with more reference to “sophisticated” scientific sources—to show we are aware that scientists don’t believe everything they give the high school student, and even realize that much there comes from “faith”—*but still have the basic evolutionary faith* that the universe “explains itself” and can be understood in “natural” terms. I don’t recall if we have made it clear anywhere yet that our argument is only secondarily against the particular theory of evolution, and primarily against the larger idea of *naturalism*—that the universe explains itself.

21. Scientists Who Question Evolution

(To Dr. Alexander Kalomiros, February 22/March 6, 1976)

We received your new letter on evolution....

Now I do not know if it is possible to continue this discussion or not. You have placed me in a “category”: I am a “fundamentalist,” a “literalist,” I am “against science” and under “Western influence.” I am afraid that anything I may now say, you will dismiss as of no value. If so, there is no point in my even replying to your letter; your mind is already made up about me and you will not listen to whatever I may say. *I hope that this is not so*, because you are the first Orthodox evolutionist I have found who is willing to discuss this question at all, and I think both of us could gain greatly by continuing this discussion. But I will have to tell you clearly that, despite your impression, I am *not* a fundamentalist, nor am I “against science”; quite the contrary.

But you are placing an impossible limitation to this discussion when you say: “I would discuss evolution with you from the scientific point of view only if you had some diploma of one of the biological or

geological branches of natural science." Since you wish it to be so, I of course can say nothing. But let me quote one of your scientific statements: "The stages of the embryo in the uterus are exactly the stages of life's evolution upon earth. This is so exact that even the gills of our ancient ancestors, the fishes, exist in the foetus of even the most perfected animals of the solid earth, the mammals." And now let me quote two statements made in scientific journals and textbooks by scientists possessing advanced degrees in their specialties:

1. "Haeckel's recapitulation theory (which is exactly what you have described to me as an unquestioned scientific fact) has been demonstrated to be wrong by numerous subsequent scholars." (Walter J. Boch, biologist of Columbia University, New York, in the article "Evolution by Orderly Law," in *Science*, vol. 164, May 4, 1969, p. 684.)

2. "The type of analogical thinking that leads to theories that development is based on the recapitulation of ancestral stages or the like no longer seems at all convincing or even very interesting to biologists." (Prof. C. H. Waddington, University of Edinburgh, in *Principles of Embryology*, 1965, p. 10.)

I do not bring these examples in order to debate this theory with you; I do so only in order to show you that something which you accept as undisputed scientific fact is not only disputed but even denied by reputable scientists, many of whom are themselves evolutionists!* The same is true of some other "scientific facts" which you cite, and which you refuse to allow me to discuss with you.

Despite your accusation, *I am not "against science."* I do not have an advanced degree in science, but I have taken college courses in zoology and done considerable reading in scientific sources on the theory and facts of evolution. I have read the Life book on Evolution** and found it very disappointing, because I hoped to find in it *demonstrations of facts* (because I am sincerely interested to know whether evolution is *true* or not!), and instead I found only diagrams and pictures and descriptions which are *not* convincing to anyone with an open mind, but

* For more recent quotations by evolutionists on Haeckel's now-falsified theory of embryonic development, see p. 521n above.—ED.

** Ruth Moore, *Evolution* (Life Nature Library, 1962).—ED.

only to someone who *already believes* in evolution *on other grounds*. Your mind is evidently closed on this subject, and 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 as a scientific theory. Many of them state quite openly that a "literal" creation in six twenty-four-hour days is *one possible interpretation of the scientific facts which we now have*. (Although you will recall that I wrote in my first letter that this question is not one of the first importance, in my opinion.) There is also now much *scientific* evidence that the world is no older than 8,000 to 10,000 years. (I do not say that this is "scientifically proved"—I say only what *scientists themselves* now say—that there are some undisputed scientific facts which make sense only if the world is very young.) Are you going to tell me that I am crazy or "against science" when I can quote doctors of *geological and biological sciences* (many of whom are not "fundamentalists") who say things like this? If so, then there is no point discussing the issue further, because that would mean that *you yourself* are against science, are against an impartial and objective examination of scientific facts. I pray that this is not so....

I do not wish to discuss in detail with you any of the scientific evidence for or against evolution—there are others who can do this much better than I. I only ask, to begin with, that you allow me to send you one book, written by a scientific specialist (in geology, I believe), who has given his views at lectures to geological societies here in America, that contains, in a rather balanced discussion, criticisms of the many weak points of the evolutionary theory. I do not agree with everything written there (it is on a somewhat popular, college-age level), but it does give us a beginning for possible further discussion. Religion is not

* Lincoln Constance, "Systematic Botany—An Unending Synthesis," *Taxon*, vol. 13, no. 8 (Nov. 1964), pp. 262–63.—ED.

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mentioned in this book, which discusses only scientific evidence. If you are willing to read this book, or at least some chapters of it which interest you, with a reasonably open “scientific” mind—then it will be possible to continue our discussion.

22. Avoiding One-Sidedness

(To Alexey Young, March 17/30, 1976)

I haven’t gone back to Kalomirov’s letter, and probably won’t attempt a reply before summer.* The letter, although I find its tone distasteful, is helpful, because it shows the reaction that our “evolution book” would have had in some quarters if it hadn’t first been tested by this correspondence. This will help us to avoid “one-sidedness.” I have the impression Kalomirov demonstrates quite a bit of rationalism himself; he writes not as from within a tradition himself, but as one who is *striving* to get into the tradition. Our uninterrupted Russian tradition, for all its real and supposed Westernisms, has a strength and resiliency which the “rediscoverers of tradition” do not have. May God help us to express these things in a way that can be accepted and assimilated today.

23. Three Axioms

(To Fr. I., July 3/16, 1977)

About “evolution”—we were glad to have your comments. If you really want to see them so much, and Dr. Kalomirov has already distributed his letters, we could send you copies, after we’ve made our reply to his second letter. But really, this correspondence has not been very fruitful at all. At first we were encouraged by the fact that he was willing to discuss the matter at all (which few Orthodox seem to want to do), and we responded to him in a tone that we thought was roughly the same as his own, not fearing to be corrected on any mistakes we might make, but hoping that—although starting almost poles apart—we might in the end “work out” this question in friendly de-

* I.e., a detailed reply in addition to the comparatively brief reply he had recently sent.—ED.

bate and come rather close together by the end of it. But we see now that our reply seems only to have offended him (perhaps most of all he disliked our strong implication that he is probably just as much under “Western influence” as the rest of us poor mortals!), and his second letter offers almost no chance for an extension of the debate. Our reply will probably be short (whenever we get a chance even for that!) and will have to begin by pointing out some of the contradictions he has fallen into himself, with little hope of even getting him interested in some of the more basic questions which (as I recall) haven’t even been mentioned yet by either of us.

But for now (leaping at the chance to chew this question a little more!) I will only give you a few of my own observations, not on “evolution” itself, but on the *approach* to it, which seems so difficult but is so essential.

First of all, we were very disappointed in all the three B—— letters on the subject which we have seen. There is very little there that we would *disagree* with—save for the flippant tone in some places—but they never really get to the question of evolution at all, and they are certainly not the Orthodox answer or approach to the question which Fr. E. had promised to give. In fact, these letters reveal a distinct attempt *not* to approach the question at all, but rather to stay above it, with a rather superior air. Symptomatic is Fr. E.’s confession (either there or elsewhere) that he has never read Teilhard de Chardin and doesn’t need to, as also his evident ignorance of the whole scientific side of the question. (The “funny cartoon” he included has nothing to do with any “new findings,” for example, but was old news eighty years ago.) Likewise with Dr. Kalomiros: he prides himself on knowing nothing at all of Western teachings on evolution (apart from what he regards as “scientific facts”) and insists that we pay attention only to what *he* teaches on the subject, which is “Patristic.”

1. This brings us to Axiom no. 1 in our approach to the question (not the most important one, but first in order of discussion): 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 evolution) as well as the broader philosophy of evolution based on it (Teilhard de Chardin, etc.). This is precisely what the B—— Fathers seem to be afraid of, and

in general our Orthodox theologians also (including Fr. Michael Pomazansky if I'm not mistaken): once you get into "science," the theologian is out of his depth, there are endless fruitless debates, etc. I think this is why Dr. Kalomiros' evolution articles in the Greek religious press stirred up uneasiness but no distinct protests: because "theologians" in general just don't know how to handle the scientific side.

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. And the question of whether man has been on earth for some *thousands* of years or some *millions* of years is one that certainly touches on some basic Orthodox questions—whether the genealogies of the Scripture are actually genealogies (as all the Fathers certainly believed) or just sketchy lists with many long blanks in them; whether some of the Patriarchs of the Old Testament (if these are not genealogies) might not be "symbols" instead of concrete people; whether Adam himself ever existed (especially in view of what seems the prevailing theory now among evolutionists—"polygenism," that new species begin in many pairs simultaneously); etc. 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 them both correctly.

Your point—to start with basic theological principles—I think is good, and these should always be fundamental. And one must always

be well aware of the different modes of knowledge and not mix them up. The trouble is, the question of evolution is so complex that one isn't always aware which aspect of it has ceased to be scientific and has intruded on theology or philosophy, or exactly where the real conflicts arise. Therefore, I think it is very important, as a second axiom:

2. To be aware of the basic *philosophies* underlying or derived from evolutionism and various other views of origins. 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! The Catholics used to solve this problem with a *deus ex machina*: when the body had evolved sufficiently, God “specially created” a soul for it—there evolution is correct, and so is Genesis, broadly interpreted. Kalomiros has basically the same view, though he has a more Patristic vocabulary to describe it—but such views are very artificial and contrived: the Christians wait for the latest evolutionary hypothesis and twist the text of Genesis to fit in with it. This won’t do! An awareness of how evolutionary philosophers (such as Teilhard de Chardin) view the whole question of evolution, while it may not solve any specific question, will still give a broader view of the whole intellectual background behind evolution.

3. Axiom 3: The whole question of Genesis cannot be well approached by Orthodox people without appealing to the basic Orthodox sources: the Holy Fathers. Especially valuable: the *Hexaemera* of St. Basil and St. Ambrose; commentaries on Genesis by St. John Chrysostom and St. Ephraim the Syrian; homilies on Adam, Paradise, and the first-created world by St. Symeon the New Theologian (especially homily 45 in the Theophan the Recluse edition of 1892), St. Gregory the Sinaite (in the Russian *Philokalia*), St. Abba Dorotheus (Instruction I); commentaries of various Fathers on related passages of Scripture (for example, Romans 8:19–22 concerning the “futility” or “corruption” of the post-Adamic world, or St. Gregory the Theologian on the Genealogies of Christ); homilies on the subject of the Resurrection, or whenever the question of “seed” or “growth” is discussed; treatises on the origin of man (St. Gregory of Nyssa); Patristic discussions on reincarnation and the preexistence of souls (which are philosophically related to the question of evolution); etc.

About Dr. Kalomirov: our second reply to him will point out where we think he went astray in his Patristic interpretations. But our general impression of his two letters (which we won't write him directly for fear of offending him again) is this:

1. He is very unprepared to discuss the question either scientifically or philosophically. He is unaware of Western discussions of the subject and is only concerned to stand "superior" to them—which one can't do if one isn't aware of them. It is abundantly obvious from his two letters that he is far behind the West, and he is holding to scientific and philosophical positions long abandoned or in process of revision by Western scientists themselves. As one example: his defense of Haeckel's "recapitulation" theory of the human embryo: today's *evolutionary* textbooks of embryology dismiss it as a nineteenth-century fantasy, but Kalomirov not only clings to it as an "obvious proof" of evolution, but even forbids us to discuss any scientific questions with him until we get advanced degrees in the physical sciences (a typical refuge of someone who doesn't want a free discussion of the subject)! He is not aware, either, of the less dogmatic spirit which many evolutionary scientists now have, nor of the immense number of scientists (with advanced degrees!) who now have abandoned evolution entirely or are skeptical of it.

2. He is *theologically* unprepared for such a discussion—something which surprised us most of all. Even after promising us that he was going to reply only after reading all the basic Patristic texts on the subject, he still bases his whole argument on two or three Patristic texts, very one-sidedly interpreted, and does not even answer a number of our Patristic citations (which are only a small part of the Patristic passages we have found). His St. Gregory of Nyssa quote says nothing whatever of evolution unless you read it into the passage; and the St. Seraphim quote certainly does not sustain his interpretation, wherein he does precisely what he accused us of doing—taking "chronologically" words which are "ontological" in reference.

When I say that Dr. Kalomirov is "unprepared," I do not of course mean that he is *incapable* of discussing the question—merely that he is so prejudiced in advance (with a complex about being "inferior" to "Western wisdom") that he does not view the question at all objec-

tively.... I quoted St. Ephraim's very "fundamentalistic" view [that the Six Days were twenty-four hours long] without precisely agreeing with him—and Dr. Kalomirov dismissed it by saying "he was using the science of his time." But since the science of St. Ephraim's time most certainly did *not* teach that the world was created in six twenty-four-hour days (with twelve hours between each creative "moment"), I can only assume that Dr. Kalomirov is not prepared to examine Patristic evidence very objectively, using any excuse to dismiss whatever doesn't agree with his own views.

I would strongly suspect that Fr. Michael Pomazansky would prefer not to make any *general* comments on the question of evolution—however, if you gave him specific questions touching on theology, you might get answers. But then again, he might be so afraid of the scientific side that he might hesitate even here.

This letter is already too long. Unfortunately, I just won't have time for some while to set down the Patristic quotes I have found up to now. But some time perhaps I will get the time. You might be interested in some of the publications of the Institute for Creation Research in San Diego, especially books like *Scientific Creationism* (public school—i.e., non-religious edition) which present only scientific evidence without reference to religion. Their presentation of the "Creation Model" is a promising approach to a more objective view of the whole question. Their religious views, of course, suffer from the general shortsightedness of fundamentalism (in particular, their unawareness of the whole Patristic field of commentary on Genesis—but most Orthodox people have a similar lack of awareness!). I'm enclosing two of their pamphlets, with their address so you can order some of their books if you want.

I would like to keep up this discussion, a little at a time, if you wish to.

24. Notes from a Dialogue on Evolution

(To Fr. I., August 8/21, 1977)

A few notes on our continuing "dialogues on evolution." Many thanks for your two letters....

1. The question of the “age of the earth” is a question raised by science (which cannot give it a completely satisfactory answer) and touching on Revelation and certain theological questions. From the point of view of Biblical interpretation, this question is dependent on a more fundamental one: “the age of mankind.” Here the text of Genesis does not need to fear the evidence of science; and since modern science *does* talk about this, we have to have an intelligent answer to the opinion concerning the “millions of years” during which, supposedly, not merely “galaxies” have existed, but even man himself and his near “ancestors” have been walking on earth. One cannot escape the question of the existence of man in chronological time (since both Genesis with its Patristic interpreters and science seem to be talking about the same kind of “years” we know) by reference to the formation of galaxies and the relativity of time—the “primordial galaxies” themselves are a product of the scientific speculations of modern thinkers, and neither more nor less deserving of credence than ancient Greek speculations concerning the origin of the world.

2. This raises another fundamental question: how much should we use science in a commentary on Genesis? I would say, as a very minimum: we must know enough about science and its modern speculations to have an answer to those who use it to “disprove Genesis.” Thus its chief function today is perhaps negative. But beyond that, I think our attitude should be that of St. Basil in his *Hexaemeron*: the legitimate conclusions of science should be used whenever they help the task of interpreting the sacred text. The “science-phobia” which has been caused among some Orthodox Christians by the *false* use of science on the part of anti-Christians should be overcome. In the case of evolution, I don’t see how the question can be discussed at all without a basic knowledge of the “scientific proofs” for and against. I don’t mean we should become passionately *attached* to them or place them on the same level as theology—we should just be *aware* of them and know how to assess their relative value. The “scientific creationists” are very useful in this regard, because they have hunted up evidence which had been selectively disregarded by predisposed evolutionists (for example, the remarkable evidence of an earth “under 10,000 years old,” which must definitely be weighed against the evidence for an earth much older,... etc.)

3. But is the question of the age of the human race (some 7,000 or 8,000 years vs. a million or more years) really theological, or important? You doubt whether it is. I offer two observations:

a. The Holy Fathers (probably unanimously) certainly have no doubt that the chronology of the Old Testament, from Adam onwards, is to be accepted “literally.” They did not have the fundamentalist’s over-concern for chronological *precision*, but even the most mystical Fathers (St. Isaac the Syrian, St. Gregory Palamas, etc.) were quite certain that Adam lived literally some 900 years, that there were some 5,500 years (“more or less”) between the creation and the Birth of Christ, etc.* (Blessed Augustine has a good discussion as to the differences between the Greek and Hebrew chronologies**—the thousand years “more or less” didn’t bother him any more than it did other Fathers—but the assertion that Adam lived a million or more years ago, and that thus the Old [and New] Testament chronology is quite arbitrary or fanciful, could not but have evoked numerous Patristic discussions.) Can we be so trusting of the conclusions of modern science (especially if we have a basic knowledge of radiometric dating procedures and the philosophy underlying them!) as to totally overturn the Patristic opinion? Dr. Kalomiros and other Orthodox evolutionists say we should, without a second thought—I would say this is dangerous presumption, and an intrusion of dubious science into the realm of revealed truth. When Dr. Kalomiros dismisses the Patristic interpretation of the Old Testament chronology as “Jewish rationalism,” I even begin to wonder what his basic attitude to the Fathers is? It seems to have an element of disrespect, to say the least.

b. More important (more theological): one’s picture of reality, of

* See the quotations of St. Isaac the Syrian on p. 459 above and p. 663 below. St. Isaac wrote also that, in his time (the seventh century A.D.), the demons were 6,000 years old, reckoning their age from the creation of the world (*Ascetical Homilies* 54, trans. Holy Transfiguration Monastery, p. 269): a teaching echoed by St. Macarius the Great, who stated that, in his time, Satan “is already 6,000 years old” (*Fifty Spiritual Homilies* 26.9, trans. George A. Maloney, p. 167). In *To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia* 9, St. Gregory Palamas wrote that “Adam continued to live after that time [i.e., after the transgression] even for 930 years” (*Philokalia* 4, p. 296).—ED.

** Blessed Augustine, *City of God* 15.13–14, NPNF 1 2, pp. 293–95.—ED.

the world, definitely influences one's view of God. I offer you (very briefly) two pictures ("models") of man and his world:

(1) Man created some 7,000–8,000 years ago, separately from other creatures (not descended from others), dispassionate by *nature* (in soul and body), with Eve miraculously created from his rib (in a way we cannot describe with scientific precision, as St. John Chrysostom indicates), in a world of creatures with natures basically stable and not in process of becoming other natures. Much could be said on separate details of this picture, and knowledge of many of the details can never be *precise*; but basically: it does not contradict the text of Genesis and is harmonious with the Orthodox view of God.

(2) Man descended from lower creatures, passionate by his origin and nature, *becoming* dispassionate in Paradise (when grace brought him out of his bestial state, according to Kalomiros) at a moment very hazy both chronologically and theologically (today Roman Catholic evolutionists deny Paradise altogether because they can't reconcile it with evolutionary philosophy), existing in his fallen state perhaps a million or more years, during which time he gradually came up from savagery to civilization, the record of him in the Old Testament being extremely sketchy and not to be taken seriously when it speaks of "years"; the world around man being in a constant state of change and ascent from one nature to another, and this whole process being explainable ("more or less") by science, except for the original impulse of creation itself (which produced a rather undifferentiated mass with the "potentially" of all future developments). (Kalomiros insists there is nothing "miraculous" about the Six Days of Creation—they all proceeded according to scientific laws!) This picture, that of "theistic" or "God-guided" evolution, can be reconciled with the text of Genesis and its Patristic interpretation only by means of many jumps and improvisations and wholesale disregard of Patristic evidence. The chief reason, I suspect, why it does not give the horrors to Orthodox believers in "God-guided evolution" (as, for example, Fr. N. professes himself to be)—is simply because they put their heads in the sand and don't bother to think about it at all, because of a very unhealthy science-phobia. But my point here is: is not one's view of God basically affected by such a picture of the world? For example, the view of an

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“Orthodox evolutionist” like Theodosius Dobzhansky (in his address on receiving an honorary doctorate from St. Vladimir’s Seminary!) utterly denies the Providence of God in the world; his “God” is the deist God. St. John Damascene (following St. Gregory of Nyssa and others) states that it is unworthy of God to believe that He created man’s body and soul in separate moments, as if He did not have power for the whole act at once; this act of creation was simultaneous; here the text of Genesis is not to be interpreted literally or “chronologically” (Kalomirov specifically denies this—his interpretation of St. Seraphim’s words would collapse otherwise!). How much less worthy of God, then, to believe that He created only some kind of material ocean of potentiality and left everything to “evolve by itself” according to natural laws!

All this, as you can see, is an informal discussion presented for your reflection—precise citations will have to be given when I have time.

25. Clergy in Greece against “Orthodox Evolutionism”

(To Bishop Gregory,
November 22/December 5, 1980)

In the 1981 Conference in Pennsylvania I notice that Dr. Alexander Kalomirov will be speaking on “The Creation of Man and the World,” and I greatly fear that his talk and his very presence will only promote the spirit of “criticism” which is poisoning our Church so much. I myself had a lengthy correspondence with Dr. Kalomirov some years ago on the subject of “creation and evolution,” and I discovered to my astonishment that he is an adherent of the most naive kind of evolutionism (he wrote that Adam could well have had the face of an ape, because he was at first an ape-like creature to whom God gave His Spirit!), and that he is most doctrinaire and arrogant in upholding his opinions (he refused to discuss any scientific evidence with me because I have no doctor’s degree in science, and when I criticized some of his opinions and showed that some of his scientific “evidence” is outdated and is no longer accepted even by evolutionary textbooks in the West, he broke off the correspondence with me). Dr. Kalomirov’s opinions on creation have been greatly criticized by conservative clergy

in Greece,* and theologically, in his correspondence with me, he had very shaky and superficial grounds for upholding his scientific evolutionism. In addition, Dr. Kalomirov has now made himself notorious in Greece for starting his own schism from the Old Calendarists over the issue of the Icon of the Trinity showing God the Father as an old man—he insists the icon is heretical and justifies the breaking of communion with those who venerate or even tolerate it.

26. People Are Ready to Hear This

(To Fr. Alexey Young, Meat-fare Saturday, February 15/28, 1981)

Thinking about my Genesis course this summer, I was rereading part of Dr. Kalomirov's letters. How discouraging! One loses all inspiration to get tangled up in this subject, seeing how he handles it. And really, the tone is just like Deacon L.'s. I wondered why, and Fr. Herman answered me: They're trying to keep up with the "advanced" fashions in the universities; and I think that's probably really the answer. Especially Kalomirov's repeated insistence (Deacon L. says the same thing) over how many have "lost their souls" because of literal interpretations of Genesis—that is, we have to give them Genesis on *their* level, changing the truth if need be so as not to offend them or give them more than they can chew. But 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. Kalomirov, Deacon L., and others are intellectuals who haven't been fully converted, or have brought their intellectual baggage with them into Orthodoxy—the same thing they accuse others of? This was the disease of the Russian intellectual converts earlier in this century, and I think our Greeks** fall into the same category.

Therefore, I am plowing ahead with Genesis according to the Holy

* In another letter (to Fr. D. S., Nov. 23/Dec. 6, 1980) Fr. Seraphim says further: "Conservative theologians in Greece regard him [Dr. Kalomirov] as a radical evolutionist."—ED.

** Here Fr. Seraphim is referring specifically to the "traditionalist" Greek clergy who had joined the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia: the Church to which Fr. Seraphim himself belonged.—ED.

Fathers, realizing that it may cause more waves among the Greeks (and name-calling—but I’m already a “theosophist” and can’t get much worse than that!), especially since it will be “competition” to Dr. Kalomiros’ talk in Pennsylvania.

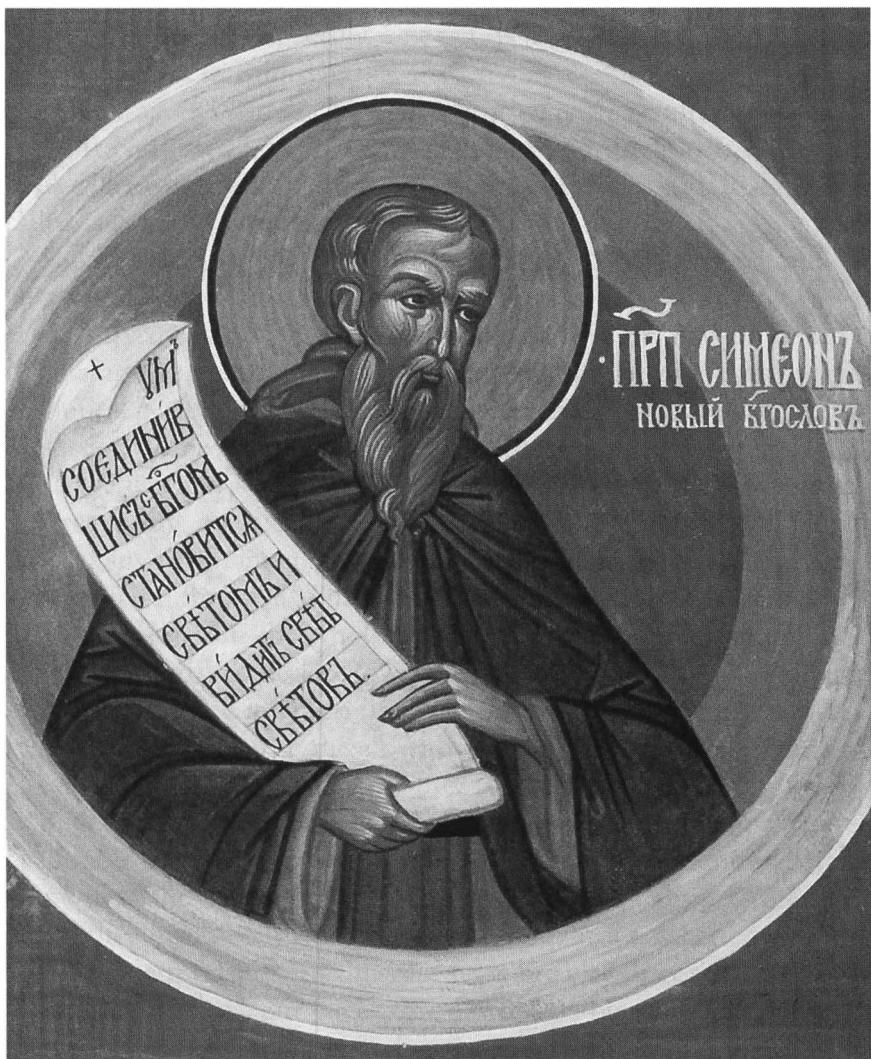
Speaking of Genesis, I see no reason why this course on Genesis couldn’t be turned into the main portion of our long-lost “evolution” book. The whole outline of it now becomes clear to me. It should be called something positive (no evolution in the title), such as “Genesis, Creation, and Early Man: An 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.

PART V

Notes and Outlines



St. Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022).
*Fresco from the Kazan Mother of God Cathedral,
Optina Monastery, Russia, 2000.*

CHAPTER ONE

Notes on Science, Evolution, and Christian Philosophy

EDITOR'S NOTE: These sections of Fr. Seraphim's notes were written over the course of several years. Sections 1 and 13 were written in 1974; the rest cannot be precisely dated. Titles for sections 3 and 9 were provided by Fr. Seraphim; the other titles have been added by the editor.

1. The Incorruption of the First-Created World

Vain are they who say that the Holy Fathers were “naive in science” and simply “didn’t know” about evolution (as if the Holy Spirit withheld this information from the Divinely inspired Fathers and Scriptures, and revealed it only to eighteenth-century Enlightenment man and his later descendants!). On the contrary, they knew quite well what was being said in Genesis. We know, therefore, that before the fall of Adam some 7,500 years ago, *no creature experienced corruption* [decay]; but the whole evidence for “evolution” lies precisely in the evidence of corruption which, supposedly, occurred before the “evolution of man”! Need we hesitate to know where the truth lies? If science finds that the Virgin Birth of Christ is outside the laws of nature as it knows them, we Orthodox Christians nonetheless believe it absolutely; in the same way, even if science finds the incorrupt creatures of the first period of the world’s existence “impossible” by the laws of nature it knows—we still believe as the Church and the Holy Fathers do.

And there is a specific reason why science cannot understand this mystery, which is set forth by the great Father St. Symeon the New Theologian in his 38th Homily:

The words and decrees of God become the law of nature. Therefore also the decree of God, uttered by Him as a result of the disobedi-

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ence of the first Adam—that is, the decree to him of death and corruption—became the law of nature, eternal and unalterable. Therefore, in order to abrogate this decree, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, was crucified and died, offering Himself as a sacrifice for the redemption of man from death.¹

That is to say: the law of nature before Adam's disobedience *is different from the law of nature now in force, and it is therefore totally unknowable by science....* Certain it is that science cannot, on the basis of observing a creation which is everywhere corruptible and mortal, make even the slightest inference about a creation not subject to these laws. What was before the disobedience of Adam, and what is beyond the end of this corruptible world (when the creation will not be destroyed but totally *transformed*)—*are totally outside the sphere of science* and may be known only through Orthodox theology in accordance with God's revelation to mankind....

At this point the sincere Orthodox believer who is confused because he has been taught “evolution” from his childhood and cannot force himself to disbelieve in it all at once—will ask: Is it not still possible somehow to “reinterpret” the incorruptibility of Adam and the first creation so as not to be too much outside the fashions of contemporary ideas? To which the answer is: If you wish to “reinterpret” the state *before* the corruptible, fallen world we know—then you must likewise “reinterpret” the state *after* this fallen world, the future bliss of heaven, for the two correspond and only differ, as St. Symeon has pointed out in the long passage quoted above,* in that the future state of the world will be fully spiritual, corresponding to the “spiritual body” of the men who will dwell in it, and no longer will it be possible for its incorruptibility to be lost. Do we Orthodox Christians believe that we will *actually* be immortal and incorruptible in that next life—if God will only number us among the saved—or only metaphorically and allegorically so? If we believe and think as the Holy Fathers do, then our future incorruptibility will be *real*, as was that of the creation and of Adam before his disobedience.

* See pp. 463–44 above.—ED.

It is vain for us to imagine that we are more “sophisticated” than the Holy Fathers, being made so wise by modern “enlightenment” and science that we know better than they how to read and interpret the Divinely inspired Scriptures (as St. Basil says, considering ourselves “wiser than the revelations of the Spirit”).² The superiority of modern knowledge over that of the Holy Fathers lies solely in one respect, which lies at the very bottom of the hierarchy of knowledge: in the quantity of scientific facts now available to us (but not everything that calls itself “scientific fact” is such!); in every other respect our knowledge is inferior to theirs. They knew far better than today’s scientists and philosophers the *place* of scientific knowledge in the whole hierarchy of knowledge; and they saw clearly that the proper interpretation of Genesis is the task of theology, not science, and it is facilitated, not at all by a knowledge of present-day scientific facts, but rather by advancement in spiritual life and understanding. That indeed is why the whole doctrine of creation is presented most clearly, precisely in the writings of a Father like St. Symeon the New Theologian, who attained the heights of spiritual life. The notion that we now, “enlightened” by science, can understand Genesis better than the Holy Fathers, is itself a result of that evolutionary philosophy which virtually everyone now holds quite unconsciously....

Thus the whole structure of evolutionary ideas and philosophy concerning the supposedly corruptible creation before Adam is seen to be an elaborate fable like unto those the ancients had about their “gods,” and which were so well refuted by the God-bearing Fathers of the first Christian centuries.... If the world is acknowledged to be incorrupt before the disobedience of Adam, the need of evolutionists for “millions of years” vanishes: there are then no fossils, no extinct species, no “survival of the fittest” [before the fall of man].*

* The incorrupt, “very good” condition of man and the rest of creation before the fall, as delineated in the Scriptural-Patristic teaching of the Church (see appendix 1), does not correspond to what natural scientists study in the fossil record, which is a record of violence and carnivory (e.g., creatures buried catastrophically while in the act of devouring each other, or with other animals in their intestines), including cannibalism (e.g., dinosaurs eating members of their own species—see pp. 895–96 below); of suffering (e.g., creatures writhing in agony while being buried alive); of diseases and afflictions (e.g., cancer, tuberculosis, gout, and abscesses); and of the death and

2. Science and the Question of Incorruption

Science is silent before evident miracles of incorruption in New Testament times: the Mother of God's painless birthgiving without a father;* also Christ's Resurrection. Secondarily, the incorruption of

corruption (decay) of all kinds of living things, including man. In keeping with the Scriptural-Patristic testimony on prelapsarian incorruption, then, the fossil record is to be placed, historically, *after* the fall of man.

This is one of the primary reasons why, from an Orthodox perspective, it is futile to interpret the Six Days as having lasted for millions of years. If the world was incorrupt before the fall, then, as Fr. Seraphim points out above, "the need of evolutionists for 'millions of years' vanishes." Furthermore, there is then not even a place in which to historically "fit" those millions of years, since according to the naturalistic worldview they represent aeons of corruption, most of which passed before man's evolutionary emergence. Thus, as Fr. Seraphim writes elsewhere, with the acceptance of the Orthodox teaching that the world was incorrupt before Adam's fall, "the greater part of evolution's schema of prehistory is thrown out" (see p. 669 below).—ED.

* St. John Damascene writes of the Mother of God's virginal and painless birth-giving: "He Who is without a mother begotten of a Father was without a father born of a woman.... Because [this birth] was without father, it surpassed the nature of generation.... [And] because it was without pain, it surpassed the established order of birth—for, where pleasure had not preceded, pain did not follow, as the Prophet said: 'Before she travails in labor to give birth, before the pain of birth comes on, she escapes it and bears a male' (Is. 66:7)" (*On the Orthodox Faith* 4.14, FC 37, pp. 364–65). St. Damascene then goes on to affirm that, when the Virgin gave birth to Christ, the seals of her virginity miraculously remained intact: "Just as at His conception He had kept her who conceived Him a virgin, so also at His birth did He maintain her virginity intact, because He alone passed through her and kept her shut.... For it was not impossible for Him to pass through the gate without breaking its seals (cf. Ezek. 44:2)" (*ibid.*). Again, in the Canon of Pascha (the Resurrection of Christ), St. Damascene writes: "Having kept the seals intact, Thou didst rise from the grave, O Christ, Who didst not violate the Virgin's womb by Thy birth, and Thou hast opened to us the gates of Paradise" (Canticle 6).

Concerning the miraculous birth of Christ from the Virgin, St. Cosmas of Maiuma writes in the Canon of the Nativity: "The Word, having dwelt in the Virgin and taken flesh, came forth from her yet kept her incorrupt. For being Himself not subject to decay, He preserved His Mother free from harm" (Canticle 6, *The Festal Menaion*, p. 276).—ED.

holy relics, also miracles of Christ and the saints. *The order of fallen creation is here interrupted by a higher law*—so too creation before the fall is unknowable because a different law prevailed.*

3. Evolution and “Cosmic Religion”

1. One of the chief ideological-religious functions of “evolutionary” thought is to “broaden” one’s mental outlook, not necessarily directly attacking religious ideas (but sometimes this also), in order to make it impossible to think in “narrow” religious terms:

(a) The age of man and the universe is billions, not thousands of years. This weakens the “realistic” view of the Old Testament, Adam, the Patriarchs, Paradise.

(b) Man’s lifetime becomes less crucial. Sooner or later, it becomes impossible to continue to stress a “narrow” view of man’s lifetime (and

* On this subject, St. Barsanuphius of Optina (1845–1913) copied the following illuminating passage in his cell-notes: “Certain people, even evident believers in God, not to mention overt atheists, say, ‘I admit that the laws of nature were set down by God, and therefore I cannot grant that they can be broken. God cannot break the order that He Himself has established.’ One could answer such crafty sophists thus: Amazing! It’s just as if God and man exist for your laws of nature, and not the laws of nature for the purposes of God and the good of man. This is the old leaven of the Pharisees, to which a worthy reply was given 1900 years ago: ‘The Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath day’ (Matt. 12:8)! Our God is a God of order, and He directs the world by means of laws. The laws in and of themselves do not produce any manifestations in nature. They merely regulate and balance the powers of nature. In nature, in this visible world, various forces function, and the lowest of them yield to the higher: the physical yields to the chemical, the chemical to the organic, and finally, all of them together to the highest of all, the spiritual. Without the intervention of the highest forces, the lower forces would function in a homogenous, immutable order. But the higher forces alter, and sometimes even suspend the actions of the lower. In such a natural subordination of the lower forces to the higher, not one of the laws of nature is changed. Thus, for example, a physician changes the progression of a disease, a man changes the face of the earth by the digging of canals, and so on. Cannot God cause the same thing to a boundlessly greater extent?” (from *Soul-Profiting Reading* [in Russian], Aug. 1897, p. 671; quoted in St. Barsanuphius of Optina, *Cell-Notes 1892–1896* [in Russian], pp. 15–16).—ED.

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decision for eternity) if one believes in a “broad, evolving” universe, especially in connection with Christianity.

(c) The “broad” view of the natures of things must sooner or later involve the nature of man: if everything *changes its nature*, “evolves” from and to something else—then why not man? All evolutionists think so, and Christians who deny this while accepting the rest of evolutionary theory make fools of themselves, being “fundamentalists” in part, “evolutionists” in part.

2. Evolution is a “totalitarian” thought-form; it attempts to give a religious-philosophical outlook for the *whole* of life. As Teilhard de Chardin (quoted approvingly by Theodosius Dobzhansky) affirms: “Is evolution a theory, a system, or a hypothesis? It is much more—it is a general postulate to which all theories, all hypotheses, all systems must henceforward bow and which they must satisfy in order to be thinkable and true. Evolution is a light which illuminates all facts, a trajectory which all lines of thought must follow—this is what evolution is” (*Concern*, Spring, 1973).

Evolution is not partially true or false. It arose from—demands to be accepted as—a *whole* philosophy of the world and life. The scientific hypothesis is quite secondary.

3. A characteristic of modern currents of thought is “universalism”—the attempt to make a synthesis that will include all “partial” views: Masonry, ecumenism, Hegelianism, Baha’i, Unitarianism, unity of all religions. This is what “evolutionary” philosophy is—a “universal” theory to explain everything, and to justify everything the way it is—universal salvation, a cosmic view of everything entering into the universal harmony of things as they are.

4. As a consequence, harmony is found between evolution (and other universalist ideas) and “mystical” writers of the past, and an attempt is specifically made to show the harmony between Teilhardism and *Orthodox* “mystical” tradition, quoting St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Isaac the Syrian, etc. Those who do not come up to mystical, universalist heights are dismissed as “legalistic,” “moralistic,” narrow, etc. But in this way the harmony of Orthodox tradition is destroyed: one part is turned against the other in order to make Orthodoxy fit into the harmony of modern universalistic ideas.

This is *very much in conformity with the pride of “modern” ideas*: We know better than the ancients; only the *most exalted* thought of the past compares with our thought. But this is directly against the Holy Fathers who warn against reaching too high, not recognizing one’s subtle, hidden pride and passions. Specifically, ours is least of all a time to spread and popularize “mystical” ideas and writers, and drag them into the marketplace. It is far better to be humble, revere these exalted writers, and not presume that one can understand them. The writings of Theophan the Recluse are more suited to our condition.

4. The “Mysticism” of Teilhard de Chardin

One can be sympathetic with Teilhard de Chardin’s *intent* to reconcile science and Christianity, which spoke in two entirely different languages in his day. True, all that is *true* in science is not in conflict with Orthodox truth, and a fervent Christian can be a truthful scientist. But false theories, mistaken personal fancies and opinions—cannot serve as a basis for a true worldview, whether they come from science or religion. Teilhard de Chardin solved the dichotomy of science and Christianity by throwing up a vague “mysticism” between them; thus he was faithful neither to true science nor to true religion, but simply invented a new false teaching of his own—it is very attractive because it is in accord with “mystic” and “universalist” currents of our times. But to serious thought, to truth, his teaching is but another of the serious errors of our times, and a very fruitful one for the coming unified worldview of the last humanity. He is a predecessor of Antichrist.

5. Evolution as the Exact Opposite of Christianity

The whole “evolutionary philosophy” which grasps people today leads them to believe, often unconsciously, in a view of creation and life which is just the opposite of what Christianity teaches: simple begets complex, savagery “evolves” to civilization, imperfect gives rise to perfect, “progress,” etc. According to Orthodoxy, the perfect falls to the imperfect (Paradise to fallen world; and even historically, the Holy Fathers note the fall of mankind in general until the coming of

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Christ—cf. St. Symeon the New Theologian and St. Gregory of Nyssa), and man in the last days will be much lower spiritually than in the early Church (cf. the prophecies of St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher and St. Niphon of Constantia);* incorruption and immortality precede corruption and mortality. The perfection and immortality of the coming age (heaven) are not a *development* or “evolution” from the present world (as Teilhard de Chardin would have it; actually, chiliasm is almost an inevitable deduction from evolution), but a radical transformation.

The whole aim of “evolutionary philosophy” is to upset this Christian outlook, based on God Who does everything as He wishes, and

* St. Nilus the Myrrh-gusher of Mount Athos (†1651), appearing posthumously to the monk Theophanes on the Holy Mountain in the year 1817, prophesied about the state of humanity in the last times: “The world in those days will become unrecognizable. When the advent of Antichrist draws near, people’s reasoning will be obscured because of carnal passions, while profanity and indecency will prevail. People will become unrecognizable; people’s faces will be disfigured; men will not be distinguishable from women because of their shameless garments and the hair on their heads. Then they will become wild and will resemble the beasts.... Respect for parents and elders will be no more; love will perish; the Christians’ shepherds, bishops and priests, will be conceited and will no longer recognize the right path from the left. During those days the customs and the traditions of the Christians and the Church will change. Prudence will be lost and prodigality will prevail. Lies and the love of money will reach epidemic proportions.... Fornication, adultery, homosexuality, thefts, and murders will be an everyday occurrence during those days” (quoted in Monk Leontios of Dionysiou Monastery, *Prophecies* [in Greek], p. 96). See also the prophecies of St. Nilus concerning the degeneration of Orthodox monastic life, in *The Orthodox Word* no. 21 (1968), pp. 143–49.

The prophecy of St. Niphon, Bishop of Constantia on Cyprus (†before 367), is as follows: “To the very end of this age there shall not be lacking Prophets of the Lord God, as also servants of Satan. But in the last times those who truly will serve God will succeed in hiding themselves from men and will not perform in their midst signs and wonders as at the present time, but they will travel by a path of activity intermixed with humility, and in the Kingdom of Heaven they will be greater than the Fathers who have been glorified by signs. For at that time no one will perform before the eyes of men miracles which would inflame men and inspire them to strive with zeal for ascetic labors.... Many, being possessed by ignorance, will fall into the abyss, going astray in the breadth of the broad and spacious path” (quoted in Sts. Barsanuphius and John, *Guidance toward Spiritual Life* [in Russian], pp. 654–55).—ED.

make instead something more “understandable” to fallen men—rationalism, humanism. That is why “evolution” was developed gradually by modern agnostic-atheistic-deistic philosophy before any “scientific” proof was ever found. The Orthodox Christian perspective (Paradise, the shortness of [time allotted to] this world, etc.) is a *whole new outlook* for those made stupid by modern “enlightenment” philosophy, of which evolution is a key product.

6. Why Orthodox Christians Should Not Be Indifferent to Evolution

Some say that Orthodox Christians should pay no attention to “evolution”—that it is “science” and has nothing to do with theology. If evolution is taught in schools, our attitude should be one of indifference: God could create man in any way He chooses; our tradition does not tell us how or give us any teaching to oppose to evolution.

This argument is false because:

1. St. Peter says: “Be ready always to give a defense to everyone that asks you for an account of the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15). The question of evolution touches on Christian faith, specifically regarding creation and the nature of man. Even if the enemies of Christianity are very ridiculous in their arguments, our conscience demands that we have an answer to them, both for their sake (for they are also living souls whose error keeps them from God) and because there are simple souls who can be led away from God by ridiculous arguments. To the Soviet cosmonaut who “looked for God” in space and thought his failure to find Him disproved the existence of God*—our answer is clear: we Christians have a teaching about whether God is located “in the sky” or not, and this atheist argument (which is taken seriously by some poor souls) is easily refuted by presenting the true doctrine of God Who is, in the words of St. John Damascene,

* A reference to Yuri Gagarin, the first man to travel into space. The remark often attributed to him by Western sources, “I don’t see any god up here,” actually originated from a speech of Nikita Khrushchev, in which the Soviet leader said: “Gagarin flew into space, but didn’t see any god there.” Gagarin was a baptized Orthodox Christian.—ED.

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without beginning and without end, everlasting and eternal, uncreated, unchangeable, unalterable, simple, uncompounded, incorporeal, invisible, impalpable, uncircumscribed, unlimited, incomprehensible, uncontained, unfathomable, good, just, the Maker of all created things, all-powerful, all-ruling, all-seeing, the Provider, the Sovereign, and the Judge of all.³

2. Many Orthodox Christians are not merely “indifferent” to evolution; they openly accept it, unaware that thereby they accept the Latin-Scholastic doctrine of creation and the first-created man, which is totally opposed to the Orthodox Christian doctrine as set forth clearly especially in the Holy Fathers of the highest spiritual life.

3. In general the question of “evolution” and “creation” has by now, after so many vain arguments brought forth by both sides in the past century, become so confused that even many very aware Orthodox Christians do not have a coherent view on the whole subject; and very few are those who know the Patristic teaching concerning the interpretation of the text of Genesis, all the more so in that few of the Patristic works on Genesis are to be found in English or other Western languages.*

7. Paleontology and “Ivory-Tower Orthodoxy”

Paleontology is an imprecise and very outward science. And evolution does *not* come from paleontology—it is a philosophy which many paleontologists accept.

Theology and paleontology are not two entirely independent spheres—that’s a modern rationalistic idea. They are different levels which *sometimes* overlap.** And the basic *philosophies* of [Orthodox]

* This situation has changed with the publication in English of more Patristic works pertaining to Genesis; see “Suggested Resources,” pp. 883–87 below.—Ed.

** Here as in other places (pp. 110, 118–19 above and pp. 673–74, 683 below), Fr. Seraphim counters a view that was later developed as a thesis by paleontologist and evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould: that science and religion represent “non-overlapping magisteria.” (See Gould, “Non-overlapping Magisteria,” *Natural History*, vol. 106 [March 1997], pp. 16–22.)—Ed.

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theology and [evolutionist] paleontology are radically distinct: man as *fallen* from the angelic state, vs. man *rising* up from savagery. One can't hold *both* these ideas seriously.*

The idea that paleontology can believe whatever it wants and Orthodox Christianity isn't affected—this is an ostrich mentality, which makes Orthodoxy either fairy tales or simply remote from life. On the contrary, Orthodoxy often impinges on everyday problems; and a lack of Orthodox *philosophy* to apply revelation to life, means we are *crippled* for ordinary life. This is *ivory-tower Orthodoxy*, not real Orthodoxy.

We must be precise about “science.” Most people *assume* “science” knows what it is talking about. *But there is no such thing as “science”—there are different “sciences,” each one with a very different level of accuracy and preciseness.* Paleontology is one of the *less* precise sciences, requiring much guesswork to fill vast gaps of time and knowledge. All the sciences connected with “proving” evolution are imprecise—prehistory, paleontology, geology. The more precise sciences whose testimony is called for to “prove” evolution—embryology, genetics, etc.—if anything give proof *against* evolution.**

* Furthermore, as noted above, Orthodox theology does not agree with the evolutionist view which places most of the fossil record (a record precisely of corruption) before the appearance of man.—ED.

** In other notes, Fr. Seraphim put it somewhat differently: “The more precise the science (e.g., genetics), the less convincing proof [of evolution] there is; the less precise (paleontology, archeology, prehistory), the bolder the speculation at the expense of facts.”

Phillip E. Johnson, commenting on Michael H. Brown’s *The Search for Eve* (1990), notes: “The book shows the contempt that ‘hard science’ molecular biologists have for the ‘softer’ paleontologists who base their theories about human evolution upon reconstructions from isolated teeth, shattered skullcaps, and fragmented jaws” (Johnson, *Darwin on Trial*, p. 194).

See *Not by Chance!* by Lee Spetner, *Genetic Entropy* by J. C. Sanford, and *Signature in the Cell* by Stephen C. Meyer for critiques of evolutionary theory based on recent discoveries in the “hard science” of molecular biology.—ED.

*8. Which Interpretation of the Fossil Record
Makes God a Deceiver?*

Evolutionists (e.g., Dobzhansky) say that if evolution is not true, then God is playing “tricks” on man with fossils, etc. Not so—because evolutionists *read into* the fossils their own religious and philosophical beliefs. But indeed, if evolution be *true*, then God has “tricked” the writers of Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers who have interpreted it!

9. Man as Qualitatively Different from Animals

According to evolutionism, Adam was born of carnal intercourse of non-human creatures. This is a “son of God”?!

To reconcile evolution and Orthodox teaching, one must say either:

(1) The difference between man and beasts is *quantitative* rather than qualitative: one last little mutation produced man. This is repugnant to theology, which holds that the image of God is qualitatively different from beasts—no beast is “almost man.”

Or: (2) Adam was born a beast, and became man only by a miracle of God’s “inbreathing.” This is repugnant to science, which seeks to explain everything by natural laws, and rejects miraculous explanations.

*10. The Roman Catholic Idea of the State of Adam
(according to Fr. Michael Pomazansky)*

In the Roman Catholic view, the result of the fall is the loss by man of a *supernatural* state given by God’s grace (it is not the loss of his *natural* state, as in Orthodox theology), and after this man remains in his “*natural*” condition. His *nature* is not injured, but only placed in disorder—the flesh overweighs the spirit.

(The Protestant error is a little different: according to Luther and Calvin, human nature was *completely corrupted* by the fall and can do nothing to help itself.)

Blessed Augustine, in opposing Pelagianism, went to the opposite error and stated that in fallen man freedom to do good was *completely annihilated*; the grace of God is everything (cf. Protestantism).*

Thus Catholicism underestimates the nature of man before the fall, and his nature after the fall (and so opposed St. John Cassian). The same error again appeared in Barlaam, who underestimated the state of Divine vision accessible to man in this life, and so he opposed St. Gregory Palamas.

The greatness of man and his origin and destiny are *not understood* by the Latins—they make him too small, obviously because they measure everything by a *this-worldly* standard. Their theology comes from *human wisdom*, not Divine revelation and Divine vision.

11. An “Inferiority Complex” among Christians

The prestige of science has produced an “inferiority complex” in Christians. Science produces “results,” as a result of what no one will deny is really knowledge; but this has produced in general an air of superstitious awe surrounding the pronouncements of “science” (or, rather, scientists) on many things which it is not competent to judge. And so when science touches on things mentioned in Scripture, for example, believers are much too quick to back off and defend their treasures by saying they are “metaphors” or do not mean *literally* what they say. This is nowhere clearer than in the first chapters of Genesis, which such believers hasten to interpret in a way acceptable to the latest “scientific opinion.”

12. What Kind of Simple-Minded Fools Are We?

Must we have a naive immigrant psychology in the West?—Chanting in our services and reading in Scripture that the genealogy of mankind starts with Adam, “who was [the son] of God” (Luke 3:38), and believing “in actual fact” that there were countless ages of Neander-

* On this subject, see Fr. Seraphim Rose, *The Place of Blessed Augustine in the Orthodox Church*, chap. 2.—ED.

thals, Java Man, etc., before Adam? What kind of simple-minded fools are we not to see that if we are speechless before the “scientific” wisdom of this world, our view of man and creation makes no sense at all and is only some kind of fairy tale—*in which all the Holy Fathers believed, but we know better!* Thus, science teaches us our “Orthodox theology”—and we are so under the fascination of modern Western ideas that we fall for it!

*13. For the “Orthodox Evolutionist,”
Where Does History Begin and Fables Leave Off?*

How can Orthodox Christians reconcile [the evolutionist] view of creation and of early man with Orthodox doctrine? Some openly proclaim themselves “Orthodox evolutionists,” and many others, assuming that “science must know what it is talking about,” accept evolution in silence, even though they may feel uneasy or disturbed about some points.

Questions asked by simple believers actually raise very profound questions. The idea of the “evolution of species” is incidental and minor compared with fundamental questions concerning man: How can we believe that Adam was created “as an immortal king over an incorrupt world” (St. Symeon the New Theologian)⁴ if he is descended from corruptible creatures? If “man” is hundreds of thousands or millions of years old, then how can Adam be an historical person? And if he is not historical, then is Cain or Abel, or Methusalah, or Noah?^{*} Where does history begin and fables leave off? And has the Orthodox Church then erred in always recognizing the forefathers as individuals, and indeed saints commemorated during her Divine services? And who was it that Christ raised from hell if Adam is not a real man and the ancestor of all men?^{**}

* As noted above (pp. 298n, 327n), Christ Himself spoke of Abel and Noah as actual, historical persons.—ED.

** On how belief in a real Adam as the ancestor of all men serves as a basis for the Pauline and Patristic exposition of the Orthodox doctrine of redemption, see pp. 41–43 above and pp. 751–53, 751–52nn, 774–78, 776n, 782–83nn below.—ED.

14. The Old Testament Chronology

The time elapsed from Adam to the present day is no more than some 7,500 years, as the Holy Fathers never doubt. St. John Chrysostom says clearly that Christ “opened for us today Paradise, which had remained closed for some 5,000 years.”⁵ And St. Isaac the Syrian: Before Christ “for five thousand five hundred and some years God left Adam (i.e., man) to labor on the earth.”⁶... But why needlessly quote the Fathers who all say the same thing, when every Orthodox Christian need only look at any Orthodox calendar to discover that we are now living in “the year 7482 from the Creation of the world,” according to the chronology that has come down to us from the earliest Christian times. (The Fathers, by the way, were well aware of the discrepancy of some hundreds of years between the Greek and Hebrew Old Testament chronology, and it did not bother them; they did not quibble over years or worry that the standard calendar was precise “to the very year”; it is sufficient that what is involved is beyond any doubt a matter of some few thousands of years, involving the lifetimes of specific men, and it can in no way be interpreted as millions of years or whole ages and races of men.)

15. The Missing Evidence

All attempts to reconcile evolution and Christianity are artificial:

1. the Day-Age theory [i.e., the Six Days are actually periods of millions or billions of years];*

* The Day-Age theory was first promulgated by the Scottish stonemason, self-taught geologist, and popular author Hugh Miller in his book *The Testimony of the Rocks*, published in 1857. (The book was published shortly after his death: he committed suicide on the night he had finished checking the printers' proofs. For his exposition of the Day-Age theory, see pp. 195–211 of the book; for an account of his life and death, see pp. 7–32.)

Today, the Day-Age theory is associated with both “theistic evolution” and “old earth/progressive creationism.” (Miller himself was an advocate of the latter view.) For

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2. the “Gap” theory [i.e., there was a gap of billions of years between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2];*
3. the body of Adam evolved and then his soul was created or grace was given to him.

The whole question of evolution has never been even *formulated* from an Orthodox point of view. The missing evidence is the Patristic evidence. The main purpose of this book is to present this—as an addition to the evidence for the creation “model.”

critiques of the Day-Age view, see Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, pp. 67–93, and Henry M. Morris, *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science*, pp. 114–16.—ED.

* The Gap theory was first proposed in 1814, in a lecture by the Protestant minister and theological writer Thomas Chalmers, who was later instrumental in founding the Free Church of Scotland. Beginning in 1909 the theory was endorsed in the footnotes to the popular Scofield Reference Bible.

The most thorough critique of the Gap theory is found in the book *Unformed and Unfilled* by Weston W. Fields. The Gap theory is also discussed in Jonathan Sarfati, *Refuting Compromise*, pp. 101–4, and Henry M. Morris, *The Biblical Basis for Modern Science*, pp. 121–25.—ED.

CHAPTER 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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pensable. One truth cannot contradict the other—but their intertwining is a complex subject. No *fact*, whether physical (science) or spiritual (theology—where truth and not speculation is involved) can be denied.

II. Critique of evolutionary theory.

- A. Evolutionary theory is overdone—it has dominated scientific thinking for a century and has had enormous influence in nonscientific realms (morality, education, religion) totally out of proportion to the actual nature and certainty of its knowledge.
- B. The history of it—the search for an explanation without God. This does not *entirely* discredit it, because actually almost all of our knowledge is distorted by biases and predispositions; but it already guarantees that the final outcome of this search will be one-sided and partial.* Recent reaction against evolutionary theory among many scientists is a sign of this.
- C. Basic evolutionist arguments are all inconclusive; there is no *proof* for or against.
- D. History of the rise and decline of the evolutionary hypothesis (see [Henry] Morris, etc.)—the Scopes trial, fashions in thought, respectability. Many Orthodox people suffer from an “inferiority complex”; they want to be “up-to-date” and are

* The late paleontologist and evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould, who professed to have no religious beliefs, once made the following frank observation: “Our ways of learning about the world are strongly influenced by the social preconceptions and biased modes of thinking that each scientist must apply to any problem. The stereotype of a fully rational and objective ‘scientific method,’ with individual scientists as logical (and interchangeable) robots is self-serving mythology” (“In the Mind of the Beholder,” *Natural History*, vol. 103, no. 2 [Feb. 1994], p. 14).

From this consideration one is reminded of the statement of St. Gregory Palamas that Fr. Seraphim quoted above (p. 466). Speaking of various forms of secular knowledge, including “the discovery of the mysteries of nature,” St. Gregory wrote that “they are manifested according to the idea of those who use them and easily take the form which is given them by the point of view of those who possess them.” One’s point of view is crucial since, as St. Gregory says, it determines whether the fruits of one’s secular learning are good or evil.—ED.

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fearful of being identified as “fundamentalists.” ... We must be above this.

III. Answer:

- A. Not the “Bible”—it needs interpretation.*
 - B. Not “science”—it lacks the higher metaphysical dimension by its own nature.
 - C. Not “agnosticism”: science and religion in airtight compartments; they must come together.
 - D. Not “Christian evolutionism”: the false combination of “science” and “religion.” This means Christianity giving ground before evolutionism, allowing it to dictate dogma (Teilhard de Chardin, etc.)
 - E. The answer: the Orthodox Patristic view (i.e., the Orthodox interpretation of Scripture), with awareness of science. This is what Kireyevsky called for. Science must be *enlightened and raised up in knowledge* by faith and revelation. But no one in all the evolution controversy has made more than a token use of the Fathers. What do the Fathers teach?
 - F. The following is not “all the answer”; rather, it is an approach to the answers for Orthodox Christians by trying first of all to identify the *question*—where are the sources of harmony and conflict between contemporary science and the Holy Fathers?
 - G. To be avoided: “proof texts,” out of context statements from the Fathers, picking and choosing.
- IV. Patristic sources (list chief ones) and their principles of interpretation of Scripture (“literal” but also “befitting God”—cf. St. John Chrysostom).

V. The basic question:

- A. Beginnings.
 - 1. Science has been mistaken in treading on this ground: it is beyond its scope. The beginning of life or of the universe can only be the subject of the wildest guesses, unless it has

* Here Fr. Seraphim means that the answer is not simply the Bible *by itself*, since the Bible can be misinterpreted. The answer is the Bible with the interpretation of the Holy Fathers (see below).—ED.

been revealed. Science has sought it because it threw out revelation—this was a fatal mistake which began the whole controversy. If society does not have a revelation or “model” of beginnings which scientists can accept, then scientists should be more humble in speculations and not try to supply this by means of groundless projections.

2. Beginnings by their very nature are *metaphysical*, miraculous. If we can know them at all, it is only by revelation. If we *can't* know them, then don't guess.
3. All “scientific” hypotheses about beginnings are only a cheap imitation of theology—no “God,” but a “cosmic tapioca” instead; no “creation,” but a “big bang” instead—this is ridiculous. Scientists don't realize the ridiculousness of it because they have no theological awareness. Beginnings are “off bounds” to scientists—they seek them only because of the crisis of religious *awareness* and knowledge in modern times, which has led the secular sciences to usurp the role of theology, [and] human guesses [to usurp] the role of revelation.
4. Once the miraculousness of beginnings is admitted, then other questions in evolution take on new light. The conflict between “gradual evolution” and “Six-Day creation” is seen in a new light—either one is equally thinkable (cf. Julian Huxley: “I can conceive of a six-day creation—but there is no God to do it!”). *Then* the question becomes, not whether one is *proved* by present scientific findings (*neither* one is—science can't do it!) but: how can I make the best whole picture, incorporating true scientific findings and true knowledge of revelation?

B. The Six Days.

1. False ideas of Day-Age: “1,000 years = 1 day.”* This is too

* Fr. Seraphim is speaking here of the extrapolation of 2 Peter 3:8 onto the Six Days of Creation described in Genesis. In other notes he writes: “St. Peter's words ('One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day') is a general truth, not applicable to every use of the word 'day' in Scripture; we must examine the Genesis case individually.” Indeed, St. Peter's statement has nothing to do

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- low a level of “reconciliation”; it does not remove the main problem.
2. The Patristic view: the Holy Fathers didn’t really discuss the question as we see it because the evolutionary idea wasn’t present. It seems *assumed* that the days are very short—cf. Gregory the Theologian on the “newly created earth” for Adam, St. Ephraim the Syrian, etc.*
 3. But a much more fundamental question is the *corruption* of the world in those Six Days—cf. St. Symeon the New Theologian. The most consistent interpretation of the Holy Fathers is that the world knew no corruption until Adam’s fall. If this is accepted, then the greater part of evolution’s schema of prehistory is thrown out. Some (e.g., Kalomiros) would elaborately justify the evolutionary view, taking St. Gregory of Nyssa’s “two creations,” etc., and showing the “full agreement” of the Fathers with the idea that the world was corrupt from the very beginning—this is obviously exaggerated.
 4. Science enlightened by faith does not need to *force* any interpretation on the Six Days which would contradict scientific uniformitarian assumptions—but at least it will withhold *certainty* of opinions in the face of the *possibility* of a radically different world before Adam’s fall. This is also bound up with the question of *beginnings*. Those Six Days are part of the *Creation* (i.e., the metaphysical realm, miraculous), and hence all the more unknowable in detail.
- C. “Fixity of Species”—“Special Creation.”
1. There has been much unnecessary controversy on this question. “Kinds” vs. “species.” The popular mind accepts mere “variation” as proof of a much bigger question of “evolu-

with the Six Days of Creation, nor is it meant to define the length of a day; rather, it is simile, drawn from Psalm 89:4, intended to illustrate the fact that God is outside of time. The application of St. Peter’s statement to the timespan of the Six Days of Creation is a modern conceit, not found in the writings of the Holy Fathers (see ACCS: New Testament 11, pp. 158–59).—ED.

* See pp. 436, 442–43 above.—ED.

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tion.” We leave it to scientists to define the limits of change observable to them. By its grandiose conception, evolution as such cannot be *proved* by the small variations observable by science today.

2. But revelation and the Patristic witness definitely have something to say on this point: St. Basil (an “eagle always produces an eagle”), St. Ambrose (the mule, a donkey-horse hybrid, is infertile; this is a sign to man: “Man, don’t interfere”). Science, of course, does not deny the stability and the fixity of kinds (and the sterility of hybrids) in *present experience*; but evolutionary belief requires that the ultimate ancestors of living creatures are not many but one. But why?—Because theology (the question of “beginnings” again!) has intruded into science. This is beyond proof. And science is faced with the fact that an immense number of “links” are missing between kinds, both today and in fossils.
3. A philosophical point: quote St. Gregory of Nyssa on the “confusion of natures” that occurs if reincarnation is accepted; it is the same if one accepts evolution.
4. Let scientists define the limits of variation, and let them use the word and concept of “evolution” in explaining change—but let them abandon metaphysical schemes which strive to extrapolate small changes into an all-encompassing principle. If this latter is true, let it come naturally from the data without forcing an interpretation on facts.

D. The “first-formed man.”

1. Here a whole series of questions arise, and perhaps this is the one area where there is a serious clash between the evolutionary hypothesis and revealed knowledge. Let us carefully separate the different questions involved.
2. “From the dust.”
 - a) There have been attempts to explain this by quoting St. Athanasius (“*all* men are from the dust”—i.e., there is “nothing special” about this creation).
 - b) But the Fathers precisely emphasize the *specialness* of

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man's creation (cf. St. Basil)—of course, not by the literal *hand* of God, but separate from all other acts of creation; it is something higher.

3. Apology for evolution:

- a) The idea that Adam came last, and therefore "*descended*" from the rest of creation. Quote St. Gregory the Theologian on *why* he came last; St. Gregory of Nyssa. *Nothing* can be inferred from the Scriptures or the Fathers favoring the evolution of man—you must project this belief into the texts.
 - b) The very narrative of Genesis says the body came first, then the soul—cf. St. John Chrysostom (Adam was first a “dummy”) and St. Seraphim (Adam was first a “living creature”—some base their whole evolutionist argument on this nineteenth-century Father!). But we must clearly distinguish between the truth and the way it is described owing to the limitations of human language. Sts. Chrysostom and Seraphim are not discussing the *chronological* creation of man, but the composite *nature* of man, on which they do not (incidentally) *disagree* but only have a different perspective. But quote St. John Damascene and St. Gregory of Nyssa on the *simultaneous* creation of man.
 - c) Some, wishing to preserve both the Scripture and evolution, insert the “divine” act of man’s creation rather arbitrarily into the evolutionary history of man (as Teilhard de Chardin said might be done). Some would have man evolved from lower beasts, but with a separate “____”;* others would have him a beast until God breathed in his “soul” or “grace.”—All such arguments are artificial: science does not need them to explain man as it thinks he is, and from the theological side it is arbitrary to stick a human soul into an otherwise “natural” process.
4. Can Adam have non-human ancestors?
 - a) Evolution says yes—so much so that if you deny this

* Fr. Seraphim’s handwriting is unclear here.—ED.

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point you really do away with evolution, which is nothing if it is not universal.

- b) Quote the Fathers on the first-*formed* man with no father or mother. The Fathers clearly believed him to have no ancestors of any kind.

5. A related question: the age of man, the antiquity of Adam.

- a) All the Fathers accept the Old Testament chronology, ca. 7,500 years. One writer [Dr. Kalomirov] says this is “Jewish rationalism”; others point out the discrepancy between the Greek and Hebrew texts. Quote Blessed Augustine on this point—the Fathers were not “literal,” but said “more or less.” Latest Protestant apologists also have become less literal on this, but point out the difference between a man *millions* of years old, and some 6,000–10,000 years.*

- b) Genealogies of Christ show that Adam is the “son of God.” The Fathers are very concerned to reconcile discrepancies and show that this is a literal genealogy, not a list of “symbolic ancestors.” Thus, man is some thousands of years old, not millions.

6. One Adam or many?

- a) “Polygenism”—commonly accepted in evolutionist circles—makes no sense for man. Adam is a person.

7. The creation of Eve.

- a) This is a stumbling block for evolutionists. If this is “literal,” then the evolutionary hypothesis does not apply to man; if he is “evolved” then he is already male and female like all the rest of “evolved” nature.
- b) Quote the Fathers—Sts. John Chrysostom, Ephraim the Syrian, and others.
- c) Again, it is a question of “beginnings” which science itself is unprepared to handle. If scientists regard it as “absurd,” it is primarily on nonscientific grounds.

* See, for example, appendix 2 in John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood*.—ED.

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8. The *nature* of the first-formed man—Paradise.
 - a) A real place? or symbolism? All the Fathers assume Paradise is a reality. If Paradise is unreal, and Adam never had a state unfallen—then heaven itself becomes dubious, and the transfigured state of man is open to question.
9. The fall of man.
 - a) Again, let's not get bogged down in details.
 - b) Is it an historical act?
 - c) The consequences—sin and death are passed to us.

VI. Conclusions.

- A. Give the Orthodox Patristic “model” of creation.
- B. Science is afraid of it because, under the influence not of purely scientific consideration but rather shaped by the modern *philosophic* mentality, it fears the metaphysical or supernatural. But its own speculations on beginnings are *also* metaphysical and supernatural.
- C. The weakness of the theory of evolution as a sweeping theory (as opposed to its applications on small areas) lies in the fact that it refuses to admit the metaphysical where it naturally belongs. If we can know beginnings, it is only through revelation. If not, it's all guesses. Here revelation and faith must come to the aid of science and *raise* it up to see better.

2. *Patristic Section*

I. Introduction.

- A. This will not be only Patristic theology, but also Patristic *philosophy*: the views of the Fathers on questions that are not directly dogmatic. The disruption of knowledge brought about by a disproportionate emphasis on logic and science in the modern West has affected many Orthodox thinkers also. One effect has been to place “theology” and “philosophy” and “science” in watertight compartments. This results in the retreat of theology before science, which gives a large part of one’s “worldview” now. This makes it possible for very fervent and zealous Orthodox Christians to think they can believe *both* in

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the Patristic account of creation and in evolution—as if the two were entirely distinct. No, they overlap, and there is a place of conflict which can only be resolved by applying the Patristic *philosophy* to the whole of one's worldview.

- B. The distinction, of course, must be made between the realm of *facts* (and those views which depend on facts) and the realm of philosophy as such; quote Fr. Michael Pomazansky on St. Basil and St. John of Kronstadt. The Fathers to be sure can be mistaken in their views if these depend on facts which are wrong; we must read them with discernment and no preconceived notions.

II. The question of “Nature” and “Seed.”

- A. This is not a scientific but a philosophical question. Even the idea of “species” is arbitrary, as scientists admit. Philosophy, on the other hand, does not demand that we know all the *details* of the distinctions and similarities and categories of creatures, but it has a definite view about the idea of the “natures” of things.
- B. The evolutionary view constitutes a philosophy in itself: that nature in principle is fluid, one kind of creature becoming another kind, and all creatures proceeding from one or a few primitive types. This is a sweeping philosophy for which, *of course*, there is no proof whatever....* Since this vast view of evolution is *not* scientific but philosophical, we must criticize it on the basis of Patristic philosophy.
- C. St. Gregory of Nyssa, in *On the Resurrection*, teaches that nature is not confused, and things are distinct, each with its own nature. The book of Genesis says “each according to its kind.” So also St. Basil and St. Ambrose.... The Patristic view is definitely that natures are distinct and don’t mingle, and that this is the way God created them. “Freaks” are clearly exceptions. The evolutionary philosophy of “one nature” running through all creation is unfounded scientifically and un-Patristic philosophically, and is the

* In another working outline, Fr. Seraphim elucidated this point: “‘Evolution’ is a *philosophical*, not a scientific question. It goes beyond all scientific facts, or rather jumps from the observable facts of variation to an all-encompassing philosophical theory which has no *proof* but only ‘semblances’ of proof.”—ED.

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opposite of the heresy of the preexistence and transmigration of souls, about which more will be said below.

III. The Creation of the Six Days.

- A. If the Patristic philosophy of “nature” is different from that of evolution, the Patristic idea of the *creation* of nature must likewise differ. Here we must think precisely on a number of points.
- B. Kalomiros: quote St. Gregory of Nyssa, and the popular idea that Genesis describes creation just like modern science. But this is very vague.
- C. Twenty-four-hour days: is this some kind of defect in the Fathers, a “fundamentalism” before its time, a captivity of pre-modern science?
- D. No: there is profound meaning in it.
 1. God’s omnipotence and *swift* action is emphasized, for one’s idea of nature is indeed dependent on one’s idea of God. We shall see later that the “God” of “evolutionists” is not at all the God of Christians.
 2. The Six Days are a mean between extremes,* and define the nature of time.
 3. The nature of the creative process (and of the first-created world) is understood by the Fathers *quite differently* from evolutionism. Evolutionism merely *projects* present natural laws into the beginnings, without seeing that Genesis, the beginning of all things, is something quite distinct from the present state of things, and knowledge of it is not available to science but only through revelation. Which brings us to the key point:

IV. The Patristic Interpretation of Genesis.

- A. Moses; Divine knowledge; the realism of the Fathers.
- B. The nature of our knowledge of the first-created world.

V. The first-created world; the fall.

VI. Adam and the nature of man.

* By “extremes,” Fr. Seraphim is evidently referring to the idea of a totally instantaneous creation on the one hand (see pp. 121, 140–42, 140–41n, 436, 439–42 above), and the idea of evolution over vast periods of time on the other.—ED.



Fr. Seraphim talking with pilgrims during the St. Herman Summer Pilgrimage in August 1982, at which he began the second segment of his course on Genesis.
St. Herman of Alaska Monastery, Platina, California.

AFTERWORD

Fr. Seraphim's Last Talk on Creation and Evolution

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following talk, taken entirely from a tape transcription, was given as an introduction to the second segment of Fr. Seraphim's course on Genesis, August 9, 1982. Several of his students were new, not having attended the first segment in August 1981. Therefore, before providing a Patristic commentary on the fourth to eleventh chapters of Genesis (from Cain and Abel to the Tower of Babel), Fr. Seraphim recapped what he had said during the first segment about science as it relates to Scripture and the Holy Fathers. A few weeks after giving this talk, he was taken to the hospital, and on September 2 he reposed in the Lord.

THE QUESTION of how we approach the book of Genesis is bound up with our modern outlook on life. We have all been brain-washed. Whoever watches television or goes to school hears certain ideas put across in the name of science, some of which are scientific and some of which are not scientific—they are speculations. Some of what is put across is philosophy, and some of it even comes close to a kind of religion.

This is especially strong in the Soviet Union, where they teach that man has descended from monkeys. The Soviet state pushes this idea as a kind of dogma. Therefore, when people become Christian, they throw off this idea that had been forced upon them. Here in the West, on the other hand, it is not quite so easy to see it as dogma, because here we are free; science is supposed to be free and have its own theo-

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ries and its own reasons for having these theories. Therefore, often we think something is a scientific truth when it is not so at all, but rather is open to speculation and to discussion. Unfortunately, this very subject of evolutionism is very emotion-charged, and therefore a lot of people are not willing to discuss it. They would rather accept whatever is in the air, whatever is taught in the science class, without thinking too much.

Another reason why people do not want to think about or discuss this issue is because it is very complicated. You can get involved in all kinds of complex questions which are totally irrelevant. For example, you tell somebody, "I don't believe that man comes from a monkey"; and he says, "But science doesn't teach that man comes from a monkey."

"Well, I don't believe that he comes from an ape."

"But science doesn't teach he comes from an ape. Science teaches he comes from a lower creature which is not an ape, but something else."*

In fact, nowadays some evolutionists say that some of the apes descended from men, instead of vice versa.** There are all kinds of evidence you can add up on whatever side you want to take. All these details aside, however, there are certain basic questions one can ask. "Does man come directly from the hand of God, or does he come from some lower creature?"—That is a very basic question which should be

* Apologists for evolutionism have often used this argument—that man did not descend from an ape but from an earlier common ancestor—to show that their opponents do not properly understand evolution. However, a leading atheistic evolutionary paleontologist, the late George Gaylord Simpson, called this sort of argument "pussyfooting." He wrote: "In fact, that earlier ancestor would certainly be called an ape or monkey in popular speech by anyone who saw it. Since the terms ape and monkey are defined by popular usage, man's ancestors were apes or monkeys (or successively both). It is pusillanimous if not dishonest for an informed investigator to say otherwise" (Simpson, "The World into Which Darwin Led Us," *Science*, vol. 131, no. 3405 [April 1, 1960], p. 966).—ED.

** John Gribbin and Jeremy Cherpas, in their article "Descent of Man—or Ascent of Ape?", write: "To translate our suggestion into that form of speech, we think that the chimp is descended from man, that the common ancestor of the two was more man-like than ape-like" (*New Scientist*, vol. 91 [Sept. 3, 1981], p. 592).—ED.

open to discussion. And there are two ways of approaching the discussion: one from the side of Genesis (and we have to know how to understand what the book of Genesis says), the other from the side of science.

It so happens that science is not at all as certain about this question as some people claim it is. The Soviets say that everything is quite certain and dogmatic about it, and you simply accept what the scientists tell you and that is the truth. In the West, fortunately, there has been a lot of criticism and discussion of this matter.

When Darwin's theory first came out in the late nineteenth century, there was a lot of discussion, most of it not on a very high level. People in the Church of England, for example, were very upset by the whole idea that man came from a lower creature, but they did not have any really scientific preparation to discuss the question; therefore, they became "fundamental" about it. In fact, up to this day, there are fundamentalists who get up in arms whenever you mention the subject. They say everything is absolutely literal in the book of Genesis; they go to the opposite extreme and make it very difficult to have a rational discussion on the subject.

On the whole, the scientific discussion was still not on a very high level when, in 1925, there occurred the famous "Scopes Monkey Trial," which you have all heard about. In Tennessee there was a law* against the teaching of evolution, and a teacher volunteered to be a nominal defendant in a test case. Actually the state won that case; but the famous lawyer Clarence Darrow made such a case for how ridiculous it is to stand by these old Biblical ideas—which are not "scientific," and so forth—that from that time everybody became scared to be against evolution. Thus, those who were against it just remained quiet and did not have any particular argument. (There were actually some good books in that period which criticized the theory of evolution, but they were outside the main trend.) Even very fundamentalist people often would give way on various points about the theory of evolution, or else they would not want to discuss evolution because it

* Actually it was merely a symbolic measure. The governor signed the bill only with the explicit understanding that it would not be enforced.—ED.

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was too difficult. And there are so many complex issues involved that it is a very difficult subject to discuss rationally unless you are prepared.

However, in the last twenty years or so there have been a number of people who have been looking at this whole question a little more objectively, criticizing and discussing sometimes various small points, sometimes the whole theory. This has been a very good thing. Science should welcome it. Unfortunately, it has not been too well received in scientific circles.

I've become acquainted with these people. There is one group in San Diego called the Institute for Creation Research; they put out a monthly newsletter called *Acts & Facts* which discusses what is happening in their research. Usually it has an insert which goes into a specific scientific question. For example, one is on the law of entropy and creationism, another one is on experimental psychology, and so forth; there are often quite sophisticated discussions. They discuss the age of the earth, the age of the solar system, and all those questions which you have to know about if you are going into the scientific side of this issue.

These people are very good. Their Institute is a Protestant religious school, but they are operating purely on the basis of scientific criticism.* They put out a number of textbooks, including a very good one called *Scientific Creationism*, in which they discuss all the various points about evolution and creation without mentioning anything religious, because if they were to start mentioning religious things, of course, their textbook could never be used in a high school or a college. In the last few years especially, they have gotten quite a bit of impetus behind them. They have been having a number of debates in big universities all over the country, and there has been great

* The Institute currently has some forty Ph.D. scientists on its resident faculty, adjunct faculty, and advisory board. A number of Ph.D. scientists are also employed by creationist organizations that have been established since Fr. Seraphim's repose, most notably Creation Ministries International (centered in Queensland, Australia, with offices in the United States and other countries) and Answers in Genesis (centered in Kentucky, with offices in the United Kingdom).—ED.

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interest—students come out by the thousands.* The student response depends on where the debate takes place. If it occurs in a university in California, the students will be more against creationist ideas. In the South, the students are more in favor of them. In fact, in one place the evolutionists who were debating said they felt like they were a lion in a den of Daniels: everything was reversed.

The discussions of the creation scientists are very interesting. They are quite up on the latest literature and discoveries. On the other hand, recently some of the evolutionists have stopped debating creation/evolution because they generally are not prepared. A number of them recently admitted that, since these creationists are so up on their details and so sharp in debate, they are putting the evolutionists to shame.** It is time, they say, that evolutionists go back and begin to find out what their arguments are, because through all these years they have been taking for granted that everyone thinks like they do. They were not ready for all the criticism from the side of creationism, which goes into quite specific points which are very dubious according to the evolutionist interpretation.

The Creation Research Society in Michigan now has a voting membership of well over six hundred scientists, all of whom signed a statement that they were in favor of the creationist interpretation of

* Scientists from the Institute for Creation Research have participated in hundreds of formal creation/evolution debates, usually held on university campuses and opposing faculty evolutionary scientists. The foremost debater has been Dr. Duane Gish, who received his Ph.D. in biochemistry from U.C. Berkeley and held key positions at Berkeley, Cornell University Medical College, and the Upjohn Company before joining the Institute for Creation Research in 1971. When he retired in 2005 at the age of eighty-four, Gish had conducted over 350 debates with evolutionist professors, attended by large numbers of students. He never lost a debate.—ED.

** In 1996 Dr. Eugenie Scott, executive director of the National Center for Science Education (a private organization dedicated to protecting the teaching of evolution from creationist challenges), warned her fellow evolutionists: ‘*Avoid debates*. If your local campus Christian fellowship asks you to ‘defend evolution,’ please decline ... you will probably get beaten” (Eugenie C. Scott, “Monkey Business,” *The Sciences*, Jan.–Feb. 1996, p. 21).—ED.

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origins.* Therefore, if someone tells you that evolution is the only scientific interpretation, you should be aware that there are at least six hundred scientists who say no. There are thousands more who, although they would not make that actual statement, nevertheless sympathize and are willing to discuss the issue. In fact, one of our friends who is a scientist told us that more and more people in the scientific world, although they still stick to the evolution model, do not even insist that it is truth; it is for them a *model* that helps to explain how things came to be, how they are now developing, and so forth.

The creationists offer a visual presentation of two models—the creationist and the evolutionist—by which you can see what should happen according to the former and what should happen according to the latter. They say that the situation now is like it was in the time of Copernicus. Before Copernicus there was the geocentric model: that the sun, planets, and stars go around the earth. In order to explain how the planets move according to this interpretation, it was necessary to make so-called cycles and epicycles. For example, astronomers noticed that Mars appeared to go faster than the stars for a while, and then it suddenly went backwards. They had to figure out what kind of movement it needed to have in order to make it do this. If it was simply going around the earth, it was a very strange thing that it should be suddenly going backwards. Therefore, they had to make all kinds of adjustments in the sky to account for the fact that it did not follow a regular movement. Finally these movements and adjustments became so complicated that Copernicus said it was much easier to explain everything as if the earth and the planets went around the sun. The stars out there are comparatively fixed; they are further away than the plan-

* Each of these voting members has one or more post-graduate degrees in science. The statement that they signed affirms that "all basic types of living things, including man, were made by God during the Creation Week described in Genesis," and that "the great Flood described in Genesis ... was an historic event worldwide in its extent and effect." Although voting members of the Society must have post-graduate science degrees, those without such degrees can be sustaining or student members. The Society publishes a peer-reviewed journal, *Creation Research Society Quarterly*; it is now centered in Missouri, and has an experiment station in north-central Arizona.—ED.

ets. According to this concept, you have to make fewer epicycles and fewer adjustments in the calculations.

The creation scientists say that this is exactly what is happening with the evolutionary theory. Whenever something comes up which goes against the evolutionary theory, the evolutionists put in another cycle or epicycle. They explain that it cannot really be that way because it goes against the theory, and that is why they have to make an adjustment for this particular exception. The creationists say, why not change the theory and make it more simple?

Unfortunately, there is a lot of prejudice in this area because people say that if you talk about creation, you're talking about religion. Actually, every scientific theory has to have something which is assumed on faith. The evolutionists assume their belief on faith. The really rigorous ones insist that once there was nothing or there was a point of tremendous energy which suddenly exploded and produced the universe. It requires a great amount of faith to believe that. If you believe in God, you have a whole different approach. Of course, if you believe in God, then, since He is infinite, He can do whatever He wants. Then you can be free to see what fits the scientific facts and what fits the text of Genesis.

One common mistake in approaching the book of Genesis is to say that it is something religious, maybe even myth, while science treats the factual aspect. That is an oversimplified view, because Genesis talks about truth, and thus there will be an overlapping between what science talks about—because science is trying to get to truth—and what Genesis talks about. We have to be aware that we cannot put them in two different categories. When people try to separate them in this way (which they very frequently do as an answer to the question) they do not treat Genesis as a serious text. They say Genesis is not to be interpreted as a text that actually talks about the origins of nature, except as a kind of speculation or as a handing down of ancient myths, Babylonian creation tales, or something like that.

Therefore, the question is: how are we going to approach this whole text of Genesis? I think we have only one answer. We have to understand how this text has been understood by the Church over the past two thousand years, because it is a text which comes from God—a

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revealed text—and the Church which has preserved the revelation of God must have the way to understand it. Therefore, you cannot trust someone who simply opens up the text, in the English translation he has, and gives what seems to him to be a very basic interpretation. Furthermore, you cannot trust your own interpretation, because you are going to put your modern ideas into it. You are going to make it evolutionist or anti-evolutionist, according to your prejudice. That does not tell us what the text of Genesis says. To understand what it says, we have to understand how the Church understands it. In other words, what is the Patristic reading of it, how do the Fathers understand the text? That is what this course is about.

We discussed in the last year's course the first three chapters of Genesis, which are of course the "thickest" ones, requiring the most interpretation. These chapters discuss the whole Six Days of Creation, the creation of man, the fall of man, the state of Paradise, and man's banishment from Paradise.

Last year we saw that the interpretation of the Holy Fathers is not exactly what the Protestants would be satisfied with because it is not "fundamental" enough in some respects; and the people who want to combine Genesis with the modern theory of evolution would also not be satisfied with it because it is much too "fundamental" for them. Actually, if you want one word to describe how the Fathers interpret Genesis, I think you can say they interpret it very *realistically*. That is, first of all, they accept that (and this is a very basic point) the text is *Divinely inspired*. In fact, St. John Chrysostom says that it is a book of *prophecy*.^{*} Some books prophesy the future, but the book of Genesis is a *prophecy of the past*. This is necessary because, when the world was created, there was no witness. You cannot possibly have someone give you a firsthand account of what happened at the beginning of the world, because there was no one there. Therefore, unless the One Who made the world Himself tells you, you will never know—all you will have will be guesses.

According to the Holy Fathers, however, we *do* have this knowledge because God revealed it to the prophet Moses. Moses was in a

* See p. 131 above.—ED.

state of ecstasy when he received this text about the beginnings of the world; therefore, we have to read Genesis rather as we would read the book of the Apocalypse, the last book of the Bible, which deals with prophecies which have not been fulfilled yet and so is rather difficult to understand.

Genesis, then, should be understood as prophecy, according to the Holy Fathers, according to the rest of the Holy Scripture, and according to our own experience in the Church. A lot of it, of course, is beyond us; therefore we can say only a few things about some parts of the text.

So we approach this text as Divinely revealed, realizing that we will obtain a basic understanding of it not through our common sense, nor through science (although of course we have to use common sense also, and we can use science where it applies to a given text), but through the Holy Fathers.

This raises another question. People who are scientifically aware will say the Fathers made mistakes in science. For example, St. Basil the Great, in his writings on the Six Days of Creation, states that there are some creatures, such as certain frogs, which spontaneously come from the dust.¹ This was according to the science of his day. Knowing this isn't true, people in modern times say that the man made a mistake, since the science of his day, through which he was interpreting the scientific aspect, was wrong. And it is true that, in this respect, when there are scientific facts, we can correct the writings of the Holy Fathers. Some people, however, think this means we can correct the text of Genesis. But if you look at the text of Genesis, you will see that whenever the Fathers make these misinterpretations because of their knowledge of the science of their day, it is not because the text of Genesis says that. It is because that is the most logical way to read it on the basis of the scientific knowledge. Today we would have a little different way of reading it, and we might be more correct. The text remains the same.

Actually there is not a single statement in the text of Genesis which commits one either to the idea that the sun is going around the earth or the earth around the sun, or anything of the sort. That is all a matter of later interpretation, dependent upon our scientific awareness. Thus the text of Genesis is not open to this criticism of science.

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We might correct the interpretation of the Fathers if it deals with specific scientific questions like where frogs come from or something like that.

By the way, we should also not be afraid of science in interpreting the book of Genesis because all the writings of the Holy Fathers about the Six Days of Creation are *filled* with scientific facts, based on the science of their day. For example, when St. Basil discusses the creation of the birds, fish, or land animals, he goes into all the different kinds and explains their customs. He then tells how we can draw examples of moral life from them, like a bird that is faithful to its mate. That is all very nice and interesting, but the text of Genesis does not stand or fall on that. This is explanatory material. Actually, someone today could go into the scientific facts we have about creation, using these as explanatory material, and could write a tremendous book on this very subject of the Six Days of Creation. Unfortunately, people tend to be too narrow-minded nowadays; the scientists will not broaden their horizon enough to take in the whole aspect of Genesis. The ones who read Genesis usually are not prepared enough for the scientific side. Nevertheless, we can keep this possibility in mind; the subject is a very fruitful area for discussion.

Also, we are not to be afraid of science because science cannot possibly contradict revealed truth. If it's truth, it's truth. There's one kind revealed from God, and one kind revealed in nature. The kind revealed from God is absolute, we say, because it comes directly from God. But its interpretation relies upon our wisdom, which we obtain from the Church and the Holy Fathers as we go. When we have understood that, then we can even make our own speculations, as long as we do not say that those speculations are on the same level as the text itself. Science is much more speculative, especially when it comes to these very early things like the creation of the world, since no one was there to see it.

I should mention also a basic fact about the first Six Days of Creation that we discussed last year: those Six Days are quite different from what is going on now. The Holy Fathers make it quite clear that you cannot make deductions based upon what is happening now and derive an understanding of the first Six Days of Creation, because what

was happening then was the creation of the world *out of nothing*. That is not happening today. Now we have the continuous creative activity of God. St. John Chrysostom discusses this very matter in his commentary on Genesis.* As he points out, in Genesis it is said that God rested from His works (cf. Gen. 2:2), that is, ceased to create, but our Lord in the Gospel of John says that the Father continues to work (cf. John 5:17), and therefore He must still be creating. So these are two different things. What was in the beginning was the creation of God, from which He rested. That is no longer taking place. What happens after that is His continuous Providence over the world, which is actually a continuous creation, because without the living Word of God, how could a seed become an individual person or plant or animal? It is all very miraculous and a work of creation, but it's *different* from the creation which was at the beginning, in the first Six Days. If you do not see that, you will make a lot of mistakes.

We will see in our reading of the next chapters of Genesis—four through eleven—that there is even a basic difference between the way men were before the Flood and the way they were after the Flood. There are a number of things which changed with the Flood. But it was in the Six Days that everything we know now came to be, and after that is simply the continuation of those things which were already created, according to the laws which God made and gave to nature.

* See p. 192 above.—ED.



St. Maximus the Confessor (580–662) and
St. Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022).

*Fresco from the Trinity-Sypanov St. Pachomius of Nerekhta Convent of the
Kostroma Diocese, Russia. A. V. Alyoshin School of Iconography, 2005.*

APPENDIX ONE

Created in Incorruption

THE ORTHODOX PATRISTIC UNDERSTANDING
OF MAN AND THE COSMOS IN THEIR ORIGINAL,
FALLEN, AND REDEEMED STATES

By the editor

Adapted from a talk given at the conference on “Orthodoxy and the Natural Environment,” St. Nicholas Ranch, Dunlap, California, October 27, 2007, and again at the International Nativity Educational Readings of the Moscow Patriarchate, in the section “The Orthodox Interpretation of the Creation of the World and Contemporary Science,” held at the Moscow State University of Railway Engineering, January 30, 2008.

Through sin, this cosmos became a place of death and corruption.

—St. Maximus the Confessor¹

I. INTRODUCTION

THE consensus of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church holds that man and the rest of the visible creation were physically *incorrupt* (ἀφθαρτος, without decay) before the fall of man, and that death and corruption entered the world only at the fall. This doctrine is based on a common interpretation of both the Old and New Testaments. In the book of Genesis we learn that man was made subject to death and that the earth was “cursed” at the fall (Gen. 3:17–19). In the Wisdom of Solomon it is said that God did not make death and did not create living things for destruction (Wis. 1:13–14), and further

that man was created to be incorruptible (Wis. 2:23–24). This teaching is repeated in the New Testament by St. Paul, where he affirms that death came into the world through man's sin (Rom. 5:12, 17; 1 Cor. 15:21–22), that because of man the creation was made subject to "futility" (Rom. 8:20), and that the creation and man himself await deliverance from the "bondage of corruption" (Rom. 8:19, 21–23) at the general resurrection.

The common Patristic interpretation of this Scriptural teaching finds concise expression in the theology of St. Symeon the New Theologian, who writes as follows on the incorruption of man and the world in the beginning, and on their fall into corruption:

Adam was created with an incorruptible body, though one which was material and on the whole not yet spiritual, and was established by God the Creator as the immortal king of an incorrupt world, and I mean by the latter everything under heaven and not just Paradise....²

You see then that not unreasonably do we say that all the creation was also incorrupt from the beginning, and was furnished by God after the order of Paradise, but was cursed with corruption and led into bondage when it was subjected to the futility of men (cf. Rom. 8:20–21).³

This Scriptural-Patristic teaching, that death and corruption entered the cosmos only at the fall, is a basic tenet of the Orthodox Christian worldview. It is tied to, and indeed forms an integral part of, Orthodox anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology. Because this teaching is such a crucial one, and because today's secular worldview militates against it, it is worthy to be examined in depth. In this article we will attempt to present it in a generally chronological manner, outlining first the incorrupt state of man and the cosmos before the fall; then the death and corruption that entered at the fall; and finally the redemption and salvation of man and the cosmos by the incarnate Son of God, culminating in their final, perfected state after the general resurrection, when death and corruption will be permanently overcome. We will then discuss how, specifically, the Orthodox Church's teaching on prelapsarian incorruption relates to her teaching on the redemption of

man and the cosmos, and on their final, redeemed condition. Further, we will contrast this teaching and its theological corollaries with the modern secular worldview of evolutionism. In conclusion, we will consider how the Orthodox understanding of the first-created world, the fall, and the future age can inform our faith as Orthodox Christians.

II. THE ORIGINAL CONDITION OF MAN

1. Man's Spiritual Condition before the Fall

Before examining the subject of the original incorruption of the entire cosmos, let us begin by looking specifically at the original state of man, who St. Symeon the New Theologian says was created as “lord and king of all the visible creation,”⁴ and who, in the words of St. John Chrysostom, is “more precious to God than all creation.”⁵

According to the Orthodox Patristic worldview, the entire visible universe was made for the sake of man, and man was made for union with God. Man was created “in Divine grace,” as St. Gregory of Nyssa affirms.⁶ St. John Chrysostom writes that “the glory from above garbed them [Adam and Eve] better than any garment.”⁷ Likewise, St. John Damascene states that, in Paradise, Adam “had the indwelling God as a dwelling place and wore Him as a glorious garment. He was wrapped about with His grace.”⁸

The Orthodox Church understands grace to be the very Energy of God, distinct yet inseparable from the Divine Essence. God is wholly present in His Energies. Therefore, when man was created in grace, he had God Himself within him. He was meant to participate in God’s life through the Divine Energies, to be fully and perfectly penetrated by grace, and thus to attain to union with God—a union which the Holy Fathers do not hesitate to call deification (*θέωσις*).

St. John Damascene teaches that Adam was not deified at his creation, but was created *for* deification: he was “to complete the mystery by being deified through reversion to God—this, however, not by being transformed into the Divine Essence, but by participation in the Divine illumination.”⁹

2. *Man's Physical Condition before the Fall*

In the Wisdom of Solomon it is said: “God made man for incorruption, and made him to be an image of His own eternity. Nevertheless, through the envy of the devil death came into the world” (Wis. 2:23–24). It is the unquestionable testimony of the Church that Adam and Eve were created *conditionally* immortal; that is, if they had not sinned they could have lived forever in incorrupt bodies, partaking of the tree of life in Paradise, and eventually attaining to heaven as well. There was no necessity either in their remaining incorrupt or in their falling into corruption: their free will was the determining factor. In the words of St. Irenaeus of Lyons:

God placed certain limits upon man, so that, if he should keep the commandment of God, he would remain always as he was, that is, immortal. If, however, he should not keep it, he would become mortal, dissolving into the earth whence his frame was taken.¹⁰

Likewise, St. Athanasius the Great:

Knowing that the free will of man could incline to either side, in anticipation He [God] made secure the grace given them, by means of a law and a place. For, bringing them into His own Paradise [Garden], He gave them a law, so that, if they guarded the grace and remained good, they might possess the life in Paradise which is free of sorrow, pain or care, besides having the promise of incorruption in heaven.^{11 *}

* For further discussion of St. Athanasius' teaching on the immortality of man before the fall, see pp. 738–41, 738–39nn, 741n below. On our first parents' immortality and incorruption being dependent on the use of their free will, see also St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 124; St. Theophilus of Antioch, *To Autolycus* 2.24, 2.27; St. Methodius of Olympus, *From the Discourse on the Resurrection* 1.13; St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis* 2.17.3; St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 10; St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 61; St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* 2.30; St. Symeon the New Theologian, *Ethical Discourses* 1.2; St. Gregory the Sinaite, *On Commandments and Doctrines* 8; St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily* 31; etc.

That the first man was granted conditional immortality at his creation was affirmed in a Canon approved at the Council of Carthage in 419 and ratified at the Quinisext Council (692)* and the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787):

Whosoever says that Adam, the first man, was created mortal, so that whether he had sinned or not, he would have died in body—that is, he would have gone forth from the body, not because his sin merited this, but by natural necessity—let him be anathema.¹²

Originally, the incorrupt bodies of Adam and Eve did not have, in the phrase of St. Gregory the Theologian, the “denser flesh, mortal and unyielding,” that our bodies now have.¹³ As St. Maximus the Confessor wrote in elucidating the Theologian’s words, “The human body in the forefather Adam before the transgression … did not have the corruption that now whips him with its goads,” and was thus without a “constitution which makes the flesh denser,** mortal, and unyielding.”^{14***} According to St. Gregory the Sinaite, when “man was created incorruptible,” he was “without bodily humors.”^{15****}

From the writings of many Holy Fathers—Sts. Irenaeus of Lyons,

* The Quinisext Council in Trullo was held twelve years after the Sixth Ecumenical Council. As noted earlier, its decrees are accepted in the Orthodox Church as a continuation of the acts of the Fifth and Sixth Councils.

** The word translated here as “denser,” *παχυτέραν*, denotes the qualities of grossness, materiality, denseness, coarseness, and earthliness. Together with Sts. Gregory the Theologian and Maximus the Confessor, other Holy Fathers (e.g., St. Sophronius of Jerusalem, St. John Damascene, St. Gregory the Sinaite, and Blessed Theophylact of Ohrid and Bulgaria) used this term to describe a characteristic that the human body acquired at the fall and will lose in the resurrection; see the quotations on p. 487, 487n above and pp. 700, 700n, 719–20, 720n, 766, 766n, 768, 768n below.

*** The word translated as “unyielding,” *ἀντίτυπον*, could be variously rendered as “obstinate,” “resistant,” “rigid,” “contradictory,” or “opposing”; also, when referring (as in this case) to a body, it can mean “solid,” “firm,” or “tough.”

**** The word that St. Gregory the Sinaite employs here, *χυμοί*, denotes the liquid substances contained in the body. In the translations of this passage of St. Gregory found in the Slavonic and Russian versions of *The Philokalia (Dobrotolyubije)*—the works of St. Paisius Velichkovsky and St. Theophan the Recluse respectively—*χυμοί* is rendered as мокроты/мокрота, which means “moistures.”

Ephraim the Syrian, Athanasius the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrus, John Damascene, Maximus the Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory the Sinaite, and Gregory Palamas—we know that, before the fall, Adam and Eve were free from the bodily needs of shelter and clothing,¹⁶ and even of sleep;¹⁷ they had no sexual relations or even sexual passions;¹⁸ there was no emission of seed;¹⁹ their eyes did not produce tears;²⁰ they partook of incorruptible fruits, but did not void bodily waste;²¹* they had no afflictions, infirmities, illness, disease, physical defects, or maimings of the body;²² they knew no difficulties, sorrows, labors, sweat, hunger, or thirst;²³ they did not experience physical pain;²⁴ they were not subject to cold and heat, or to the elements.²⁵ Thus, writes St. John Chrysostom, before the fall man's existence was akin to that of the angels:

Up until that time [of the fall] they were living like angels in Paradise and so they were not burning with desire, not assaulted by other passions, not subject to the needs of nature, but on the contrary were created incorruptible and immortal, and on that account at any rate they had no need to wear clothes....

Consider, I ask you, the transcendence of their blessed condition, how they were superior to all bodily concerns, how they lived on earth as if they were in heaven, and though in fact possessing a body they did not feel the limitations of their bodies. After all, they had no need of shelter or habitation, clothing or anything of that kind....

Everything, you see, He [God] made and arranged so that this rational being [man] created by Him had the good fortune to be of

* St. Symeon taught that man needed to eat incorrupt fruit before the fall (see pp. 704, 769 below), while St. Maximus taught that Adam would not have lost his immortality if he had obeyed God and been nourished from the tree of life (cf. Gen. 2:9). St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Gregory the Sinaite listed feeding as a mark of the corruption that came into existence at the fall; however, both of them listed it together with the voiding of bodily waste. From the sum of the Patristic teaching on this subject, we can conclude that, while incorrupt man did eat incorrupt food before the fall, this eating was not the same as what we know today, when the food undergoes corruption and waste is excreted.

the greatest importance, and far from being inferior to the life of the angels, enjoyed in the body their immunity from suffering.²⁶

Elsewhere St. John Chrysostom writes that, before the fall, Adam and Eve

lived in Paradise as in heaven and they enjoyed God's company. Desire for sexual intercourse, conception, labor, childbirth, and every form of corruption had been banished from their souls.... At that time there were no cities, crafts, or houses.... Nevertheless, nothing either thwarted or hindered that happy life, which was far better than this one.²⁷

3. Desire and Pleasure before the Fall

Describing man's original condition, St. Symeon the New Theologian writes that

fiery lust or movement, or the irrational madness and desire of the stomach, as yet did not at all exist, but in him [Adam] was life without internal discord, and his existence was free from pain.²⁸

Elsewhere, the same Saint says that the fruits in Paradise afforded first-created man with "indescribable pleasure and enjoyment."* From these two statements it may be concluded that, in experiencing "pleasure and enjoyment" in created things prior to the fall, the first humans did not experience irrational desire for them.

According to St. Maximus the Confessor, at his creation man was supposed to direct his desire and longing not to created things but to God, and to find his pleasure (*ηδονή*) in Him:

When God created human nature, He did not create sensible pleasure and pain along with it; rather, He furnished it with a certain spiritual capacity for pleasure, a pleasure whereby human beings

* See p. 704 below.

would be able to enjoy God ineffably. But together with coming-into-being, the first man, by use of his senses, squandered this spiritual capacity—the natural desire of the mind for God—on sensible things.²⁹

For St. Maximus, “pleasure” in its fallen context is a combination of sensual feeling and a passionate desire for a sensible object:

Every forbidden pleasure has come to be through passion aroused through the senses by some object of sense.... For desire added to sensual feeling changes into pleasure, giving it a shape, and sensual feeling moved by desire produces pleasure when it is applied to some object of sense.³⁰

In the writings of St. Symeon and St. Maximus on this subject, we see two Fathers viewing the same reality from different sides. St. Symeon, in saying that man experienced “pleasure” in partaking of the fruits of Eden, was speaking of pleasure in created things *without* irrational desire for them. St. Maximus, on the other hand, in saying that man was not originally created with “sensible pleasure,” was speaking precisely of pleasure *born of* desire. From the sum of the teachings of both Fathers, we arrive at the following: in experiencing pleasure in created things before the fall, man did not turn his desire toward them, but instead kept it directed toward God, the natural object of his desire.

Indeed, according to a passage attributed in *The Philokalia* to St. Theodore the Great Ascetic, man’s enjoyment of created things was one of the ways by which he could raise his mind to his Creator in Paradise:

The first man could indeed, without any hindrance, apprehend and enjoy sensory things by means of the senses and intelligible things with the *nous* (mind, intellect). But he should have given his attention to the higher rather than the lower, for he was as able to commune with intelligible things through the *nous*, as he was with sensory things through the senses. I do not say that Adam ought not to have used the senses, for it was not for nothing that he was in-

vested with a body. But he should not have indulged in sensory things. When perceiving the beauty of creatures, he should have referred it to its Source and as a consequence have found his enjoyment and his wonder fulfilled in that, thus giving himself a twofold reason for marvelling at the Creator. He should not have attached himself, as he did, to sensory things and have lost himself in wonder at them, neglecting the Creator of intelligible beauty.³¹

Thus, the pleasure in sensible things that man could experience before the fall was not a self-indulgent, egotistic pleasure, not an end in itself. Rather, it was one means by which man could, in the words of St. Maximus, exercise his “spiritual capacity for pleasure” and “enjoy God ineffably.”

As St. Maximus himself testified, God planned from the beginning that man’s mind would be raised to Himself by means of the sensible creation, for in all created things one can find “traces” of His majesty:

This was the peculiar plan of God’s consummate goodness: not only did the divine and incorporeal essences of intelligible things constitute representations of God’s ineffable glory, acquiring legitimately and proportionally within themselves the whole incomprehensible loveliness and inapproachable beauty, but, in addition, traces of God’s own majesty intermingled with sensible things, things that fall far short of intelligible essences. These traces of God’s majesty are able to transport the human *nous*, which uses them as a vehicle, infallibly to God.³²

4. The Condition of Man’s Mind before the Fall

From St. John Chrysostom we learn that Adam was originally created with “ineffable intelligence,” which endowed him with the capability to name all the animals (Gen. 2:19–20), and with “prophetic grace,” which enabled him to prophesy about Eve after her creation (Gen. 2:23–24).³³

St. Gregory the Sinaite speaks of man’s memory in its prelapsarian state, and compares this with what we experience after the fall:

The memory was originally simple and one-pointed, but as a result of the fall its natural powers have been perverted: it has lost its recollectedness in God and has become compound instead of simple, diversified instead of one-pointed.³⁴

St. Diadochus of Photiki speaks in a similar way regarding man's perceptive faculty (*αἴσθησις*):

The exercise of holy knowledge teaches us that the perceptive faculty natural to us is single but is henceforth divided into two operations as a result of the disobedience of Adam.... Therefore, one part of the soul is carried away by our passionate part, whence we are pleasantly impressed with the good things of this life. But the other part of her often delights in rational and noetic activity, and thus our *nous* longs, when we practice self-restraint, to pursue the beauties of heaven.³⁵

There is also Patristic testimony that, before the fall, the human mind was not held under the sway of the imagination. In Orthodox theology the imagination (*τὸ φανταστικόν*) is seen as "a faculty belonging to the irrational part of the soul" (St. John Damascene),³⁶ which "stores up [images] like treasures and brings them forth interiorly ... even when there is no corresponding body present" (St. Gregory Palamas).^{37*} From St. Maximus we learn something of this faculty in connection with man's original state, for he writes that before the primordial transgression Adam "was not by way of pleasure moved by the deceitful passions of the imagination."** This point was later elucidated by a Greek Holy Father of the eighteenth century, St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain. Basing himself, as he says, on St. Maximus, St. Nicodemus writes:

* See Archimandrite Sophrony, *Saint Silouan the Athonite*, part 1, chap. 7, for a contemporary exposition on the imagination according to Orthodox hesychastic tradition.

** See p. 700 below.

In the beginning, pleasure and pain were not created together with the flesh; nor forgetfulness and ignorance together with the soul; nor the ever changing impressions in the shape of events with the mind. All these things were brought about in man by his transgression.³⁸

And elsewhere:

The first-formed man, Adam, was created by God without imagination. His mind, pure and unified, functioned as mind and so itself acquired no impression or form under the influence of the senses or from the images of sensory things. Making no use of this lower power of the imagination, he did not visualize the outline, color, shape, or dimensions of things, but with the higher power of the soul, that is the intellect, he contemplated immaterially, purely, and spiritually only the bare, simple inner principles [*τοὺς λόγους*] of beings.³⁹

5. St. Maximus on Man's Original Condition

A detailed description of man's existence before the fall has been provided by St. Maximus in his *Ambiguum* 45. Explaining a phrase of St. Gregory the Theologian's *Oration* 38—that the first-created man was, before the fall, “naked in his simplicity and [in his] life without arts and skills [*ἀτέχνω*], and without any covering or protection”⁴⁰—St. Maximus writes:

So I suppose that the teacher said these things wanting to indicate the difference between the constitution of the human body in the forefather Adam before the transgression and that which in us is now seen and holds sway, because back then man clearly was not torn apart by qualities contrary to and corruptive of each other in their bodily mixture, but was accordingly without flux or efflux—and free of the constant alteration between them, depending on which quality predominates. For indeed man was not deprived of the immortality that is by grace, and did not have the corruption that now whips

him with its goads, but another constitution of the body manifestly befit him, a constitution held together by qualities that are simple and without strife.

By reason of this constitution was the first man naked, not as one fleshless or bodiless,* but as one not having the constitution which makes the flesh denser, mortal, and unyielding.** According to this great teacher, the first man both lived without arts and skills [*ἀτέχνως*] without dissipating the natural good health given him once for all in his essence, and was without need of protective covering, fearing no shame because of his innate dispassion, and not subject to either cold or heat—for which reasons especially the means of protective covering, both shelter and clothing, have been contrived for humans....

For being dispassionate by grace, he was not by way of pleasure moved by the deceitful passions of the imagination; and existing without any want, he was free of the obligation to use arts and skills because of necessity; and being wise, he had been by way of knowledge set above the study of nature.

Thus the first man had nothing between him and God which was obstructing his knowledge and was stopping his movement toward God, movement self-chosen out of love, from becoming a kinship. And because of this, he was called by the teacher, “naked in his simplicity,” as existing above all research into nature; and with a “life without arts and skills,” as being pure of all life in need of arts and skills; and “without any covering or protection,” since he was free of such impassioned intertwining of the senses with sensible things, to which things he was justly subjected later on, when he fell short through defect—when he of his own choice preferred to become

* St. Maximus is here refuting a teaching of Origenism. The Origenists, believing that man was fleshless and bodiless before the fall (see p. 701n below), were apt to falsely interpret the above-quoted phrase of St. Gregory the Theologian to mean that man was originally “naked” of flesh.

** As indicated above (p. 693, 693n), in the last phrase St. Maximus is repeating the words of St. Gregory the Theologian. These words are found in St. Gregory’s *Oration 38*, shortly after the above-quoted statement about the first-created man being “naked in his simplicity,” etc.

empty of everything rather than to be full, thus becoming inferior to those things to which he had naturally been superior.⁴¹

From this citation it is clearly seen that, for St. Maximus as for other Holy Fathers, man lived for a time in an unfallen state, without bodily corruption and without the passions, cares and necessities associated with human life as we know it.*

* Some contemporary scholars, citing the words of St. Maximus quoted earlier—that the first man misused his spiritual capacity “together with coming-into-being” (*ἄμα τῷ γένεσθαι; Ad Thalassium* 61, see p. 696 above; see also *Ambigua* 42, PG 91.1321B)—have suggested that St. Maximus believed there was never a time when man was in an unfallen state. This interpretation, however, does not concur with other portions of the Saint’s teaching. In the lengthy passage from *Ambiguum* 45 that we have just quoted, St. Maximus speaks of Adam’s incorrupt, unfallen state as an actuality. Moreover, by saying that this state existed “before the transgression” and that Adam’s condition was changed “later on [ὑστερόν], when he had fallen,” St. Maximus places his detailed portrayal of the prelapsarian state within a temporal framework and indicates a time lapse between man’s creation and his fall. Elsewhere, St. Maximus writes that God gave Adam a law “before the transgression, not to eat from the fruit of the tree” (*Questions and Doubts* 92, trans. Despina D. Prassas, p. 92), and that the devil “breathed onto the first-formed beings by [encouraging] disobedience” (*ibid.* I.28, p. 145). From these passages it can be seen that St. Maximus’ teaching does in fact agree with the common Patristic understanding of the Genesis account.

It is likely that St. Maximus said that man misused his spiritual capacity “together with coming-into-being” in order to rebut Origenist ideas of an extended prelapsarian state and of a “double-creation” of man. (According to Origen, intelligences [*νόες*] were created after eternal Divine forms and contemplated God until they became “sated” with Him, at which time they “cooled down” to become souls, and God created the material bodies and sensible world into which they fell [cf. Origen, *On First Principles* 2.8.3].) Viewing St. Maximus’ statement in this light, translator Paul M. Blowers has interpreted the Saint’s words to mean: “Fallenness has been the dilemma of humankind *virtually from the beginning*” (St. Maximus, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, PPS 25, p. 85, note 10, emphasis in the original). St. Maximus’ words “together with coming-into-being,” then, are to be understood in a relative sense, as meaning “very close to the beginning.” To interpret them in an absolute sense, as denying the very existence of the prelapsarian state, makes no sense within the context of St. Maximus’ thought, let alone the wider Scriptural-Patristic context.

6. St. Maximus and St. Symeon on What Might Have Been

Such was the condition of man in the beginning. By drawing ever closer to God in love, by naturally directing his desire and longing to Him rather than unnaturally turning it aside to things of the senses, man was to become ever more holy and spiritual, ever more in the likeness of God, ever more transformed by the grace of God. Earlier we quoted the words of St. John Damascene that man was “to complete the mystery by being deified.” Expanding on this theme, St. Maximus states that man, by freely following God’s commandment in Eden, would have become a deified “son of God”—a god not by nature but by grace:

In the beginning man was created in the image of God for the undoubted purpose of being born of the Spirit by free choice, and of acquiring what was in the likeness of God through keeping the Divine commandment which had been laid upon him. In this way the same man would on the one hand be a creature of God by nature, and on the other a son of God and a god through the Spirit by grace. For it was not possible in any other way for man after his creation to be proved a son of God and a god through deification by grace, unless first by free choice he had been born of the Spirit through the self-moving and sovereign power which naturally unites him with God.⁴²

St. Symeon the New Theologian provides us with an image of what life would have been like if the first people had fulfilled their original designation. “Imagine,” he writes,

... what sort of life and way of living we might have had if we had been preserved incorruptible and immortal in an incorrupt world, going through life manifestly without sin or sorrow, free of cares and untroubled. And imagine, too, how by progress in keeping God’s commandments and the putting into practice of our good intentions we would have been led up in due time to a more perfect glory and transformation, drawing nearer to God and to the rays which spring from His Divinity. The soul of each would have become brighter,

and the perceptible and material body of each altered and changed into an immaterial and spiritual one, into something beyond sense perception.⁴³

III. THE ORIGINAL CONDITION OF THE COSMOS

1. Patristic Accounts of the Cosmos before the Fall

We have already quoted briefly from St. Symeon's description of the cosmos that man originally inhabited. St. Symeon is quite explicit that the entire visible creation, and not only Paradise, was in a state of incorruption before the fall of man. He writes:

God did not, as some people think, just give Paradise to our ancestors at the beginning, nor did He make only Paradise incorruptible. No! Instead, He did much more. Before Paradise He made the whole earth, the one which we inhabit, and everything in it. Nor that alone, but He also in five days brought the heavens and all they contain into being. On the Sixth Day He made Adam and established him as lord and king of all the visible creation. Neither Eve nor Paradise were yet created, but the whole world had been brought into being by God as one thing, as a kind of paradise, at once incorruptible yet material and perceptible. It was this world, as we said, which was given to Adam and to his descendants for their enjoyment. Does this seem strange to you? It should not.⁴⁴

Here St. Symeon is echoing the Wisdom of Solomon, in which it is declared: "God did not make death, neither does He take delight in the destruction of living things. God created all things that they might have their being; and the generations of the world were for preservation, and there is no poison of destruction in them" (Wis. 1:13–14).

As St. Symeon explains, before the original creation was "changed over to corruption" it did not "bear perishable fruits and ... sprout thorns and thistles" (cf. Gen. 3:18).⁴⁵ Elsewhere in the same work, he

affirms that God gave man in Paradise “every kind and variety of fruit, fruit which is never spoiled or lacking but always fresh, full of sweetness, and providing our ancestors with indescribable pleasure and enjoyment. For it was fitting that their incorruptible bodies be supplied with incorruptible food.”⁴⁶ In other words, it was appropriate for incorrupt first-created man to be given both an environment and a food that corresponded to his condition.

According to St. Bede the Venerable, “Before man’s transgression the earth brought forth nothing harmful, no poisonous plant, no unfruitful tree.”⁴⁷ St. Philaret of Moscow, a Holy Father of nineteenth-century Russia, says the same concerning the first-created plants:

Since God has approved of the whole kingdom of plants (cf. Gen. 1:12), man should not rebel against Him, seeing that some plants are poisonous or noxious. If the fall of man had not subjected the entire earth to corruption, we would find in them only good and useful properties.⁴⁸

In Genesis 2:5–6 (LXX) we read that, in the beginning, “God had not sent rain on the earth … but a spring came up from the ground and watered the whole face of the earth.” Commenting on this passage, St. Theophilus of Antioch states:

The whole earth was at that time watered by a divine spring, and had no need that man should till it; but the earth produced all things spontaneously by the command of God, that man might not be wearied by tilling it.⁴⁹

St. John Damascene notes that, before Adam and Eve’s transgression, “there was neither rain nor tempest on the earth.”⁵⁰ St. Ephanius of Salamis says further that

Adam and Eve had the purest air, temperately dispensed to them by God with all mildness, neither sharpened by the rigor of cold, nor enervated by the extremely unpleasant heat of summer. The land had been designed as an immortal abode very well made by God; it

was filled with gladness and well-being, and as I said, got neither cold nor hot.⁵¹

At the turn of the twentieth century, this Patristic teaching was reiterated by the holy Serbian-American Church writer and missionary Archimandrite Sebastian Dabovich.* Had our first parents not broken the Divine commandment, Fr. Sebastian writes,

there would be no need of the plow and the laboring oxen, the planting of seed, the watering shower, the mutual change of the seasons of the year, the winter binding in fetters and the summer opening up all things.⁵²

Further details about the state of the creation—in particular, Paradise—before the fall are provided by St. Gregory the Sinaite. Eden, he says, “has been planted by God with all sorts of the most fragrant plants.... It is always bursting with fruit, both ripe and unripe, and is continuously blossoming with flowers.” According to this Saint, Paradise has been “made between corruption and incorruption,” such that mature trees and fruit “turn into fragrant soil, and do not give off the odor of corruption as do plants of this world. This occurs because of the great richness and holiness of the grace ever abounding there.”⁵³**

2. Animals before the Fall

From St. Theophilus of Antioch we learn that animals were not venomous before the fall.⁵⁴ Both he and other Holy Fathers taught that beasts did not evoke fear in man in the prelapsarian world, but rather submitted to him. As St. John Chrysostom observes, when the animals came before Adam in order to receive names, “they came in complete

* It was also expounded in the nineteenth century by St. Ignatius Brianchaninov (see p. 708 below).

** In quoting these words of St. Gregory the Sinaite, Fr. Seraphim Rose notes: “This passage is expressed in the present tense—*because the Paradise in which Adam was placed is still in existence, but is not visible to our normal sense organs*” (see p. 456 above).

subjection to him as to a master and accepted the names, while Adam had no fear of these wild beasts.”⁵⁵ Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus notes further that, “in acknowledgment of their subservient state, the wild animals waited on Adam before his sin.”⁵⁶ “Before the fall,” writes St. John Damascene, “all things were subject to the control of man, because God had made him ruler over all the things on the earth and in the water.”⁵⁷

As stated in Genesis 1:30, in the beginning God indicated that all the animals were to eat plants rather than each other: “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.” Following from these words of Scripture, the Holy Fathers consistently taught that animals were given plants to eat before the fall. Thus, St. Theophilus of Antioch wrote that animals were not predatory before the fall, and that after the general resurrection they will be “restored to their original gentleness.”^{58*} St. Irenaeus of Lyons taught the same: commenting on Isaiah’s prophecy that “the wolf shall feed with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat … and the lion and ox shall eat straw together”(Is. 11:6–7; see also Is. 11:8–9, 65:25), he affirmed that this can be seen to refer to the state of animals both before the fall and after the general resurrection:

It is right that when the creation is restored, all the animals should obey and be subject to man, and should revert to the food originally given by God (as they had been subject to Adam before the disobedience), that is, the productions of the earth.^{59**}

St. John Damascene likewise spoke of animals eating plants before

* See the full quotation on pp. 731–32 below.

** St. Irenaeus noted that, besides referring to the original and final states of animals, this prophecy of Isaiah 11:6–10 can also refer to the harmony between formerly fierce peoples and the righteous in the Church (*Against Heresies* 5.33.3–4). In the same vein, St. Cyril of Alexandria said that the prophecy in Isaiah 65:17–19 can refer both to the state of believers in the Church of Christ and to the state of the righteous beyond the general resurrection (*Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* 5.6).

the fall, saying that then “the earth brought forth of itself fruits for the use of the animals that were subject to man.”⁶⁰ St. Gregory of Nyssa observed that plants were created before animals because they were to serve as food for the animals.⁶¹ According to St. John Chrysostom, God told Adam that He had given plants for the animals to eat so that Adam, who had been placed as lord of the creation, would not be concerned about how to provide for the animals.⁶²

The Fathers do not speak of any kind of carnivory existing before the fall. In the writings of St. Basil the Great, on the other hand, we find an explicit teaching that animals did not eat each other, and furthermore that they neither died nor decayed in the first-created world:

Doubtless indeed vultures did not look around the earth when living things came to be. For nothing yet died of these things given meaning or brought into being by God, so that vultures might eat it. Nature was not divided, for it was in its prime; nor did hunters kill, for that was not yet the custom of human beings; nor did wild beasts claw their prey, for they were not carnivores. And it is customary for vultures to feed on corpses, but since there were not yet corpses, nor yet their stench, so there was not yet such food for vultures. But all followed the diet of swans and all grazed the meadows.^{63*}

* Here it may be noted that, when St. Basil’s brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa, says that animals had “the potential of dying” ($\tauὴν πρὸς τὸ νεκροῦσθαι δύναμιν$), presumably at their creation (*Catechetical Oration* 8), he does not necessarily contradict St. Basil, for he does not say that animals actually died and decayed before the fall. In the context of the common Patristic teaching on the incorruption of the first-created world, and on death and corruption entering the cosmos only at the fall (of which more will be said below), St. Gregory’s statement can be understood to refer to a potential that animals had before the fall, but that was not expressed in actual terms until after the fall. Similarly, when St. Gregory speaks of animals being endowed with attributes such as courage and fear “for self-preservation” (*On the Making of Man* 18.2), this can be seen to refer to qualities that God gave them in His foreknowledge, as a provision for the corrupted state of the cosmos after the fall. This interpretation of the statement is corroborated by the discussion preceding it, where St. Gregory is relating how God endowed man with the attributes of animals “by the exercise of His foreknowledge” of the fall (*ibid.* 17.4). See also the teaching of St. John Damascene on God’s foreknowledge, p. 455 above.

3. The Unknowability of the World before the Fall

Drawing from the Scriptural-Patristic testimony on the incorrupt first-created world—its vegetation, animals, and climate—St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, another Holy Father of nineteenth-century Russia, provides us with a composite description that is remarkable in its details. At the same time, however, he points out that knowledge of the first-created world remains largely inaccessible to us who know the creation only in its corrupted state:

The earth, created, adorned, blessed by God, did not have any deficiencies. It was overflowing with refinement. “God saw,” after the completion of the whole creation of the world, “everything that He had made: and, behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Now the earth is presented to our eyes in a completely different look. We do not know her condition in holy virginity; we know her in the condition of corruption and accursedness, we know her already sentenced to burning; she was created for eternity. The God-inspired writer of Genesis says that the earth in its original condition did not have need of tilling (Gen. 2:5): it brought forth by itself grains and other nourishing grasses, vegetables and fruits overabundantly and of superb worth. There were no harmful growths on it; plants were not subjected either to decay or to diseases; both decay and diseases, and the weeds themselves, appeared after the alteration of the earth following the fall of man, as one ought to conclude from the words of God to Adam as he was being exiled from Paradise: “Thorns also and thistles shall it [the ground] bring forth to thee” (Gen. 3:18). According to its creation, there was on it only the splendid, only the wholesome, there was only that which was suitable for the immortal and blessed life of its inhabitants. Changes in the weather did not exist: it was continually the same—the most clear and favorable. There were no rains. A spring came forth from the earth and watered its face (Gen. 2:5–6). The beasts and other animals lived in perfect harmony among themselves, nourishing themselves on plant life (Gen. 1:30).⁶⁴

Fr. Seraphim Rose, who extensively researched the Patristic teaching on the condition of creation before the fall, stated along with St. Ignatius that we do not know “precisely what this state was” and that it is “very mysterious to us who live entirely in corruption.” “It is enough,” he wrote, “for us to know that Paradise, and the state of the whole creation before the fall of Adam, was quite different from what we know now.”*

A similar observation was made earlier in the twentieth century by St. Barsanuphius of Optina Monastery in Russia. Once, when standing before a window at night, St. Barsanuphius pointed to the moon and said to his disciple (the future Elder Nikon):

Look—what a picture!... This is left to us as a consolation. It’s no wonder that the Prophet David said, “Thou hast 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.⁶⁵

At another time St. Barsanuphius told his spiritual children that we see only “fragments” of the original, incorrupt cosmos—a cosmos that has been shattered because of man’s sin:

The earth is a place of banishment, of exile. For criminal acts people are condemned to hard labor—one for twelve years, one for fifteen years, and another permanently, until death. We too are guilty; we have sinned before the Lord, and we’re condemned to banishment, to hard labor. But the Lord is so endlessly loving that even in this place of banishment He has left us much beauty, many delights and consolations, which are especially understood by artistically sensitive temperaments. 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.

* See pp. 457, 548 above.

Imagine a marvelous statue by a great master—and suddenly, like a thunderbolt, someone smashes it. 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.⁶⁶

As Fr. Seraphim Rose pointed out, the nature of the first-created world cannot be investigated without the aid of Divine revelation, for a different “law of nature” (in the words of St. Symeon the New Theologian) existed before the fall, and it is very likely that even the nature of matter was different.* “The incorruption of the first-created world,” he wrote,

is beyond the competence of [natural] science to investigate.... *Then how do we know anything at all about it?* Obviously, because God has revealed something of it to us through the Sacred Scripture. But we know, also,... that God has revealed something besides what is in the Scriptures.... St. Gregory the Sinaite and other Holy Fathers of the highest spiritual life beheld the first-created world *in the state of Divine vision* [*θεωρία*], which is beyond all natural knowledge.**

4. Man's Calling to Deify the Cosmos

Although the first-created world was made incorrupt in the beginning as was man, it was—again like man—not created in its final and perfected state. Since the visible creation was made for man, according to God's economy it was *through man* that the creation was to reach this final condition. Possessing both body and soul, man was the link between the originally incorrupt material world and the noetic,

* See pp. 457, 547–48, 548n above.

** See pp. 460, 457–58 above.

spiritual world of the angels. As he became spiritualized and divinized by drawing closer to God, man was to lead all of creation into such a condition as well. St. Maximus the Confessor writes concerning this original calling of man:

Through a life identical in every way through virtue with that of the angels, so far as that is possible to human beings, man unites heaven and earth, making the whole of sensible creation one with itself and undivided, not separated locally from him at all in any of its dimensions, since man becomes as subtle as spirit and is no longer tied to earth by any bodily weight.^{67*}

Having thus united the whole of creation, man was called “to unite, through love, created nature with Uncreated Nature ... showing them to be one and the same through the possession of grace, the whole [of creation] being wholly penetrated by the whole of God.”⁶⁸

Summarizing this teaching of St. Maximus, Vladimir Lossky writes:

It was the Divinely appointed function of the first man, according to St. Maximus, to unite in himself the whole of created being; and at the same time to reach his perfect union with God and thus grant the state of deification to the whole creation.... Man had only to give himself to Him [God] in a complete abandonment of love, and thus return to Him the whole created universe gathered together in his own being. God Himself would then in His turn have given Himself to man, who would then, in virtue of this gift, that is to say by grace, possess all that God possesses by nature. The deification of man and of the whole created universe would thus be accomplished.⁶⁹

* It is clear from the context that St. Maximus is speaking here of the original calling of man, since this passage falls within an exposition on man’s creation, intrinsic purpose, fallen state, and salvation by Christ. Such is the interpretation of this passage given by Vladimir Lossky in *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, pp. 109–10, quoted in part below.

IV. THE EFFECTS OF THE FALL ON MAN

1. The Corruption of Human Nature

Such was man's lofty original calling. But as we all know and experience every day, the first man fell from this state and brought himself and all of creation into a state of corruption and death. In partaking of the fruit that God had forbidden him to eat, man acted in a way contrary to his own nature, which had been created "very good" by God. As St. Maximus writes:

But man did not move around the Unmoved—I mean God—as his own principle in the way that he was naturally created to do; but of his own free will, senselessly and in a manner contrary to nature, he moved around the things below him, over which he had been appointed by God to rule.⁷⁰

With the entrance of sin through the free decision of Adam and Eve, human nature became corrupted. St. Cyril of Alexandria writes of this as follows:

The forefather [Adam], by neglecting the commandment given him, struck out against God and submitted himself to the effects of Divine wrath:^{*} for he slipped down into corruption. Then was sin also

* Due to common misconceptions concerning the Biblical term "wrath of God" (John 3:36, Rom. 1:18, Eph. 5:6, etc.), a clarifying note may be in order here. According to the teaching of the Fathers, references to God's wrath should not be understood in an anthropomorphic sense. St. John Chrysostom explains: "When you hear words such as 'anger' and 'wrath' used in relation to God, do not suppose there is anything human meant in them.... Scripture says God gets angry, not attributing passion to Him, but expressing by this language His punishing action, and making an impression on dense man" (St. John Chrysostom, *Commentary on the Psalms* 6, 44, PG 55.71B, 190B, trans. Robert C. Hill, vol. 1, pp. 95, 266*). See also p. 123 above.

driven into the nature of man; thus “many were made sinners” (Rom. 5:19), that is, those throughout all the earth.... Thenceforward pleasures and filthiness invaded the nature of the flesh, and there arose then the savage law in our members. Our nature thus became diseased by sin through the disobedience of one, that is, of Adam. Hence all were made sinners, not as co-transgressors with Adam (for they did not yet exist then), but because they were of his nature, which had fallen under the law of sin.... In Adam human nature became sick with corruption through disobedience, and therefore the passions entered in.⁷¹

St. Macarius the Great speaks of this corruption as a leaven:

From the time of Adam’s fall, the thoughts of the soul have been dispersed away from the love of God toward this world, because it is mingled with crass and earthly thoughts. Indeed, as Adam took into himself after his transgression a leaven of evil passions, so also ever since, those who were born of him and the whole race of Adam by participation shared in that leaven. And it has grown and increased so that in men the sinful passions have developed into fornications and debaucheries and idolatries and murders and other absurdities, until mankind is permeated with the leaven of evil.⁷²

At the fall, Adam and Eve acquired a tendency or inclination toward sin, and all their descendants inherited that inclination. In the words of St. Gregory Palamas,

When Adam fell by turning aside from good to evil, no one remained [i.e., among his descendants] who was not inclined to evil.⁷³

As mentioned earlier, man’s memory was also affected at the fall. According to St. Gregory the Sinaite, the memory then began to

act as a source of evil thoughts. For Adam’s disobedience has not only deformed into a weapon of evil the soul’s simple memory of

what is good; it has also corrupted all its powers and quenched its natural appetite for virtue.⁷⁴

In man's now-corrupted state, his mind, while still possessed of the faculty of reason, fell under the sway of the imagination, which as we have seen is a lower, irrational power of the soul. About this St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain writes:

Just as the man-slaying devil fell through the imagination, so he caused Adam also to form in his mind that he was equal to God and to fall through this same imagination. And thus from that noetic, angel-like, unified, rational [$\lambdaογικήν$] and formless life [of the mind] the wretched man was cast down to this sensory, many-sided, and multiform imagination and to the state of irrational animals. For imagination is a trait proper to irrational animals and not to rational beings.

After man through one act fell to such a state, who can tell to what passions, what evils, and what delusions he was cast down by means of the imagination?⁷⁵

2. The Loss of Grace: Spiritual Death

Because of the corruption of his nature at the fall, man lost the grace in which he had been created. He became separated from God. Grace was now foreign to his nature, and so it did not dwell within him as it had before. As Vladimir Lossky explains:

There is no longer a place for Uncreated grace in a perverted nature where, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa, the mind like a mirror turned about, instead of reflecting God, receives into itself the image of formless matter, where the passions overthrow the original hierarchy of the human being. The deprivation of grace is not the cause, but rather the consequence of the decadence of our nature. Man has obstructed the faculty in himself for communion with God, has

closed up the way by which grace should have poured out through Him into the whole creation.^{76*}

St. John Damascene, who as cited earlier said that man was “wrapped about” with God’s grace at his creation, says later in the same work that man was “stripped of grace” at the fall:

* This points to a fundamental dissimilarity between Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology. While both Orthodox and Roman Catholics hold that man lost the grace of God when he fell, they understand this deprivation of grace in different ways.

First of all, in Roman Catholic teaching grace is a *created* phenomenon: “It is not a substance that exists by itself, or apart from the soul; therefore it is a physical accident inhering in the soul.... Sanctifying grace may be philosophically termed a ‘permanent, supernatural quality of the soul’” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911 ed., vol. 6, p. 705). This idea of supernatural (created) grace is to be distinguished from the Orthodox understanding of grace as the Uncreated Energy of God, through which man participates in God’s life. Vladimir Lossky comments on the distinction: “For Eastern [Orthodox] tradition the created supernatural has no existence. That which Western theology calls by the name *supernatural* signifies for the East *Uncreated*—the Divine Energies ineffably distinct from the Essence of God. The difference consists in the fact that the Western conception of grace implies the idea of causality, grace being represented as an effect of the Divine Cause, exactly as in the act of creation; while for Eastern theology there is a natural procession, the Energies shining forth eternally from the Divine Essence. It is in the creation alone that God acts as cause, in producing a new subject called to participate in the Divine fullness; preserving it, saving it, *granting* grace to it, and guiding it towards its final goal. In the Energies *He is*, He exists, He eternally manifests Himself” (*Mystical Theology*, pp. 88–89).

Secondly, in Roman Catholic teaching “original sin” is identified with—as well as seen as the consequence of—the privation of sanctifying grace, which grace is also termed “original justice”: “Original sin is the privation of sanctifying grace” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, p. 314); “Now the cause of ... original sin, is one only, viz. the privation of original justice” (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, part 1 of part 2, question 82, article 2). In this view, the privation of grace *in itself* constitutes “a stain, a moral deformity” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11, p. 314). According to Orthodox theology, on the other hand, man’s nature was corrupted as a consequence of his free decision at the fall, and this corruption caused him to lose the indwelling of grace and deprived him of participation in God. It is for this reason that Vladimir Lossky, in explaining how Orthodox teaching on this matter runs counter to the Roman Catholic conception, says in the passage quoted above: “The deprivation of grace is not the *cause*, but rather the *consequence* of the decadence of our nature” (*Mystical Theology*, p. 132, emphasis added).

And so, man succumbed to the assault of the demon, the author of evil; he failed to keep the Creator's commandment and was stripped of grace and deprived of that familiarity which he had enjoyed with God.⁷⁷

St. Gregory Palamas calls forth the same image:

Before the transgression, Adam shared in this Divine illumination and brilliance. He was clothed in the true robe of glory and was not naked, nor was he ugly in his nakedness, but was truly unspeakably better adorned than those who wear diadems embellished with much gold and precious stones.... Our human nature was stripped of this Divine illumination and radiance as a result of the ugly transgression.^{78*}

This “stripping of grace” constituted a kind of spiritual death in first-created man. In the book of Genesis, God told Adam: “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). In fact, Adam did not physically die on the day he ate from the tree. According to Patristic teaching, however, God’s words were true: Adam *did* die on the day he ate the fruit. He experienced *spiritual* death: the death of his soul. As St. Gregory Palamas writes:

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 nine hundred and thirty years.⁷⁹

Elsewhere St. Gregory Palamas expounds further on what is meant by the death of the soul:

The death of the soul is when God leaves the soul and is separated from it, although in another way, the soul remains immortal. Once separated from God it becomes more ugly and useless than a dead

* See St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 16.5 (FC 74, p. 216 [16.14]), where it is also said that man was “stripped of grace” at the fall.

body, but unlike such a body it does not disintegrate after death since it is not composite.⁸⁰

The death of the soul that man suffered at the fall did not, however, destroy the image of God in him. St. Gregory Palamas writes that the human soul

possesses the image of God inalienably, even if it does not recognize its own dignity, or think and live in a manner worthy of the Creator's image within it. After our forefather's transgression in Paradise through the tree, we suffered the death of our soul—which is the separation of the soul from God—prior to our bodily death; yet although we cast away our divine likeness, we did not lose our divine image.⁸¹

3. Physical Suffering, Death, and Decay

At the fall, man's *spiritual* death—which is the separation of the soul from God—made him, in turn, subject to *physical* death—which is the separation of the soul from the body. St. Gregory Palamas writes of this as follows:

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.^{82*}

* St. Gregory Palamas is here presenting a teaching found in the writings of earlier Fathers. Compare, for example, the following passage of St. Macarius the Great (adapted by St. Symeon Metaphrastes): "When the goodness of God condemned Adam to death for his transgression, it effected death first in the soul, the noetic senses having been extinguished by the deprivation of heavenly and spiritual enjoyment and becoming as if dead. Later, after thirty years beyond nine hundred, bodily death came upon him as well" (*On the Freedom of the Nous* 26, PG 34.957D–960A, *Philokalia* 3, p. 349*). In the same vein, St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: "The Lord came 'to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke 19:10). Now it was not the body merely, but the whole man, composed of soul and body, that was lost: indeed, if we are to speak more exactly, the soul was lost sooner than the body. For disobedience is

St. Symeon the New Theologian likewise draws the connection between the “stripping of grace” that occurred at the fall and man’s being made subject to bodily death. At the fall, he says,

immediately, he [Adam] was stripped of his incorruptible vesture and glory, and clothed with the nakedness of mortality. On seeing himself naked, he hid himself and sewed together fig leaves to wrap around his waist in order to hide his shame (Gen. 3:7).⁸³

St. Maximus explicates this teaching as follows:

In not wishing to be nourished by Him [God], the first man rightly fell away from the Divine life, and took death as another parent. Accordingly he put on himself the irrational form, and blackened the inconceivable beauty of the Divine, and delivered over the whole of nature as food for death. Death is living on this through the whole of this temporal period, making us his food.⁸⁴

As indicated in the passage of St. Gregory Palamas quoted above, physical pain and fatigue were introduced into human experience to-

a sin, not of the body, but of the will: and the will properly belongs to the soul, from which the whole disaster of our nature had its beginning, as the threat of God, that admits of no falsehood, testifies in the declaration that, in the day that they should eat of the forbidden fruit, death without respite would attach to the act. Now since the condemnation of man was twofold, death correspondingly effects in each part of our nature the deprivation of the twofold life that operates in him who is thus mortally stricken. For the death of the body consists in the extinction of the means of sensible perception, and in the dissolution of the body into its kindred elements: but ‘the soul that sinneth,’ he says, ‘it shall die’ (Ezek. 18:20). Now sin is nothing else than alienation from God, Who is the true and only life. Accordingly the first man lived many hundred years after his disobedience, and yet God lied not when He said, ‘In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die’ (Gen. 2:17). For by the fact of his alienation from the true life, the sentence of death was ratified against him that selfsame day: and after this, at a much later time, there followed also the bodily death of Adam” (*Against Eunomius* 2.13, NPNF 2 5, pp. 126–27). See also the quotation of St. Symeon the New Theologian on p. 723 below, where this Saint, too, says that Adam and Eve suffered the death of their souls at the time of their fall, and then the death of their bodies many years later.

gether with bodily death. We find this expressed in the Genesis account, in the sentence that God pronounces on Adam and Eve after their fall. Addressing Eve, God says: “I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy groaning; in pain thou shalt bring forth children”; and to Adam He says: “Cursed is the earth in thy labors; in pains shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the earth out of which thou wast taken: for earth thou art, and unto earth shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:16–17, 19).

It will be remembered that, before the fall, man was given to experience pleasure in God, even through sensory things, but his existence knew no pain. According to the teaching of St. Maximus, when man misused his capacity for pleasure by making sensible things the object of his desire, God providentially affixed physical pain to sensible pleasure:

Because irrational pleasure entered human nature, pain entered our nature opposite this pleasure in accordance with reason.... For every suffering, effectively having pleasure as its primary cause, is quite naturally, in view of its cause, a penalty exacted from all who share in human nature.⁸⁵

Elsewhere, St. Maximus observes that, in being given over to physical pain and death, fallen man has also been given over to physical corruption or decay after death:

God, at the very moment humanity fell,... gave the body the capacity to suffer, undergo corruption, and be wholly dissolved—as was evinced when God covered the body with garments of skin.⁸⁶

4. The Change in Man’s Physical Condition

When man fell from his original state of incorruption, his body became more grossly material. In the words of St. John Damascene, after the primordial transgression

[man] was clothed with the roughness of this wretched life—for that is what the fig leaves signify—and put on death, that is to say, the

mortality and material density* of the flesh—for this is what the garment of dead skins signifies;** he was excluded from Paradise by the just judgment of God; and was condemned to death and made subject to corruption.⁸⁷***

In such a condition of bearing “denser” or “grosser” flesh, man became subject not only to pain, death, and corruption, but also to the bodily needs we know today. St. John Chrysostom writes:

The loving God, when they [Adam and Eve] rendered themselves unworthy of that gleaming and resplendent vesture in which they were adorned and which ensured them against bodily needs, stripped them of all that glory and enjoyment they were partakers of before that terrible fall. He showed them great pity and had mercy on their fall: seeing them covered in confusion and ignorant of what to do to avoid being naked and feeling ashamed, He makes garments of skin for them and clothes them in them.⁸⁸

And again:

When He [God] rendered them liable to bodily necessities for the future, stripping them of the angelic way of life and its freedom from suffering, He later arranged for clothes for human beings out of sheep’s fleece.⁸⁹

* The word here translated as “material density,” *παχύτητα*, is a form of the same word that Sts. Gregory the Theologian and Maximus the Confessor had previously employed to describe man’s flesh after the fall; see pp. 693, 693n, 700, 700n above.

** While St. John Damascene here gives a figurative interpretation of the fig leaves and garments of skin mentioned in Holy Scripture (Gen. 3:7, 21), other Holy Fathers give a literal interpretation of them (as in the above quotation of St. Symeon on the fig leaves, and in the quotation of St. John Chrysostom on the garments of skin which is below). On the literal and figurative interpretations of the garments of skin, see pp. 275–76n above.

*** Compare St. Diadochus of Photiki: “Now as a result of Adam’s fall, not only were the lineaments of the form imprinted on the soul befouled, but our body also became subject to corruption” (*On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* 78, *Philokalia* 1, p. 280).

In another place St. Chrysostom goes so far as to say that God “refashioned” man’s body at the fall to accord with its new condition and needs:

From the [human] body it is easy to see much of the Divine Providence, not only because He made it at first better than it is at present, nor because even now He has refashioned [*μετεσκεύασεν*] it for a useful purpose, but also because He will raise it again to much greater glory.⁹⁰

In the same homily, when discussing the workings of the human eye, St. Chrysostom writes that tears are a postlapsarian function.⁹¹ From what has been said earlier, this may be seen to have parallels in other organs as well, for according to the Holy Fathers other bodily functions that are now considered “natural”—the emission of seed, the voiding of waste—were not exercised by man before the fall.

5. Sexual Procreation

In the prevailing view of the Holy Fathers, among the bodily needs that man acquired at the fall was the need to procreate sexually.* Thus,

* According to Sts. Athanasius the Great (*Commentary on the Psalms* [Psalm 50:5], see below), Gregory of Nyssa (*On the Making of Man* 17), John Chrysostom (*On Virginity* 14–15), Maximus the Confessor (*Ambigua* 41), John Damascene (*On the Orthodox Faith* 4.24), and Symeon of Thessaloniki (*On the Sacraments* 38), if man had not fallen, God would have employed a means of increasing the human race other than sexual reproduction. In the West, Blessed Augustine held a view contrary to this common teaching of the Eastern Holy Fathers. He did affirm along with all the other Fathers that Adam and Eve did not have sexual relations before the fall; however, according to him this was either because they did not have time or because they were waiting for a specific command from God (*Literal Meaning of Genesis* 9; *City of God* 14.26). Thomas Aquinas was later to refer to this teaching of Augustine when arguing for the idea that sexual reproduction was “natural to man” in his original condition (*Summa Theologica*, part 1, question 98, article 2; see pp. 494–95n above).

St. Athanasius the Great writes in his interpretation of Psalm 50:5 (“For, behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother desire me”):

The original intention of God was for us to generate not by marriage and corruption. But the transgression of the commandment introduced marriage on account of the lawless act of Adam, that is, the rejection of the law given him by God. Therefore all of those born of Adam are “conceived in iniquities,” having fallen under the condemnation of the forefather.^{92*}

Likewise, St. John Chrysostom writes concerning Genesis 4:1:

“Now Adam knew Eve his wife.” Consider when this happened. After the disobedience, after their loss in the Garden, then it was that the practice of intercourse had its beginning. You see, before their disobedience they followed a life like that of the angels, and there was no mention of intercourse. How could there be, when they were not subject to the needs of the body?⁹³

Elsewhere the same Saint elaborates on this teaching:

Why did marriage not appear before the disobedience? Why was there no intercourse in Paradise? Why not the pains of childbirth before the curse? Because at that time these things were superfluous. The necessity arose later because of our weakness, as did cities, arts and skills [*αἱ τέχναι*], the wearing of clothes, and all our other numerous needs.⁹⁴

* This teaching of St. Athanasius was later repeated verbatim by St. Maximus the Confessor in his *Questions and Doubts* I.3 (CCSG 10:138–39, trans. Despina D. Prassas, pp. 141–42).

6. The Condition of Man's Soul after Death

In addition to changing his spiritual and physical condition and handing him over to physical death and decay, man's fall into corruption also determined the state of his soul after death, making it unable to partake of eternal union with God. Adam had been barred from Paradise during his earthly life, and he remained barred from both Paradise and heaven after death. After physical death, the souls of Adam, Eve, and all their posterity went down into hades, where they continued to exist in a state of spiritual death. In the words of St. Symeon the New Theologian, when Adam and Eve abandoned the keeping of the Divine commandment,

immediately they suffered the death of their souls and then later, after many years, bodily death, and so they were brought down to hades. They were not alone to suffer this. So, too, suffered all who were born to them up to the coming of Christ God, the New Adam, and His descent into hades and resurrection from the dead.⁹⁵

St. Gregory Palamas also, in speaking about the effects of man's primordial transgression, writes:

Even after death, our souls, having been deserted by God, fell to his [the devil's] lot and he dragged them down to hades, and shut them up in seemingly inescapable prisons.⁹⁶

7. The Change in Human Nature

With man's change from incorruptibility to corruptibility at the fall, it may be said that a "mutation" occurred in his nature. As St. Maximus the Confessor writes:

In Adam, with his own act of freely choosing evil, the common glory of human nature, incorruption, was robbed—since God judged that it was not right for humanity, having abused free choice, to have an

immortal nature.... The deviance of free choice introduced passibility,* corruptibility, and mortality in Adam's nature.... Hence the mutation of human nature over to passibility, corruption, and death is the condemnation of Adam's deliberate sin.⁹⁷

In quoting St. Maximus on the change in man's nature, we should point out that the word "nature" takes on different meanings in his writings (as in the writings of other Fathers), depending on the context. In some places St. Maximus, when speaking of man, uses the word "nature" in the strict sense—that is (to quote St. John Damascene), as "that unchangeable and immutable principle and cause and power which has been implanted by the Creator in each kind [of being] for its activity."⁹⁸ Thus, in one place St. Maximus says that human nature does not change as a result of sin (including, presumably, the sin that occurred at the fall), since by definition it cannot change; rather, the mode or condition (*τρόπος*) of nature changes:

Our [nature] is manifestly merely human and in no way impeccable, because of its deviation to this side or that. This is not to say that the nature [*φύσιν*] is altered but that the movement has deviated; or, to speak more truthfully, that the nature has changed its mode.⁹⁹

* In this context, St. Maximus is speaking of "passibility" (*πάθος*) in the sense of suffering pain or undergoing change—particularly, degenerative change. Such passibility, being tied to corruption, came into being only at the fall. (See also p. 719 above, where St. Maximus says that, at the fall, the human body acquired "the capacity to suffer [*τὸ πάσχειν*], undergo corruption, and be wholly dissolved.") In other places, St. Maximus speaks of "passibility" in a different sense, as the state of being acted upon and being subject to movement. Passibility in this sense is without corruption and existed in creation even before the fall. Speaking of such passibility, which belongs to "whatever comes into being and is created," St. Maximus writes: "The passibility spoken of in this connection does not refer to change or corruption of one's power; passibility here indicates that which exists by nature in beings. For everything that comes into existence is subject to movement, since it is not self-moved or self-powered. If then rational beings come into being, surely they are also moved.... For God is the beginning and the end. From Him come both our moving in whatever way from a beginning and our moving in a certain way toward Him as an end" (*Ambigua* 7, PPS 25, pp. 50–51).

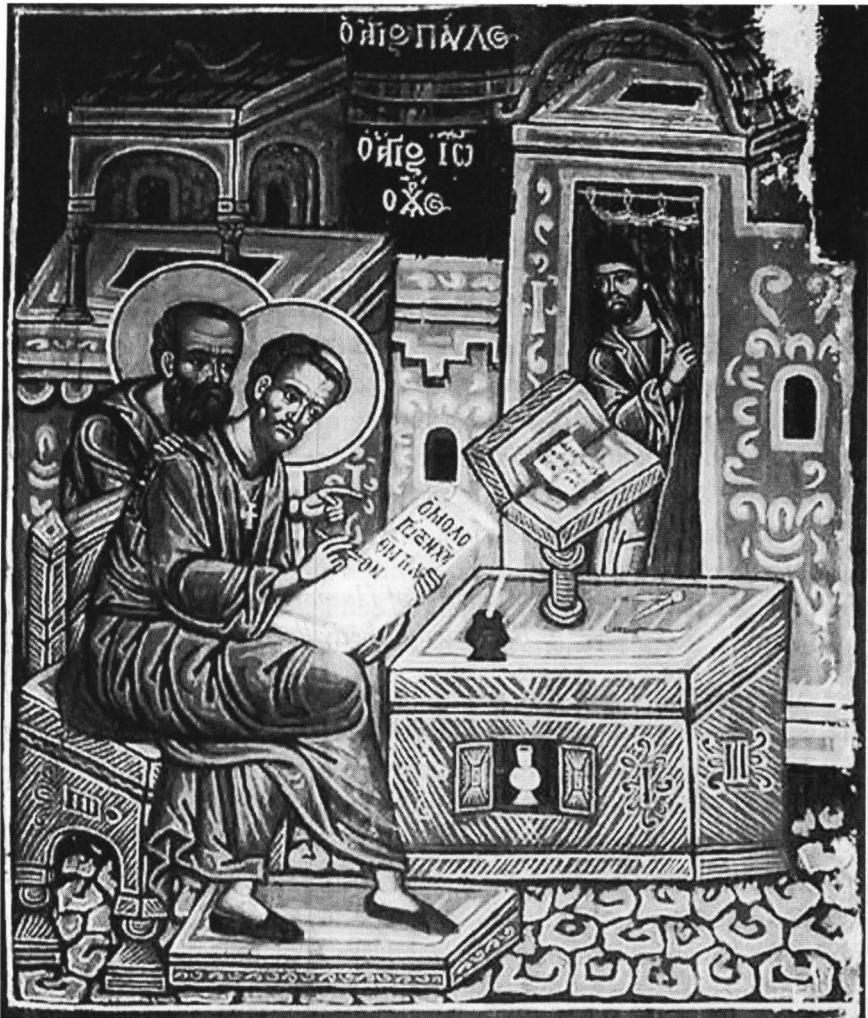
In other places, however, St. Maximus speaks of human nature in a broader sense, as including its mode or condition. In the passage quoted earlier, for example, he speaks of “the mutation [μεταποίησις] of human nature” at the fall. Earlier in the same work, he says that “through one man, who turned voluntarily from the good, human nature was changed from incorruption to corruption,” and that, because Christ “did not subvert the free choice” given to man, “God judged that it was right for man … once again to recover an immortal nature [πάλιν ἀθάνατον ἀπολαβεῖν τὴν φύσιν].”¹⁰⁰ It is only in the broad sense of “human nature,” as including its mode or condition, that one can speak of human nature “changing” or “mutating” to corruption at the fall.

8. The Commonality of Human Nature as It Relates to the Fall

Although the Orthodox Church does not accept the idea that we are all born into this world sharing the *guilt* of the sin of Adam and Eve,* according to the common Patristic teaching we are all born subject to the *consequences* of that sin. As we have seen, these include a corruption of human nature, which inclines man toward sin; an absence of the indwelling grace of God (i.e., spiritual death); the suffering, death, and corruption of the body; the bodily necessities that we know today; and a continuance of spiritual death after physical death. These consequences were passed down from the first man to his descendants because human nature is one: we are all of the family of Adam. As St. Gregory Palamas explains,

The same ancestral curse and condemnation poured out on all of us from our single forefather, as if it had sprung from the root of the human race and was the common lot of our nature.¹⁰¹

* See, for example, the teaching of St. Cyril of Alexandria on pp. 712–13 above, where it is said that, at the fall, “all were made sinners, not as co-transgressors with Adam (for they did not yet exist then), but because they were of his nature.”



A Greek icon of St. John Chrysostom writing commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles, with St. Paul whispering into his ear. "No mortal," writes St. Nikolai Velimirovich of Zica, "has interpreted the Epistles of the Apostle Paul with greater love and depth than St. John Chrysostom. Had St. Paul himself interpreted them, he could not have interpreted them better. Behold, history tells us that it was Paul himself who interpreted them through the mind and the pen of Chrysostom." According to the Life of St. Chrysostom, the Saint's disciple and novice, St. Proclus (see p. 929 below), on three consecutive nights beheld the Apostle Paul bent over St. Chrysostom and whispering into his ear as the latter was writing his commentaries on the Pauline Epistles. "Therefore," concludes St. Nikolai Velimirovich in relating this account, "it was the Apostle Paul himself who was directing the mind and pen of his greatest interpreter" (St. Nikolai Velimirovich, *The Prologue of Ohrid*, trans. Fr. T. Timothy Tepsic, vol. 2, 2nd ed., entry for Nov. 20, pp. 540–41).

V. THE EFFECTS OF THE FALL ON THE COSMOS

1. The Dependence of the Cosmos on Man

Man's fall had profound repercussions on the entire cosmos as well, bringing about what Patristic scholar Fr. Andrew Louth calls "a cosmic disaster."¹⁰² When man fell, the rest of the visible creation fell into corruption along with him: death and decay were introduced into the cosmos. Thus, not only did man fail to fulfill his original designation of raising the creation to God, but he lowered the creation from incorruption to a state of corruption.

It will be remembered that, when God sentenced mankind to suffering and death after the fall, among His decrees was the statement: "Cursed is the earth" (Gen. 3:17).^{*} This account in the book of Genesis formed the historical-narrative background for the above-mentioned teachings in the Wisdom of Solomon and the Pauline Epistles. Following from these words of Scripture, and especially from St. Paul's teaching in Romans 8:19–23 on creation's "bondage of corruption," the Patristic corpus holds that, while Adam's continued incorruption was dependent on himself—that is, on his keeping the commandment of God—the continued incorruption of the rest of creation was dependent not on itself, but on Adam's incorruption. To put it another way, Adam was dependent on God, but the irrational creation was dependent on man (or on God *through* man) for its abiding in incorruption. It was for this reason that, when man became corruptible, the rest of the cosmos followed him.

In Romans 8:20, the Holy Apostle Paul writes: "For the creation was made subject to futility, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected it in hope." St. John Chrysostom, in his commentary on this verse, explains:

* In the Septuagint text, this is followed with the words "in thy labors"; in the Masoretic, it is followed with "for thy sake."

What is the meaning of “the creation was made subject to futility”? That it became corruptible. For what cause, and on what account? On account of you, O man. For since you took a body mortal and subject to suffering, so also the earth received a curse, and brought forth thorns and thistles.¹⁰³

St. Gregory the Sinaite says the same:

It is said that when the world was first created it was not subject to flux and corruption. According to Scripture it was only later corrupted and “made subject to futility”—that is, to man—not by its own choice but by the will of Him to whom it is subject, the expectation being that Adam, who had fallen into corruption, would be restored to his original state.¹⁰⁴

As St. Symeon the New Theologian teaches, God did not curse Paradise, but only the rest of the incorrupt earth:

[God] wills to hold it [Paradise] out to us as a type of the indissoluble life to come, an icon of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. If this were not the case, then the Garden, too, would have had to be cursed, since it was the scene of the transgression. However, God does not do this, but instead curses the whole rest of the earth which, as we have said, was incorruptible just like Paradise, and produced fruit of its own accord.¹⁰⁵

St. John Chrysostom explains that this was a fitting and just consequence of man’s sin, since the visible creation had been made for the sake of man:

He [the Apostle Paul] discourses concerning creation’s bondage [to corruption—cf. Rom. 8:21], and shows for whose sake such a thing has occurred—and he places the blame on us. What then? In suffering these things on account of another, has creation been maltreated? By no means, for it has come into being for my sake. So then, how

could that which has come into being for my sake be unjustly treated in suffering those things for my correction?^{106*}

Let us recall St. Symeon's teaching, quoted above, that it was fitting that the creation supply incorrupt man with incorruptible food in the beginning. Elsewhere St. Symeon affirms that, after the fall, it was fitting that creation be made corruptible along with man, so that it could furnish man, for whose sake it had been made, with corruptible food:

[God] subjected creation to him [man], and put it under a curse so that, having been created for the sake of man who had fallen into corruption, it should itself become corrupt and provide him annually with corrupted food.¹⁰⁷

At the same time, however, it is precisely because the visible creation was made for the sake of man that it will again become incorruptible—for when the body of man is restored to a state of incorruption at the general resurrection, the rest of the visible creation will be restored to that state as well. St. Symeon writes:

[God] willed that creation serve man for whom it was made, and like him become corruptible, so that when again man is renewed and becomes spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal, then creation, too, now subjected to the rebel by God's command and made his slave, will be made new, and become incorruptible and wholly spiritual.¹⁰⁸

2. Subjected in Hope

To summarize this Patristic teaching: Since creation was made for the sake of man, it was necessary that it be created incorruptible along with man, that it fall into corruption along with man, and that in the future it be restored to incorruption along with man. It is by reason of

* Following the same line of thought, Sts. Ambrose of Milan and John Chrysostom taught that animals perished in the global Flood along with man because they had been created for man's sake. See p. 323, 323n above.

its future restoration that St. Paul, in saying that “the creation was subject to futility,” added the words “in hope” (Rom. 8:20). St. John Chrysostom, in his commentary on these words of the Apostle, explains further why there was no injustice in the fact that creation was subjected to corruption on account of man. Addressing mankind, he says:

Because of you, it [the creation] suffered evils and became corruptible, but no injustice has been done, for because of you it will become incorruptible again. This is what “in hope” means.¹⁰⁹

There is hope for the creation, St. Paul goes on to say in his Epistle to the Romans, “because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). St. Chrysostom interprets this verse as follows:

What does “the creation itself also” mean? Not only you, but also that which is inferior to you, even that which partakes of neither reason nor sense perception—even this will share all good things in common with you. For “it shall be delivered,” he [St. Paul] says, “from the bondage of corruption,” which is to say, it will no longer be corruptible, but will correspond to the beauty given to your body. For just as when the body became corruptible, the creation itself also became corruptible, so likewise when the body will become incorruptible, the creation itself will again correspond and follow suit.¹¹⁰

Again emphasizing that the rest of creation follows man, St. Chrysostom explains why Christians should find consolation in St. Paul’s teaching that the creation was made corruptible for the sake of man, “in hope” of future incorruption:

Do you see how man leads the way in all things, and how everything has come about for his sake? Do you perceive how he [St. Paul] encourages those struggling, and lays bare God’s unspeakable love for mankind? Why do you grieve, he says, over trials? You are suffering on account of yourself—creation is suffering on account of you. Nor

does he encourage only, but he demonstrates what he says to be worthy of faith. For if creation, which came into being entirely for you, has hope, much more ought you to have hope, through whom creation will come to enjoy all those good things.¹¹¹

St. John Chrysostom's commentary on this passage in Romans has served as a basis for subsequent Patristic commentaries, such as those of St. John Damascene in the eighth century, Blessed Theophylact of Ohrid in the eleventh century, and St. Theophan the Recluse in the nineteenth century.^{112*} St. Chrysostom was not, however, introducing a new interpretation of this passage, but only expressing what had been the common teaching of the Church. Two centuries before St. Chrysostom, for example, St. Irenaeus of Lyons set forth the same interpretation. Commenting on Romans 8:19–23, St. Irenaeus wrote that when “the commencement of incorruption” occurs at the general resurrection, “the creation itself” will be “restored to its primeval condition”—thus indicating both the original and the future incorruption of the cosmos.^{113**}

St. Irenaeus' contemporary, St. Theophilus of Antioch, elaborated on this theme. In the passage of his teaching mentioned earlier, he explained why it was fitting that animals were changed at the fall together with man, and how they would one day be restored to a condition without hunting and predation:

The animals are named wild beasts [*θηρία*] from their being hunted [*θηρεύεσθαι*], not as if they had been made evil or venomous from the first—for nothing was made evil by God, but all things good, yea, very good (Gen. 1:31)—but the sin in which man was concerned brought evil upon them. For when man transgressed, they also transgressed with him. For as, if the master of the house himself

* St. John Damascene's and Blessed Theophylact's commentaries on this passage were condensed versions of St. John Chrysostom's commentary. St. Theophan used St. Chrysostom as his main source, but quoted also from the writings of other Fathers.

** See also p. 706 above, where St. Irenaeus again says that, in the general resurrection, creation will be “restored” to its original condition.

acts rightly, the domestics also of necessity conduct themselves well, but if the master sins, the servants also sin with him, so in like manner it came to pass, that in the case of man's sin, he being master, all that was subject to him sinned with him. When, therefore, man again shall have made his way back to his natural condition, and no longer does evil, those also shall be restored to their original gentleness.¹¹⁴

Again, a century before St. John Chrysostom, St. Methodius of Olympus commented on Romans 8:18–21, saying that the creation fell into corruption for the sake of man, and that it will be restored to incorruption along with him:

For the creation was made subject to futility, [St. Paul] says, and he expects that it will be set free from such servitude, as he intends to call this world by the name of creation. For it is not what is unseen [the angelic world] but what is seen that is subject to corruption. The creation, then, after being restored to a better and more seemly state, remains, rejoicing and exulting over the children of God at the resurrection, for whose sake it now groans and travails, waiting itself also for our redemption from the corruption of the body, that, when we have risen and shaken off the mortality of the flesh ..., and have been set free from sin, it also shall be freed from corruption and be subject no longer to futility, but to righteousness (cf. 2 Pet. 3:13).¹¹⁵

In our own times, this common Patristic teaching has been expounded by a modern-day Holy Father, St. Justin (Popovich) of Celije, Serbia. All of creation fell into corruption along with man, Fr. Justin says, not simply because the destiny of all creatures is linked to man's, but because their destiny is *dependent* on man's:

The fate of visible nature has, from the beginning of its existence, been under the power of the influence of man.... Organically and mystically connected with man as with a God-like creature of God, nature in the essence of its life depends upon man and always moves strictly commensurately with man. When man chose the path of sin

and death as his path through history, all of nature, as the result of its irresistible inner dependency on man, followed after him (cf. Rom. 8:19–23). The fall of man was at the same time the fall of nature, and the curse of man became the curse of nature (Gen. 3:17–18). And from that time man and nature, like two inseparable twins, blinded by one and the same darkness, deadened by one and the same death, burdened by one and the same curse, go hand in hand through history, through the abysmal wilderness of sin and evil. Together they stumble, together they fall, and together they arise, ceaselessly striving toward the distant conclusion of their sorrowful history.¹¹⁶

Elsewhere, in his essay “A Deer Lost in Paradise,” St. Justin expressed this teaching in poetic fashion, through the mouth of a deer who speaks on behalf of all God’s creatures:

You men consciously and voluntarily fabricated sin, evil, and death; and then without our consent you also pulled us into them through your malice and malevolence, because you had authority over us. Therefore, you shall also have to answer for us.... On the day of Judgment men will have to give an answer for all the torments, for all the sufferings, for all the troubles, and for all the deaths of all earthly beings and creatures.¹¹⁷

VI. “BY MAN CAME DEATH”

1. Death Is Not from God

As our study thus far has shown, the Orthodox Church, through the Holy Scriptures and their interpretation by the Holy Fathers, confesses that death and corruption exist not because God made them in the beginning, but because man brought them into the world through his sin. Besides the verses in the eighth chapter of Romans that we have already examined, other passages in the Pauline Epistles express this Orthodox doctrine. In 1 Corinthians, the Holy Apostle writes that “by

man came death” (1 Cor. 15:21). Again, in Romans, chapter 5, he writes that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Rom. 5:12), and further that “by one man’s offense death reigned by one” (Rom. 5:17).

Commenting on the latter verse, St. John Chrysostom writes:

What armed death against the cosmos? The fact that one man tasted of the tree only.¹¹⁸

St. Macarius the Great likewise teaches that

Adam was placed as lord and king of all the creatures.... And so, when he was taken captive, the creation which ministered to and served him was taken captive together with him. For through him death came to reign over every soul.¹¹⁹

St. John Damascene affirms the same:

The creation of all things is due to God, but corruption came in afterwards due to our wickedness and as a punishment and a help. “For God did not make death, neither does He take delight in the destruction of living things” (Wis. 1:13). But death is the work rather of man; that is, its origin is in Adam’s transgression, in like manner as all other punishments.¹²⁰

Providing further insights into the causality of death, St. Maximus explains that, at the fall, sin was “nailed” or “attached” to the root of human nature, thus bringing not only man but also the entire visible creation into a state of death and corruption:

What I am saying is that in the beginning sin seduced Adam and persuaded him to transgress God’s commandment, whereby sin gave rise to pleasure and, by means of this pleasure, nailed itself in Adam to the very depths of our nature, thus condemning our whole human nature to death and, via humanity, pressing the nature of (all) created beings toward mortal extinction.¹²¹

Elsewhere St. Maximus sets forth the same teaching on how death and corruption entered the cosmos:

The true word mystically explains that man—who was allotted, by the grace of the God Who made him, to be master over the whole visible world—by way of misuse turned the motions of the innate faculties of his noetic essence toward that which is against nature; and as a result, according to the just judgment of God, man brought upon himself and this whole universe the change and corruption presently ruling over both him and it.^{122*}

2. The Devil's Role

St. Maximus also speaks of the devil's role in bringing sin, and thus death, into the creation:

Through man, [sin] impels all created things toward death. All this was contrived by the devil, that spawn of sin and father of iniquity who through pride expelled himself from Divine glory, and through envy of us and of God banished Adam from Paradise, in order to destroy the works of God and dissolve what had been brought into existence.¹²³

It is in light of this explanation that we are to understand the words of Scripture quoted earlier, “Through the envy of the devil death came into the world” (Wis. 2:24), as well as the following verse from the

* See also the quotation of St. Maximus on p. 689 above. In addition to the Patristic passages quoted elsewhere in this book, one finds other places where the Holy Fathers, following the teaching of the Apostle Paul (cf. Rom. 5:12, 8:20–21), affirm that “death entered the cosmos” at the fall of man. See, for example, St. Athanasius the Great, *Four Discourses against the Arians* 1.51, NPNF 2 4, p. 336; St. Photius the Great, quoted in a catena on Romans, PG 118.416B; Blessed Theophylact of Ohrid, *Commentary on Romans*, PG 124.404C, 448A; St. Gregory Palamas, *Homily* 16.1, trans. Christopher Veniamin, p. 180; St. Maximus the Greek, *Works* (in Russian), vol. 2, p. 331; and St. Theophan the Recluse, *Commentary on First Eight Chapters of the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Romans* (in Russian), p. 308.

Canon of the Feast of Theophany, composed by St. John Damascene, which speaks of the devil “implanting” death in the creation:

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.¹²⁴

3. Is Death “Natural”?

The Scriptural-Patristic teaching we have recounted on the origin of death and corruption in the cosmos, and on the devil’s place in it, forms the basis of a poetic passage by another modern Holy Father from Serbia, St. Nikolai Velimirovich of Zica. In a work called “Death Is Unnatural,” St. Nikolai writes:

Death is not natural; rather it is unnatural.

And death is not from nature; rather it is against nature.*

All of nature in horror cries out: “I do not know death! I do not wish death! I am afraid of death! I strive against death!”

Death is an uninvited stranger in nature.

All of nature bristles at this uninvited stranger and is afraid of it. For it is like a thief in somebody else’s garden, who does not just steal and eat the fruit, but who also tramples, spoils, breaks and uproots what was planted. And the more it ravages, the more it becomes satisfied.

Even when one hundred philosophies declare that “death is natural!” all of nature trembles in indignation and shouts: “No! I have no use for death! It is an uninvited stranger!”

And the voice of nature is not sophistry.

The protest of nature against death outweighs all excuses thought up to justify death.

And if there is something that nature struggles to express in its untouched harmony, doing so without exception in a unison of

* As in the passages of St. Justin of Celije quoted above, “nature” (природа in Serbian) here refers to the created order or natural environment.

voices, then it is a protest against death. It is its unanimous, frantic, and heaven-shaking elegy to death.

If in fact death is unnatural, if it is not natural and is against nature, then a question arises: why is it so and whence does death enter nature?

Not a single kingdom of light and life accepts death as its native. It must have sneaked into the worlds of life secretly—crawling on its belly and staying out of sight so that it would not be spotted and exposed—from some bottomless abyss where even it was too cold and lonely.

When death was behind the fangs of a snake, it was dead unto itself.* And no one in the world then knew about good and evil—only bliss existed; and nobody heard of knowledge and ignorance—there was only wisdom; and nobody knew of life and death—there was only the state of blissfully wise existence.

But because of an occasion, which is more dreadful than the most horrible nightmare, the mouth of the snake opened and the fangs full of venom appeared out of it—and death entered first-created nature.¹²⁵

Elsewhere, in his *Homilies*, St. Nikolai Velimirovich offers another profound reflection on the same theme, indicating through observable examples that death is indeed an intruder in this world:

There is a mysterious feeling that takes hold of all who stand around a dead body, a feeling that is rarely expressed, and this is shame. Not only do men fear death, they are ashamed of it. This shame is a proof—an even stronger one than fear—that death is the consequence of man's sin. As a sick man is ashamed to show the doctor his hidden wound, so all who have a conscience are ashamed to show their mortality. This shame of death goes to prove our

* A reference to the devil, who in St. John Chrysostom's words "employed [the serpent] like some convenient instrument" when tempting Eve (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 16.2, FC 74, p. 209 [16.4]; see also pp. 253–54 above).

immortal origins and our immortal destiny. Animals hide themselves away when they are dying, as though they feel ashamed of their mortality. How great, then, is this shame on the part of the spiritually educated!¹²⁶

When St. Nikolai says that death is “unnatural,” he is speaking from the perspective of God’s economy of His creation in its original state. Death was not part of God’s original, “very good” creation; therefore, when it entered the world, it was “unnatural.” This is not to say, however, that the creation was preserved in incorruption *strictly* according to its own nature, independent of God’s grace. As we have seen, the original incorruption of man was entirely dependent on God, while the incorruption of the rest of creation was dependent on God through man.

With regard to whether man was originally immortal by “nature” or by “grace,” various Holy Fathers express themselves differently. As we have said when discussing whether or not Adam’s nature “changed” at the fall, the Fathers sometimes employ the term “nature” in a strict sense, and sometimes in a broad sense. Thus, just as Adam’s nature may be said to have changed or to have remained unchanged, according to the sense given to the word “nature,” so also man’s original immortality may be said to have existed by “nature” or by “grace,” depending on how “nature” is viewed.

For example, in *On the Incarnation*, St. Athanasius the Great said that Adam was created mortal by nature but preserved in incorruption by grace,* while St. Gregory of Nyssa, in *On Virginity*, said that man

* “God has made man, and willed that he should abide in incorruption; but men, having despised and rejected the contemplation of God, and devised and contrived evil for themselves ..., received the condemnation of death with which they had been threatened; and from thenceforth no longer remained as they were made.... For man is by nature mortal, inasmuch as he is made out of what is not; but by reason of his likeness to Him Who is (and if he still preserved this likeness by keeping Him in his knowledge) he would stay his natural corruption, and remain incorrupt; ... being incorrupt, he would live henceforth as God.... For God has not only made us out of nothing; but He gave us freely, by the grace of the Word, a life in correspondence with God. But men, having rejected things eternal, and, by counsel of the devil,

was not originally liable to death according to his nature.* Here again we see two Fathers viewing the same reality from different sides. St. Athanasius, in saying that man in the beginning was mortal by nature, was looking at “nature” in an absolute sense, according to which God alone is immortal by nature because He alone is Uncreated, without beginning, and dependent on nothing for His unending life (cf. 1 Tim. 6:15–16: “the Lord of lords, Who alone hath immortality”).** St. Gregory, in saying that man was not originally mortal by nature, was viewing “nature” in a relative sense, according to which humanity was, *conditionally and dependently*, granted the gift of immortality by God.

turned to the things of corruption, became the cause of their own corruption in death, being, as I said before, by nature corruptible, but destined, by the grace following from partaking of the Word, to have escaped their natural state, had they remained good. For because of the Word dwelling with them, even their natural corruption did not come near them, as Wisdom also says: ‘God made man for incorruption’ (St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word* 4–5, NPNF 2 4, p. 38). A comparable teaching is found in St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies* 3.20.1, ANF 1, p. 450.

* “This reasoning and intelligent creature, man, at once the work and the likeness of the Divine and Imperishable Mind (for so in Genesis it is written of him that ‘God made man in His image’), this creature, I say, did not in the course of his first production have the liability to passion and death [τὸ παθητικόν τε καὶ επίκηρον] according to his nature or inherent in his essence” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity* 12, SC 119.398–400, NPNF 2 5, p. 357*).

** St. Athanasius taught that, since incorrupt first-created man was brought into being out of nothing, he would naturally undergo “corruption into nothing” if God did not preserve his life (*On the Incarnation of the Word* 4). This theology of created being—of creatures “naturally” having an end because they have a beginning—is taken up by other Fathers in other contexts. St. John Damascene, for example, writes that “angels are immortal, not by nature, but by grace; for, naturally, everything that has a beginning has an end” (*On the Orthodox Faith* 2.3, FC 37, p. 206). According to this sense of the word “nature,” then, even angels may be said to be “mortal by nature and immortal by grace.” As St. Maximus writes: “Creatures all exist through participation and grace.... Only the Divine Essence has no opposite, since it is eternal and infinite and bestows eternity on other things. The being of created things, on the other hand, has non-being as its opposite. Whether or not it exists eternally depends on the power of Him Who alone exists in the substantive sense” (*Four Hundred Texts on Love* 3.27–28, *Philokalia* 2, p. 87). Thus, in Orthodox theology, no created thing could *exist*, let alone possess immortality, without God’s grace.

In the writings of St. Maximus, we find this question viewed from both sides. In some places St. Maximus writes that Adam “was not deprived of the immortality that is by grace,”* and that at the fall Adam lost “the incorruptibility which had been given by grace.”¹²⁷ As we have seen, however, in another place St. Maximus wrote that Christ has made it possible for man “once again to recover an immortal nature,”** thus specifying that man had an “immortal nature” in the beginning.

Taken together, St. Maximus’ teachings lend themselves to the formulation that man’s body was originally possessed, *by grace*, of an immortal, incorrupt *nature*. Such an understanding is possible within Orthodox theology, which sees no rigid dichotomy between grace and nature. As Vladimir Lossky points out: “Grace is implied in the act of creation itself.... Nature and grace do not exist side by side, rather there is a mutual interpenetration of one another, the one exists in the other.”^{128 ***}

In seeing the inner harmony of St. Maximus’ thought on man’s

* See p. 699 above.

** See p. 725 above.

*** The interpenetration of grace and nature is also expressed in the Patristic teaching on the human *soul*, which, as we have seen in the passage of St. Gregory Palamas quoted above (pp. 716–17), remained immortal even after man’s fall. Thus, St. John Damascene, after listing attributes of the human soul and including immortality among them, writes: “All these qualities according to nature [the soul] has received from the grace of the Creator, from which grace it has received both its being [*τὸ εἶναι*] and its being by nature such as it is [*φύσει οὔτως εἶναι*]” (*On the Orthodox Faith* 2.12, PTS 12.77, NPNF 2 9, p. 31b*). Here St. John affirms that immortality is a quality with which God has endowed the *nature* of the soul by means of His *grace*, just as it is by grace that He has granted the soul its very existence. It is in this light that we are to understand, for example, the statement of St. Irenaeus that “the spirit and the soul and other such things ... are immortal by nature, to which things life is always present by their very nature” (*Against Heresies* 5.4.1, ANF 1, p. 530; see also 5.7.1, pp. 532–33), or St. Gregory Palamas’ affirmation that “by nature the soul is immortal” (*To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia* 8, *Philokalia* 4, p. 295). If the soul can be called immortal by nature, it is in the sense that the nature of the soul possesses immortality as a gift from God. In the concise phrase of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, the soul is “immortal because of God Who gives it immortality” (*Catechetical Lectures* 4.18, NPNF 2 7, p. 23).

original immortality, we can better appreciate the harmony between the theology of St. Athanasius and that of St. Gregory of Nyssa. St. Gregory, as we have quoted him earlier, wrote that man was created “in Divine grace”;^{*} and elsewhere he described man’s condition before the fall as a “pristine state of grace.”¹²⁹ Thus, while saying that man was not created liable to death according to his nature, he also affirmed that this incorrupt condition was a state of grace. Likewise, St. Athanasius, in saying that man was created mortal by nature, also affirmed that man was preserved in incorruption by grace. While employing the term “nature” in different ways with regard to man, both Fathers taught the same essential points: (1) that man was preserved in incorruption until the fall, (2) that this condition was a state of grace, and (3) that if man had not sinned he would not have died.^{**}

4. St. Gregory Palamas on the Cause of Death and Illness

As we have seen in the writings of several Fathers, it was in being “stripped of grace,” and thereby dying spiritually, that man was made subject to physical death. Perhaps no Father speaks at greater length and in more detail on this than does St. Gregory Palamas. In the following passage from his thirty-first homily, St. Gregory describes the whole process by which death, together with bodily diseases and infirmities, was introduced into the life of man:

We should inquire and learn about the origin of physical death. God, Who is Life-itself, fullness of life, and the Cause of all life in time and eternity, and indeed of the pre-eternal and Godlike life, neither gave us bodily death, nor created, nor commanded it to exist. If God did not make this death, He is also not responsible for physical diseases, so where do our bodily illnesses and maladies, as well as

* See p. 691 above.

** Moreover, as we have seen, both Sts. Athanasius and Gregory of Nyssa taught that human sexual procreation was a result of the fall, and that if man had not fallen God would have increased the human race by some other means. This further underlines their common vision of man’s original state of physical incorruption, and its fundamental difference from his condition after the fall. See pp. 494–95n, 722 above.

the death of our bodies, come from? Listen and understand what the source of this death is. The spiritual serpent and archetype of wickedness deserted to evil in the beginning and so was deprived of true, good life. He was justly driven away from the life from which he had already fled, and became a dead spirit, not dead in essence, for deadness has no essential existence, but dead through casting off true life. He was not satisfied, though, with hurtling towards evil, but also made himself a death-dealing spirit, deceitfully, alas, and persuading mankind to share in his own death.

Because our ancestors agreed with Satan against the Creator's will and stripped off the garments of life and heavenly radiance, they became, sad to say, spiritually dead like Satan. Satan is not just a dead spirit, but brings death upon all who draw near to him. Both of those who shared in his state of death [i.e., Adam and Eve] had bodies through which the deadening counsel which they had put into practice finished its work. Once their spirits had died and become sources of death they passed on their deadness to their bodies, which would have disintegrated immediately and returned to the earth, had they not been preserved by a higher providence and power to await the decision of Him Who upholds all things by His word alone (cf. Heb. 1:3). He ... held back the sentence of physical death and postponed it. When He did pronounce it, in His profound wisdom and great love for mankind, He refrained from putting it into effect until a future time. He did not say to Adam, "As you have eaten from the tree from which I told you not to eat, go back to whence you came." Instead, having first spoken of many things relevant to the course of human life on earth, He pronounced, "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). For He did not utter these words as a commandment, but to foretell what was in all fairness to take place, with His permission and without Him preventing it. Notice that, like the death of the soul, physical death does not come from God but from transgression, as a result of the soul committing sin, and of the serpent deceitfully dragging man down with him into iniquity. Consequently, bodily ailments also found their way in as a result of sin.¹³⁰

5. Why God Allowed the Entrance of Death and Suffering

Although the Holy Fathers declare along with St. Paul that death is an “enemy” which is to be “destroyed” (1 Cor. 15:26), they also affirm that the introduction of death was allowed providentially by God. Death, as we have said, was not part of God’s economy of His creation in its original condition; however, after the fall God used death for the benefit of man. As St. John Chrysostom observes, in man’s fallen state death serves for the cutting off of sin:

Even though death entered as a result of sin, nevertheless such is the superiority of God, His loving-kindness and the excess of His care that He employs even this to the advantage of our race.... Is it not the final blow to evil? I mean, if someone is wicked, his practice of evil is felled at his death: “For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7), that is, no longer continues sinning; if a person who is good passes on, all his works of virtue lie in safety and in a secure treasury. Does this not, tell me, render the living more temperate and circumspect?... You see, if despite death being what it is there is so much rapacity, so much avarice, the stronger preying on the weaker like fish, when would avarice ever come to an end if there were no death? I mean, if they are aware that they will not enjoy what they steal, but willy-nilly they will pass it over to others, and they so grieve and lament at this, when would the flames of evil desire ever be extinguished if they kept their ill-gotten gains without fear?¹³¹

St. Irenaeus likewise sees God’s love toward mankind in the fact that He allowed death to enter the world:

God also drove Adam out of Paradise, and placed him far from the tree of life, not because He envied him the tree of life, as some dare to claim, but because He pitied him and did not desire that he should persevere forever as a sinner, nor that the sin which surrounded him should be immortal, and evil interminable and irreme-

diable. But He set a bound to man's sin by interposing death, thus causing sin to cease.¹³²

St. Gregory the Theologian says the same:

Yet here too he [Adam] makes a gain, namely death, and the cutting off of sin, in order that evil may not be immortal. Thus his punishment is changed into a mercy; for it is in mercy, I am persuaded, that God inflicts punishment.¹³³

Just as God used death for the benefit of man in his fallen state, so also did He use the other physical consequences of the fall: suffering, bodily needs, labor, disease, etc. Like death itself, these other consequences serve to humble man and bring him to repentance.

At the fall, man succumbed to the temptation of pride, expressed in the serpent's words, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). All the physical consequences of the fall serve to remind man that he is not God but a created being who is dependent on God. St. John Chrysostom, in recounting the sentence imposed on Adam at the fall (Gen. 3:17–19), explains this as follows:

Behold the reminders of the curse! Thorns it will bring forth, He [God] says, and thistles, so as to give rise to great labor and discomfort, and I will ensure that you pass the whole time with pain, so that this experience may prove a brake on your getting ideas above your station, and you may instead have a thought of your own make-up and never again be deceived in these matters.... My intention in bringing you into the world ... was that you should live in a state of enjoyment and prosperity, and not be subject to the needs of the body but be free from all such and have the good fortune to experience complete freedom. Since, however, such indulgence was of no benefit to you, accordingly I curse the ground so that it will not in future yield its harvest as before without tilling and ploughing; instead, I invest you with great labor, toil and difficulty, and with unremitting pain and despair, and I am ensuring that everything you do is achieved only by sweat so that under pressure from these you may

have continual guidance in keeping to limits and recognizing your own make-up.¹³⁴

Adam and Eve indeed succumbed to pride in partaking of the forbidden fruit, but that was not the only source of their fall. As will be recalled, in the primordial transgression they also turned their desire away from God and toward created things, seeking pleasure in them as an end in itself. This too is expressed in the Genesis narrative: “And … the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree beautiful to contemplate” (Gen. 3:6).*

Thus, the temptation that brought about man’s fall was twofold. In the words of St. Mark the Ascetic: “All vice in the world is caused by self-esteem [pride] and sensual pleasure.”¹³⁵ Because of this, God employed the physical consequences of the fall as a twofold remedy: not only to quell man’s pride, but also to dampen his desire for created things and his pursuit of sensual pleasure for its own sake. As St. Maximus explains:

Being, in His Providence, concerned for our salvation, God therefore affixed pain alongside this sensual pleasure as a kind of punitive faculty, whereby the law of death was wisely implanted in our corporal nature to curb the foolish mind in its desire to incline unnaturally toward sensible things.... Through the many sufferings in which and from which death occurs, pain uproots unnatural pleasure, but does not completely destroy it.¹³⁶

Physical death, of course, puts an end to physical pain and labors. Here again we see God’s mercy, for in allowing the entrance of physical death so as to prevent sin from being immortal, God also prevented bodily pain and labor from necessarily lasting forever. As Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus writes:

Death dissolves this living thing and on the one hand ceases the ac-

* This is the Septuagint rendering. In the Masoretic Text, the last phrase reads “and a tree to be desired to make one wise.”

tion of wickedness; on the other hand, it saves man from further anguish, liberates him from sweat, drives away pain and sorrow, and brings the body's sufferings to an end. The Judge mixed the punishment with such philanthropy!¹³⁷

Furthermore, in His foreknowledge of man's eventual salvation through Christ, God allowed man's body to die so that it could be refashioned at the general resurrection. In the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa:

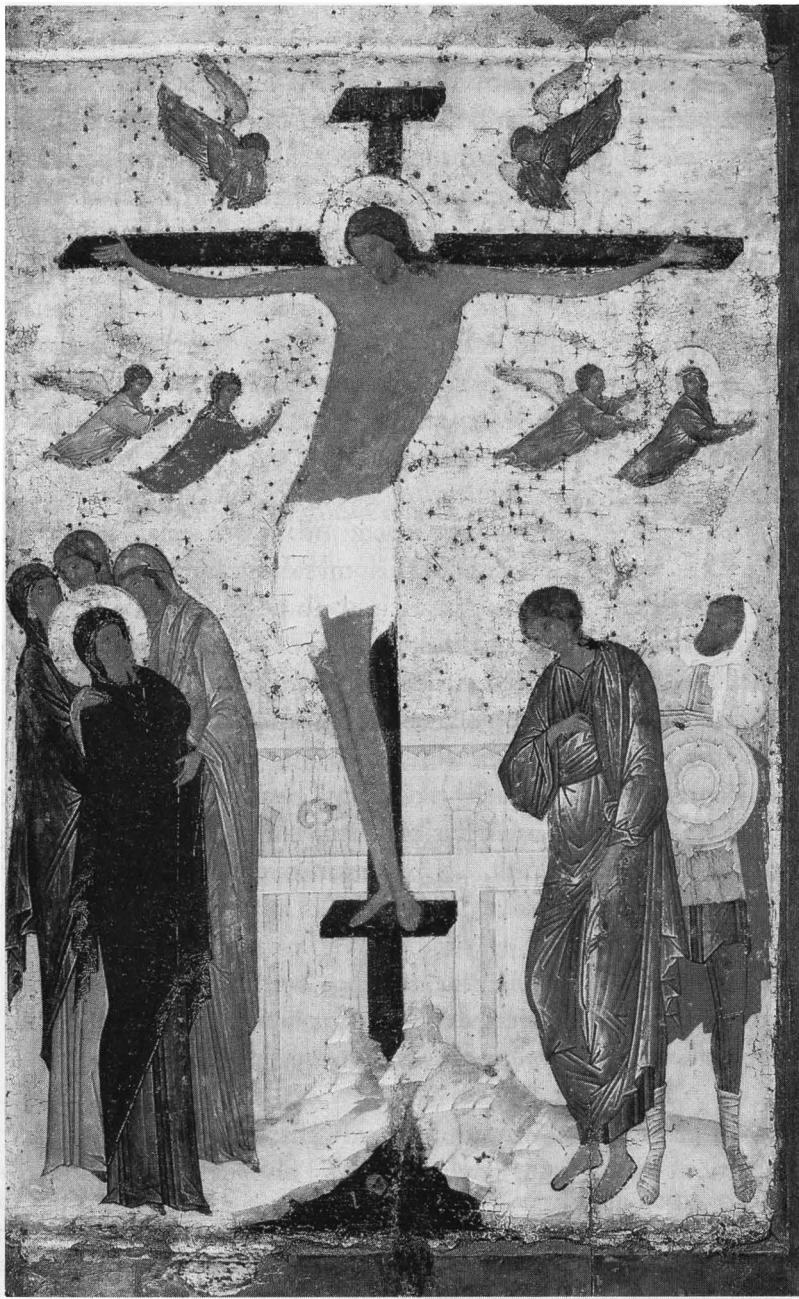
By Divine Providence death has been introduced as a dispensation into the nature of man, so that, sin having flowed away at the dissolution of the union of soul and body, man, through the resurrection, might be refashioned, sound, passionless, stainless, and removed from any touch of evil.^{138*}

St. Basil the Great also points to this idea, drawing an analogy between a human body that has been rendered immune to death and a pot that has been fired in a kiln, i.e., has acquired its final state:

God did not create death, but we brought it upon ourselves by a wicked intention. To be sure ... He did not prevent our dissolution, so that our weakness might not remain immortal. It is like someone not allowing a leaky clay pot to be placed in fire [and hardened] until the weakness present in it has been completely mended through refashioning.¹³⁹

Man's death, then, opened the way to his refashioning into a better state. The actual refashioning of man, however, would occur not through the death of sinful men but through the death and resurrection

* Compare St. Maximus the Confessor, who writes that the soul and body are naturally united in man "until such time as pleases the One Who bound them together to separate them [i.e., in death], in view of a greater and more mystical arrangement [*oikouμίας*] in the time of the expected universal consummation [i.e., the general resurrection]" (*Mystagogy* 7, PG 91.685B, trans. George C. Berthold, p. 197).



The crucifixion of Christ.
Icon by Master Dionysius, St. Paul of Obnora Monastery, Russia, 1500.

of the sinless God-man, Jesus Christ. Death, the ultimate physical consequence of man's fall, would thus become a means by which God would redeem mankind from all the effects of the fall, spiritually and bodily. As we read in Holy Scripture: "He [Christ] is the mediator of the New Covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15).

VII. THE REDEMPTION AND DEIFICATION OF MAN AND THE COSMOS

1. "*Trampling Down Death by Death*"

How are we to understand this mystery of man's redemption through Christ's death and resurrection? To begin our examination of this question, let us return to the teaching of St. Gregory Palamas on man's fall. As will be recalled, St. Gregory taught that, through Adam's one spiritual death, both spiritual and physical death were passed on to all men. The same Saint, however, affirmed that it is by means of death—Christ's death—that the power of death is destroyed. He explains that, as spiritual and physical death entered the world through Adam's one *spiritual* death, so both kinds of death are overcome through Christ's one *physical* death and His subsequent resurrection:

Through the evil one's envy and the good Lord's just consent, death came into the world. Because of the devil's overwhelming evil, death became twofold, for he brought about not just physical but also eternal death....

Of necessity bodily death followed [Adam's] spiritual death, so the evil one caused our double death by his single death.... The good Lord healed this twofold death of ours through His single bodily death, and through the one resurrection of His body He gave us a twofold resurrection. By means of His bodily death He destroyed him [the evil one] who had the power over our souls and bodies in death, and rescued us from his tyranny over both.¹⁴⁰

Out of His infinite love for us, Christ died on our behalf, that we could be given eternal life, both of soul and of body. In the words of St. Paul: “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8); and, “But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9).

Speaking of the awesome mystery of His redemption of the world, Christ told His disciples: “The Son of Man came … to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28).* This image of Christ giving up His life as a ransom was later taken up by the Apostle Paul (e.g., “Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all”—1 Tim. 2:5–6) and by the Orthodox Holy Fathers. In the following passage, St. John Damascene makes use of this image, adding to it the image of Christ’s body as bait attached to the hook of Divinity:

Since our Lord Jesus Christ was without sin (“For He committed no sin, He Who took away the sin of the world, nor was there any deceit found in His mouth” [cf. Is. 53:9, John 1:29]), He was not subject to death, since death came into the world through sin (cf. Rom. 5:12). He dies, therefore, because He took on Himself death on our behalf, and He makes Himself an offering to the Father for our sakes. For we had sinned against Him, and it was meet that He should receive a ransom for us, and that we should thus be delivered from the condemnation. God forbid that the blood of the Lord should have been offered to the tyrant [i.e., the devil]. Wherefore death approaches, and swallowing up the body as a bait is transfixed on the hook of Divinity, and after tasting of a sinless and life-giving

* Christ’s Divine foreknowledge that His death would serve for man’s salvation finds expression elsewhere in the Gospels. Speaking of His death on the Cross, Christ said: “But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am straitened till it be accomplished!” (Luke 12:50); “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14–15); and, on the day before His crucifixion: “Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12:27).

body, perishes, and brings up again all whom of old he had swallowed up. For just as darkness disappears on the introduction of light, so is death repulsed before the assault of life, and brings life to all, but death to the destroyer.¹⁴¹

In precisely the same vein, St. Gregory Palamas writes:

The Lord patiently endured for our sake a death He was not obliged to undergo, to redeem us, who were obliged to suffer death, from servitude to the devil and death, by which I mean death both of the soul and of the body, temporary and eternal. Since He gave His blood, which was sinless and therefore guiltless, as a ransom for us who were liable to punishment because of our sins, He redeemed us from our guilt. He forgave our sins, tore up the record of them on the Cross and delivered us from the devil's tyranny (cf. Col. 2:14–15). The devil was caught by the bait. It was as if he opened his mouth and hastened to pour out for himself our ransom, the Master's blood, which was not only guiltless but full of Divine power. Then instead of being enriched by it he was strongly bound and made an example in the Cross of Christ.¹⁴²

St. John Chrysostom further highlights this teaching with an image of his own:

It is as if, at a session of a court of justice, the devil should be addressed as follows: “Granted that you destroyed all men because you found them guilty of sin; but why did you destroy Christ? Is it not very evident that you did so unjustly? Well then, through Him the whole world will be vindicated.”^{143 *}

* Compare 1 Peter 3:18: “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit,” as well as the following verse from the service for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross: “The curse of a just condemnation is loosed by the unjust punishment inflicted on the Just [i.e., Christ]” (sticheron on “Lord I have cried,” in *The Festal Menaion*, p. 134).

From these and other Patristic expositions based in Scripture, the Orthodox doctrine of man's redemption through Christ's death and resurrection might be briefly stated as follows: Death is the consequence of sin. When Christ died on the Cross, He took upon Himself this consequence. However, since He was wholly without sin He was undeserving of death, and since He was Divine He was unable to be held in the bonds of death and hades. Thus, the spiritual and physical death that had entered the world through the primordial transgression were abolished through Christ's death and resurrection, and all mankind was given the possibility of being delivered from them.

2. The Commonality of Human Nature as It Relates to Redemption

The consequences of Christ's redemptive work could pass to all men because—as we have noted concerning the consequences of the first Adam's sin—human nature is one. The Apostle Paul writes: “If by one man's offense death reigned by one [that is, Adam], much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17). St. John Chrysostom comments on this verse and on those before and after it, explaining why St. Paul repeats the word “one” many times in his exposition of redemption:

How did death reign? “After the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is a type [τύπος] of Him Who was to come” (Rom. 5:14). Now this is why Adam is a type of Christ.* “How a type?” it will be said. In that, as the former became to those who were sprung from him (al-

* The fact that St. Paul, and after him St. John Chrysostom, saw Adam as a “type” (figure) of Christ does not of course imply that they did not also see him as a real person. The Orthodox Church has always viewed certain Old Testament figures and events as “types” of the New Testament dispensation while also affirming their historical reality. Thus, in another place, St. Paul wrote concerning certain events in the Old Testament: “Now all these things happened to them as types, and they were written for our admonition” (1 Cor. 10:11). In saying that these events *happened* as

though they had not eaten of the tree) the cause of that death which by his eating was introduced, thus also did Christ become to those sprung from Him (even though they had not wrought righteousness) the Provider of that righteousness which through His Cross He graciously bestowed on us all.* For this reason, at every turn he keeps to the “one,” and is continually bringing it before us, when he says, “As by one man sin entered into the world” (Rom. 5:12); and, “If through the offense of one many be dead” (5:15); and, “Not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift”; and, “The judgment was by one to condemnation” (5:16); and again, “If by one (or, the one) man’s offense death reigned by one” (5:17); and “Therefore as by the offense of one” (5:18). And again, “As by one man’s disobedience many (or, the many) were made sinners” (5:19). And so he does not let go of the “one,” so that when the Jew says to you, “How came it that by the well-doing of this one Person, Christ, the world was saved?” you might be able to say to him, “How came it that by the disobedience of this one person, Adam, the world was condemned?”¹⁴⁴

St. Cyril of Alexandria speaks specifically on how the consequences of Christ’s death on the Cross, like the consequences of Adam’s fall, were able to pass to all men due to the unity of human nature:

types and then were written down (rather than being merely “written down as types”), St. Paul is affirming that typology exists first of all in historical events, and then also in the written word.

The Holy Fathers saw “types” of Christ not only in Adam but also in Abel, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua the son of Nun, David, and others, at the same time regarding them as real people and the Old Testament accounts of them as historical. Some of these Fathers, including St. John Chrysostom, expressly wrote of the need to uphold the historical meaning of Scripture when a typological meaning is also given; see pp. 40–41, 122–23n above.

* Compare St. Cyril of Alexandria: “It is therefore anything but a secret that even in the first Adam the mystery of Christ was already represented, though differently and in a contrary configuration, not by exactly figuring forth the same thing. For the one was the beginning of the race unto death, unto a curse, unto judgment. But the other, unto everything opposite: life, blessing, and justification” (*Glaphyra on Genesis* 1.12, PG 69.29CD).

We were crucified with Christ at the moment when His flesh was crucified, because it somehow included universal human nature in itself, just as universal human nature contracted the sickness of the curse in Adam at the same time that he incurred the curse.¹⁴⁵

3. The Order of Redemption (I): Spiritual Resurrection

In Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection, *all* the consequences of the fall are overcome. These consequences, however, are not overcome all at once, but in a certain order, corresponding to the order in which man first experienced them. St. Symeon the New Theologian teaches that, just as Adam experienced first spiritual death and later physical death, so likewise Christ first overcame spiritual death in His own Person when He "resurrected up, brought to life, and deified" the human soul at His incarnation, and then He later overcame physical death in His Person at His resurrection.¹⁴⁶ St. Symeon goes on to say that the same order of redemption—first of the soul and then of the body—was observed in those who had died before Christ; for, immediately after Christ's death and while His body lay in the tomb, His soul "descended into hades, freed the souls of the saints held captive there in everlasting bonds, raised them up, and established them in a place of rest and of light without evening—but not yet their bodies, for those He allowed to remain in the grave until the general resurrection."^{147*}

Finally, St. Symeon teaches, this order of redemption is also observed in the life of each Christian. Man is first spiritually resurrected in the Church through the Holy Mysteries that have been made

* This teaching is found in the Epistles of Sts. Peter and Paul (1 Pet. 3:18–19, 4:6; Eph. 4:8–10). St. John Damascene affirms that the Savior began His descent into hell as soon as He gave up the spirit at the ninth hour, while darkness still enveloped the earth (Matt. 27:45–50; Mark 15:33–37): "In that darkness the Divine and all-holy soul of the Lord, having been separated from His sacred and life-giving body, came to dwell in the heart of the earth" (St. John Damascene, *Homily on Holy Saturday* 26, PTS 29.135–36). As St. Cyril of Alexandria points out, Christ did not deliver from hell all those who had died before His coming, but only those who "believed and acknowledged Him" (see p. 342n above).

possible through Christ's redemptive work, and only later does he experience the physical resurrection that Christ has also made possible.

"The beginning of our renewal," writes St. Gregory Palamas, is the Mystery of Holy Baptism, wherein we are cleansed of sin through Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. St. Gregory writes:

Christ tore up the handwriting of our transgressions on the Cross and made all those who were buried with Him through Baptism guiltless.¹⁴⁸

In Baptism, we die and are buried with Christ, thus partaking of the saving power of His death which frees us from sin. Thus, the Apostle Paul writes: "Know ye not, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death.... Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed" (Rom. 6:3–4, 6). As St. John Chrysostom explains:

Baptism is the Cross.* What the Cross and burial is to Christ, Baptism has been to us, even if not in the same respects. For He died Himself and was buried in the flesh, but we have done both to sin.¹⁴⁹

The Mystery of Baptism, however, does not only mean dying with Christ; it also means rising with Him and being given new life. The Apostle Paul affirms: "Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.... Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Rom. 6:4, 8). And again: "Buried with Him in Baptism,... ye are risen with Him through faith in the operation of God, Who hath

* Elsewhere St. John Chrysostom observes that "not only is Baptism called the Cross, but the Cross is called Baptism. 'With the Baptism that I am baptized with shall ye be baptized' (Mark 10:39), said Christ; and again: 'But I have a Baptism to be baptized with' (Luke 12:50), which ye know not" (*Homilies on the Gospel of St. John* 25.2, PG 59.151, NPNF 1 14, p. 89*).

raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His Cross" (Col. 2:12–14).

This spiritual resurrection in Christ is the uniting of man's soul once again with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Because man is cleansed of sin in Holy Baptism through Christ's redemptive sacrifice, grace is no longer foreign to his nature, and he becomes a fit receptacle of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in the Mystery of Baptism, together with the Mystery of Chrismation that follows upon it, man receives the grace of the Holy Spirit as he had it before the primordial fall. In the words of St. John Chrysostom:

This is the meaning of "the Spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6).... In Baptism the sins are buried, the former things are blotted out, and man is made alive, the entire grace written upon his heart as it were a tablet. Consider then how high is the dignity of the Spirit.¹⁵⁰

St. Symeon the New Theologian explains how Baptism, together with Chrismation, is both a death and a resurrection for man, both granting man forgiveness of sins and imparting to him the grace of the Holy Spirit that he had lost at the fall:

The Son and Word of God, having become incarnate, offered Himself in the flesh as a sacrifice to the Divinity of the Father, and of the Son Himself, and of the Holy Spirit, in order that the first transgression of Adam might be benevolently forgiven for the sake of this great and fearful work, that is, for the sake of this sacrifice of Christ, and in order that by its power there might be performed another new birth and re-creation of man in Holy Baptism, in which we also are cleansed by water mingled with the Holy Spirit. From that time people are baptized in water, are immersed in it and taken out from it three times, in the image of the three-day burial of the Lord, and after they die in it to this whole evil world, in the third bringing out from it they are already alive, as if resurrected from the dead; that is,

their souls are brought to life and again receive the grace of the Holy Spirit as Adam had it before the transgression. Then they are anointed with Holy Myrrh, and by means of it are anointed with Jesus Christ, and are fragrant in a way above nature.¹⁵¹

St. Symeon then writes of how those who are baptized and chrismated into Christ's Church are united to God through the Holy Eucharist:

Having become in this way worthy of being associates of God, they taste His Flesh and drink His Blood, and by means of the sanctified bread and wine become of one Body and Blood with God Who was incarnate and offered Himself as a sacrifice.¹⁵²

In a similar vein, St. Nicholas Cabasilas speaks of how we partake of Christ's redemptive sacrifice on the Cross when receiving Holy Communion:

Since, therefore, the Only Begotten Son has left nothing undone which pertains to the Father's glory, He alone "has broken down the middle wall of division" (Eph. 2:14) and clears man from his indictment.... Christ's Body then is the only medicine against sin and His Blood the only ransom from offenses.... This is the Body that was slain upon the Cross.... In its "witness before Pontius Pilate" it "made a good confession" (cf. 1 Tim. 6:13): it paid the penalty of death for this confession, and that upon the Cross.... The Blood springing out of the wounds darkened the sun and shook the earth; it hallowed the air and washed the whole world clean of the filth of sin.¹⁵³

Therefore, concludes St. Nicholas,

the labors and tears of those who repent of sins after the baptismal washing and plead for grace stand in need of the Blood of the New Covenant and of the Body which was slain, since they [the labors and tears] are of no avail without them [the Body and Blood].¹⁵⁴

Elsewhere St. Nicholas affirms that, in the Holy Eucharist, we also partake of Christ's resurrection, since "we receive the Risen One Himself ... the very Benefactor Himself, the very Temple whereon is founded the whole compass of graces."¹⁵⁵

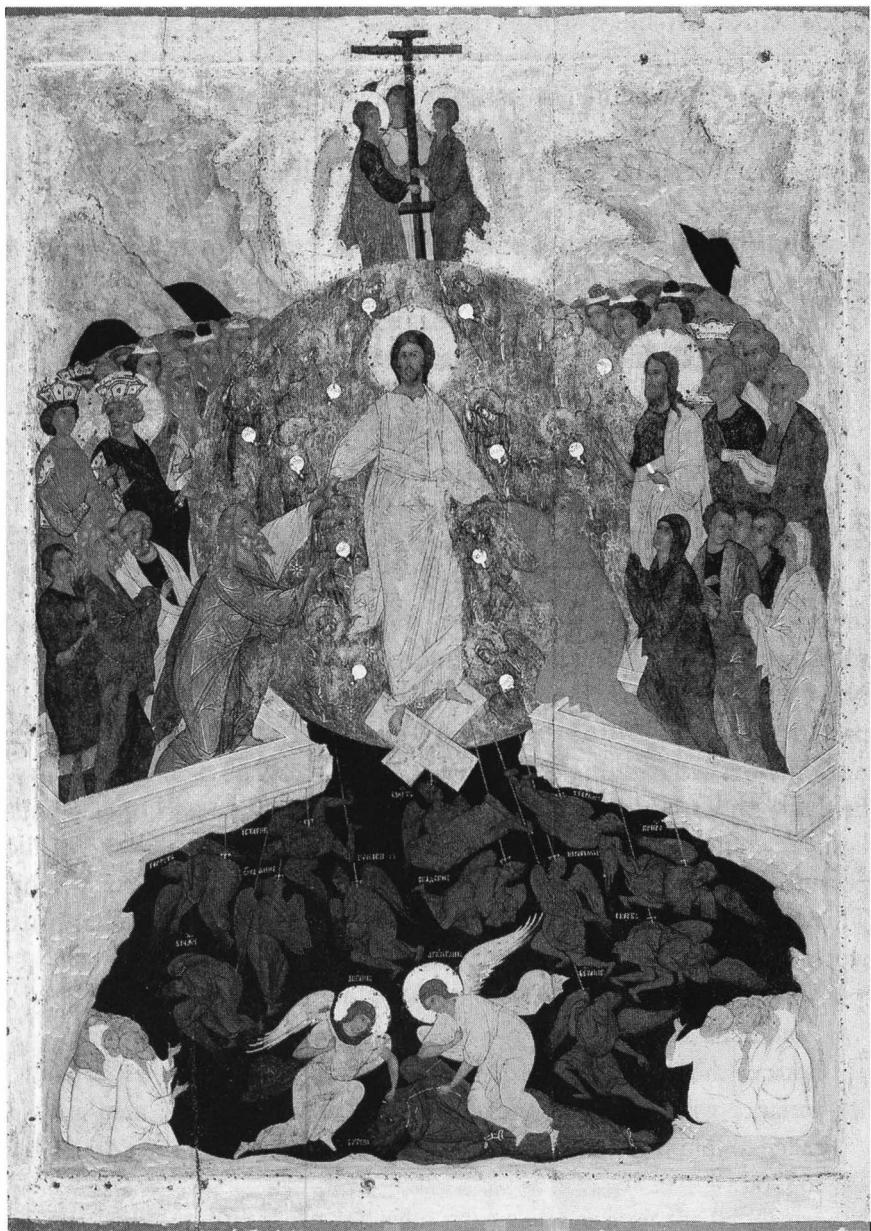
Spiritual resurrection in Christ—the uniting of man's soul with Divine grace—reopens the way to deification which had been closed to man at the fall. Throughout their lives, Orthodox Christians are to grow toward a more full deification, a more perfect participation in God's life. As St. Macarius the Great says, referring to what has been made possible by Christ:

By the power of the Spirit and the spiritual regeneration, man not only comes to the measure of the first Adam, but he also reaches a greater state than he possessed. For man is deified.¹⁵⁶

This participation in God is never to end, but passes into everlasting spiritual life in the Kingdom of Heaven. As will be remembered, mankind had been cut off from both Paradise and heaven at the fall. Now, through Christ, both have been opened again to man. When parted from the body at death, the souls of those redeemed by Christ not only pass to Paradise, which St. John Damascene describes as "luxuriant with ever-blooming plants, filled with fragrance, flooded with light";¹⁵⁷ but they also pass to heaven, the place in which the angelic powers dwell,¹⁵⁸ and which is also described as a place filled with light. Thus, as St. Gregory of Nyssa proclaims, through Christ's redemptive work,

Paradise, even heaven itself, is accessible to man; and the creation, both of the world and above the world, which long ago was set at variance with itself, is fit together in friendship; and we men are made to join in the angels' song, offering the worship of their praise to God.¹⁵⁹

These blessed realms were opened to man right after Christ's death and even before His bodily resurrection; for, as we have seen, it was then that Christ delivered the righteous from hades and raised them to



The resurrection of Christ (the harrowing of hell).
Icon by Master Dionysius, Nativity of the Mother of God-St. Therapont
Monastery, Russia, 1502.

“a place of rest and of light.”* As St. Nicholas Cabasilas explains, He freed them from spiritual death by means of His bodily death:

When it was necessary that the captives of hades be set free, He [Christ] did not entrust this work to angels or archangels, but He Himself descended into that prison. Since it was fitting that the captives should not receive freedom gratuitously, but by being ransomed, He set them free by shedding His Blood.¹⁶⁰

Thus, as St. John Damascene declares: “By nothing else except the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ has ... hades been plundered ... [and] the gates of Paradise opened.”¹⁶¹ The same teaching is proclaimed in the Divine services of the Orthodox Church, as for example in the Kontakion for the Sunday of the Cross (the Third Sunday of Great Lent), composed by St. Theodore the Studite:

No longer does the flaming sword (cf. Gen. 3:24) guard the gate of Eden, for it has been miraculously quenched by the wood of the Cross. The sting of death and the victory of hades have been abolished, for Thou didst come, my Savior, crying to those in hades, “Enter again into Paradise.”¹⁶²

One of the first to be raised to Paradise was a person who was clearly unworthy, but who nevertheless believed in Christ and was thereby redeemed through His death. This was the repentant thief crucified along with Christ, to whom Christ said, “Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). Also among those who were brought to Paradise and heaven were Adam and Eve, who, in the Orthodox icon of the “harrowing of hell,” are depicted being pulled out of the dark regions by Christ.

4. The Order of Redemption (II): Physical Resurrection

What we have described is only the first kind of resurrection—spiritual resurrection—that has been made possible by Christ.

* See p. 753 above.

The second kind—physical resurrection—will occur at the Second Coming through the saving power of Christ's resurrection.

This accords with the order of redemption outlined by St. Symeon above. As St. Symeon points out, while Christians are spiritually reborn and united with God in the Church, they still experience physical death and corruption. In the case of some saints, however, God grants a certain relative incorruption to their bodies after death:

Like iron burning in the fire partakes of the latter's brilliance and loses its dark coloring, then, when taken away from the forge, turns cold and dark again, so in fact do the bodies of the saints, by the grace united to their souls, partake of the Divine fire, and are sanctified, and burn incandescent, and become themselves translucent, and are restored as more excellent, more precious by far, than other bodies. When, though, the soul departs and is separated from the body of the saint, [his body] is immediately given over to corruption and begins shortly to dissolve. But still, such bodies may remain for many years, neither wholly incorrupt nor again quite corrupted, but keeping yet the indications each of corruption and incorruption, being preserved for the final resurrection when they shall be made perfectly new and incorruptible.¹⁶³

St. Symeon then asks why this is: why, when the saints have already been granted spiritual resurrection by God, must they wait to be granted physical resurrection? In answering this question, St. Symeon harkens back to the original creation, when the incorrupt cosmos was made for incorrupt man to dwell in. Having already established that man's condition must correspond with that of his environment, St. Symeon observes that man cannot be restored to perfect physical incorruption until the rest of creation is raised to that state as well:

It was not fitting that men's bodies should be restored and made incorruptible before the renewal of all the creation. Instead, just as the created world was first brought into existence as incorrupt, and then later, man, so again it is creation which must first be transformed

from corruption into incorruption, changed, and then, together with it and at the same time, the corrupted bodies of men will be renewed.¹⁶⁴

It is in the general resurrection that all the fruits of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection are to be fully revealed. At that time, because Christ arose from the dead, becoming the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:20), the unnatural separation of the soul from the body at death, which began at the fall, will be overcome for all mankind, and man will experience everlasting physical life in bodies that have been made once again incorruptible.* "The dead shall be raised incorruptible," writes the Apostle Paul, "and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:52). Moreover, as we have discussed earlier, the entire visible creation will be re-created and become incorruptible along with man, since it exists for man's sake.

5. The Restoration of In corruption

Adam, it will be remembered, was supposed to raise the first-created world closer to God through his own spiritual ascent to God. Adam failed in this purpose. Not only did he fail to raise up the creation to God, but through his sin he also brought the incorrupt cre-

* While all people will be raised in incorruptible and immortal bodies, not all will enjoy everlasting blessedness. As Christ says, those who receive His gift of salvation will be resurrected unto eternal life, while those who reject it will be resurrected unto damnation (cf. John 5:29). St. Nicholas Cabasilas elucidates this as follows: "The resurrection is the restoration of [human] nature. Such things God gives freely, for just as He forms us without us willing it, so He forms us anew though we have contributed nothing to it. On the other hand, the Kingdom and the vision of God and union with Christ are joys which depend on willingness. They are thus possible only for those who have been willing to receive them and have loved them and longed for them. For such it is fitting that they should enjoy the presence of the things for which they longed; for the unwilling it is impossible.... One need not therefore marvel that while all will live in immortality, it is not all who will live in blessedness" (St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *The Life in Christ* 2.[10], SC 355.180, trans. Carmino J. deCatanzaro, pp. 81–82*).

ation down into corruption. Therefore, the Second Adam—Jesus Christ—came to restore what the first Adam had lost: He came to restore man to the communion with God and to the incorruption in which he had lived before the fall, and to restore the entire cosmos to its former state of incorruption.

In the passage from Romans we discussed earlier, St. Paul writes of the future age of the renewed, incorrupt creation that will come into being after the general resurrection: “I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God [i.e., those redeemed by Christ]. For the creation was made subject to futility, not willingly, but because of Him [God] Who subjected it [to futility] in hope [i.e., in hope of the general resurrection]. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only the creation, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:18–23).

St. Justin of Celije, setting forth the common Patristic interpretation of these words of the Apostle Paul, asserts that the liberation of creation from corruption will mark the beginning of the new heaven and new earth spoken of by the Apostles Peter and John (cf. 2 Pet. 3:13, Apoc. 21:1):

By his primordial sin, man carried all of nature along after him, and surrendered it to slavery to sin and death, and the whole Divinely fashioned creation unceasingly sighs and mourns over this, awaiting its liberation from sin and death, which the Lord Jesus will grant on the last day, transforming it by His Divine-human economy of salvation into a new heaven and a new earth, “wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13). The Christ-yearning seer of mysteries, the Apostle of the apocalyptic end of the world and of the transfiguration of creation, St. John the Theologian, was made worthy of a

special revelation of God to see the future new heaven and new earth.... “And I saw,” he says, “a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away” (Apoc. 21:1; cf. Is. 65:17, 66:22).¹⁶⁵

St. Justin further bears witness that the deliverance of the visible creation will mark its *restoration* to the incorruption and beauty that belonged to it before the fall, and that this will occur by reason of God’s restoration of man to his primordial state:

Since on the last day sin and death will be abolished by the coming of Christ the Lord, all of nature will also be freed from slavery to sin and death; it will be transformed and will begin to shine with its primordial [or original], pleasing, sinless, and immortal beauty. The resurrection of the dead will be the end of death not only for people, but for all visible nature, which had been subjected to death and corruption due to the sin-loving will of its haughty lord, man (cf. Rom. 8:20). Sin, evil, sickness, death—all these are the fetid, alien sediments of man, with which he soiled and disfigured the sinless face of nature. But the Lord Jesus, by the light of His coming, will wash away all this from the beautiful face of God-created and Divinely woven nature, and it will again begin to shine in its sinless goodness and ineffable beauty (cf. Gen. 1:31). By His restoration of man to the primordial state, the Lord will also restore nature to its primordial, sinless state (Rom. 8:21). Then not only will Christ-yearning people be “restored to their ancient beauty” (*Evlogitaria of the Pannikhida*), but also all of nature—by the action of God’s grace—will throw away and cast off from itself all sins, all evil, all consequences of sin and evil, and with them death itself.¹⁶⁶

6. The Permanent Deification of Man and the Cosmos

But it was not only to restore what the first Adam had ruined that the Second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, came upon this earth. Christ

also came to accomplish what the first Adam had failed to accomplish. Man, it will be remembered, had been created for deification. As St. Symeon the New Theologian writes, if Adam and Eve had not fallen, “the soul of each would have become brighter,” and man “would have been led up in due time to a more perfect glory and transformation, drawing nearer to God and to the rays which spring from His Divinity.”* As we have seen, through His redemptive work Christ has already granted to man the possibility of experiencing such a deification of soul in and through His Church—a deification that is to grow and become more perfect in the life to come. In the general resurrection, however, He will do more than this: In reuniting man’s soul with his body, He will grant an everlasting deification to man’s body together with his soul, and along with man He will grant unending deification to the entire cosmos.

In the words of Scripture and their interpretation by the Fathers, we can find indications of how this will come to pass: The permanent deification of man’s body and the cosmos will occur together with their becoming not only incorrupt but also *spiritual*.

The Apostle Paul writes: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption.... It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.... Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:42, 44, 50–53).

Explicating this Pauline teaching, St. Justin of Celije notes that the bodies of all people—both those that have died and those that are still alive at the Second Coming of Christ—will be changed in the same way. “Thus,” he says,

* See p. 702 above.

all people will be made equal, all will acquire spiritual bodies, since natural bodies will be transformed into spiritual ones. And this transformation, this change of body, will occur “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump.” How? By the power of the resurrected Lord Christ, for He by His almighty Divine power will lead out of death all the bodies of the dead, “and the dead shall be raised incorruptible”: that which has died, that is, the body, will rise incorrupt. That which comprises the essence of the body will rise incorrupt—that which makes my body mine, your body yours, his body his, each one’s body his own. Although these will be “spiritual bodies,” they will nevertheless be the same bodies that died and are now resurrected. The same thing will occur with those whom the general resurrection will find living on earth—they will remain the same bodies, but they will turn from being physical to being spiritual. All this will happen in such a way that Peter will remain Peter in his body, Paul—Paul in his body, and Mark—Mark, likewise in his body.¹⁶⁷

How are we to understand the incorrupt and spiritual body of man beyond the general resurrection, particularly in light of our discussion of man’s incorrupt body before the fall? Earlier we quoted St. Symeon in saying that “Adam was created with an incorruptible body, though one which was material and on the whole not yet spiritual,” and that, if Adam had not fallen, his “perceptible and material body” would have become “altered and changed into an immaterial and spiritual one, into something beyond sense perception.”* We also quoted St. Maximus as saying that first-created man was, through living a life of virtue like that of the angels, to “become as subtle as spirit” and “no longer tied to earth by any bodily weight.”** Here Sts. Symeon and Maximus are speaking of relative degrees of corporeality, for as we have seen the bodies of Adam and Eve in their original, incorrupt state, even while not having yet been altered to become spiritual, did not have the grossly material or denser flesh that our bodies now have. St. Gregory

* See pp. 690, 703 above.

** See p. 711 above.

the Sinaite observes that our spiritual bodies after the general resurrection will in fact correspond with the incorrupt bodies of Adam and Eve before the fall:

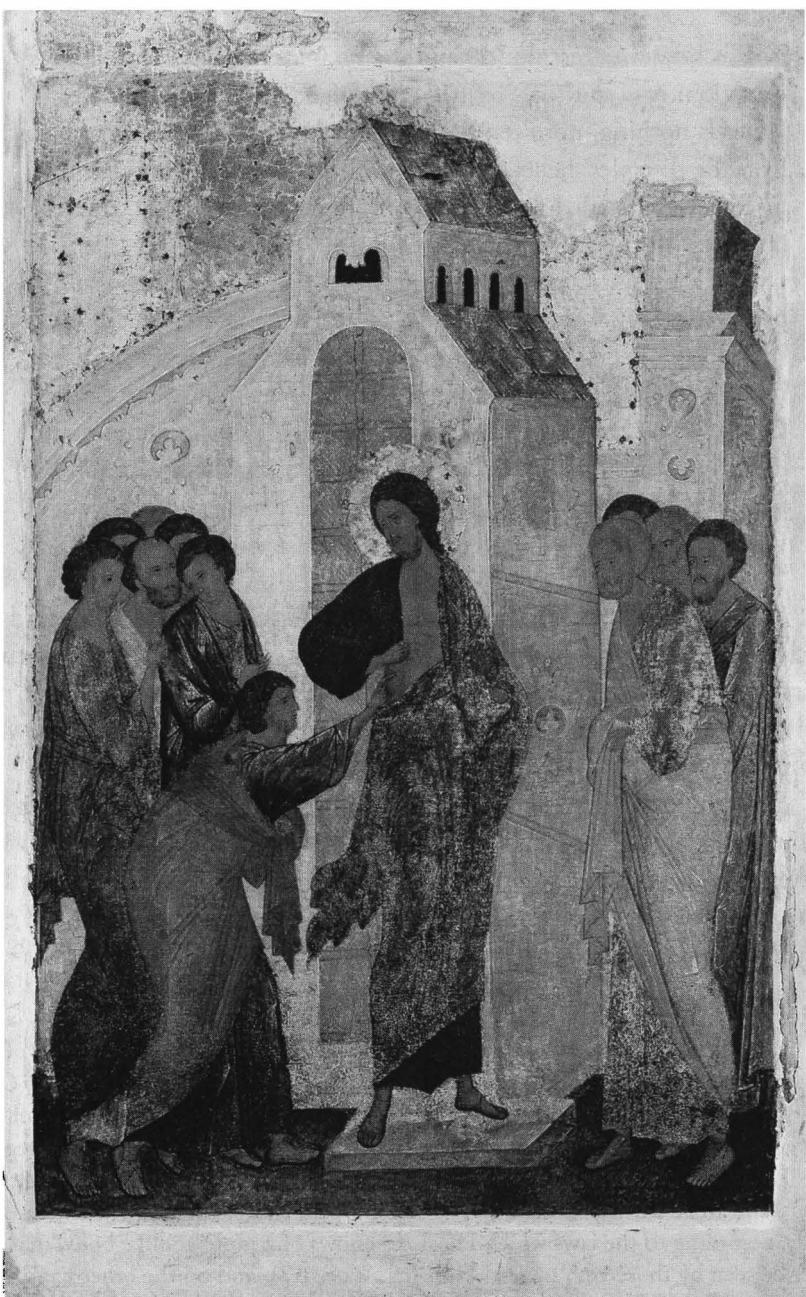
The body in its incorruptible state will be earthy, but it will be without humors and material density,* indescribably transmuted from an unspiritual body into a spiritual body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:44), so that it will be in its godlike refinement and subtleness both earthly and heavenly. Its state when it will be resurrected will be similar to that in which it was originally created—one in which it conforms to the image of the Son of Man (cf. Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:21) through full participation in His Divinity.¹⁶⁸

Man's body in the beginning, then, might be said to be "similar" to his body in the general resurrection, in that both share the quality of incorruption. Nevertheless, it is only in the general resurrection that human bodies will be perfectly and immutably spiritualized and divinized. The promise of this future condition is seen in the resurrected body of Christ.

When Christ rose from the dead, His body was in the condition of the spiritual body that Adam was *supposed* to attain by ascending to God in Paradise. As we know from Scripture, in His resurrected, spiritual body Christ left the tomb while a stone still sealed the door (cf. Matt. 28:2),** He entered the room of the Apostles while the doors remained shut (cf. John 20:19), and He appeared and vanished at will (cf. Luke 24:31). Even so, in order to show His disciples that He was not merely a spirit but had risen in the same body that had been crucified, He permitted the Apostle Thomas to touch his wounds and He ate in the presence of His disciples (cf. Luke 24:43). Blessed Theophylact of Ohrid writes of this mystery as follows:

* "Material density" is a translation of *παχύτητος*: the same term that St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Maximus, and St. John Damascene had previously used to describe man's body after the fall.

** As St. Matthew records, after Christ resurrected and left the tomb, an angel "rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it."



Christ appearing to His disciples after His resurrection;
the assurance of the Apostle Thomas.

Icon by Master Dionysius, St. Paul of Obnora Monastery, Russia, 1500.

This is how we must understand the body of the Lord after the resurrection: it is spiritual, refined, a stranger to all material density.* It needs nothing, not even food, although the Lord did eat to confirm the disciples' belief. He ate, not because His resurrected body by its nature needed food, but by economy, to show that His risen body was the same which suffered on the Cross. For this is the nature of the Lord's body now: to enter where doors are shut and to pass effortlessly from one location to another. Because the disciples still did not believe and had not yet been convinced even by touching His hands and feet, He offers yet another proof, that of eating. But what He eats is consumed by some Divine power, for all that is eaten in a natural manner passes from the mouth to the drain. But what the Lord eats here is not according to nature, as we have said, but by economy.¹⁶⁹

Since Christ arose in a spiritual body, He will raise mankind in such a body at the last day: a body both incorrupt and spiritual. Furthermore, since the rest of creation exists for man, He will not only restore it to incorruption but also make it spiritual together with man.

St. Symeon writes of this with illuminating precision. Having affirmed that all creation will be made incorrupt along with man in the general resurrection just as it was made incorrupt with him in the beginning,** St. Symeon goes on to say that both man and the rest of creation will also be made spiritual:

* Here again the word is *παχύτητος*. “The Word of God,” as St. Sophronius of Jerusalem affirms, “took on material density [*παχύνεται*] while remaining God” (*Oration 2: On the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos* 15, PG 87c.3233C), but He was without such density when He rose from the dead. In the words of St. Gregory the Theologian: “[Christ] will come again with His glorious Presence to judge the quick and the dead (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1, 1 Pet. 4:5); no longer flesh, nor yet without a body, according to the laws which He alone knows of a more godlike body, that He may be seen by those who pierced Him (cf. Apoc. 1:7), and on the other hand may remain as God without material density [*παχύτητος*]” (*Oration 40.45*, SC 358.306, NPNF 2 7, p. 377*).

** See pp. 729, 760–61 above.

Together with [the creation] and at the same time, the corrupted bodies of men will be renewed, such that, himself having become at once spiritual and immortal, man may have an incorrupt, and spiritual, and everlasting place in which to dwell. Listen to the Apostle Peter for the truth of this: “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night … wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (2 Pet. 3:10, 12). This does not mean that they shall be destroyed, but rather re-forged and transmuted into a greater and everlasting condition....

But now it is time for us to examine how creation shall be renewed and restored to its original beauty....

Just as our bodies, although they dissolve for a time, do not pass away forever, but will be renewed again at the resurrection, so, too, will heaven and earth and all that is within them—that is, all of creation—be made anew and liberated from the bondage of corruption. The elements themselves will share with us in that incandescence from above, and in the same way that we shall be tried by fire, so, according to the Apostle, shall all creation be renewed through fire....

Thus renewed, creation will not return to what it was created in the beginning. By no means. Rather, just as it is sown a “natural body,” according to the saying (1 Cor. 15:44), so it is raised a body, not like the first man’s before the transgression—i.e., material, perceptible, and mutable, needing moreover physical food—but instead a body wholly spiritual and immutable; such a body as that of our Master and God after His resurrection, the body of the Second Adam, Who is our “firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18). As His body was a far different thing than the old Adam’s, so shall the whole creation, in the same way and at God’s command, not become what it was before, material and perceptible, but be transformed in the re-birth into an immaterial, spiritual dwelling place, beyond any perception of the senses.¹⁷⁰

When St. Symeon says that our bodies and the rest of creation will be “immaterial” (*ἀνύλον*) in the general resurrection, he is again speaking of immateriality in a relative sense. The renewed creation will



Adam and Eve at the Last Judgment.

Details of an exterior fresco of Humor Monastery, Moldavia, Romania, 1535.

indeed be “immaterial” in comparison with its present state and even with its condition before the fall. However, it will not be entirely immaterial, since according to St. Symeon and other Holy Fathers only God Himself is wholly immaterial and uncircumscribed; in relation to Him, even angels and human souls possess a degree of materiality and are circumscribed by time and space.* As we have seen, the resurrected, spiritual body of Christ, to which St. Symeon likens man’s body and

* In discussing the renewed creation, St. Symeon takes pains to say that it will not be entirely immaterial and uncircumscribed: “Now, then, try to imagine with me a world which is spiritual and rises beyond our sense perception. But, what is beyond sensible perception and spiritual is quite incomprehensible for us, and invisible.... It is in this sense, therefore, that we can discourse about the angels, i.e., that they are also, in effect, somehow embodied and circumscribable, at least when compared to the absolutely immaterial and bodiless nature of Divinity.... The same reasoning holds for the soul as well. Compared to God Who is by nature bodiless, and to the angels, the soul is as it were somehow bodily and circumscribed, but it is such only

the whole cosmos after the general resurrection, was not entirely without corporeality.*

Later in the same discourse, St. Symeon, having undoubtedly beheld something of the future age in prophetic Divine vision, speaks in more detail about the renewed creation as a spiritual dwelling place of man:

with respect to Him Who is able to bind it and Who has the authority to cast it together with the body into the hell of fire. For mortal perception, however, it is altogether bodiless and incomprehensible, nor is it possible to circumscribe it within any physical place or space whatsoever" (*Ethical Discourses* 1.5, PPS 14, pp. 39–40).

St. Symeon's mention (see below) of flowers and heavenly bodies in the renewed creation provides further clarification that he is not describing a realm without any degree of materiality. The Origenist idea that the creation after the general resurrection will be wholly immaterial was in fact condemned at the Fifth Ecumenical Council: "If anyone shall say that the Last Judgment signifies the complete destruction of the body and that the end of all things will be a non-material nature, and that in the future age there will be nothing material, but only naked spirit: let him be anathema" (eleventh article of the anathemas against Origen).

On the relative materiality of angels, and on their being circumscribed (requiring and occupying a place), see pp. 490, 490–91n above.

* From St. Symeon's statement that the renewed creation will be "beyond any perception of the senses," it follows that Christ's resurrected body was and is "naturally" beyond sense perception also. It was by Divine dispensation that Christ made His body perceptible to the senses of the Apostles after His resurrection. As Blessed Theophylact points out in discussing Christ's appearance to Sts. Luke and Cleopas on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–32): "They were not allowed to recognize Him by the features of the body in which the Savior then appeared to them. For, as Mark says, He appeared unto two of them 'in another form' (Mark 16:12), and with different features. He no longer conformed the actions of His body to natural laws, but instead acted in the body in a spiritual manner that was beyond nature. This is why their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. Why did He appear to them in another form, and why were their eyes prevented from recognizing Him?... That they might believe all the more surely that His body is no longer a body that is clearly visible to everyone. Even though His resurrected body is the same body which suffered, He now appears only to those to whom He wills to reveal Himself.... He was seen by those to whom He wished to be visible" (*Explanation of the Holy Gospel according to St. Luke* 24.13–24, trans. Fr. Christopher Stade, pp. 318–19). In same way, following His ascension into heaven, Christ has miraculously appeared to people in His resurrected body at various times throughout Christian history.

As I have said several times, all creation, too, once made new, will become wholly spiritual, and together with Paradise will be transformed into an immaterial, unchanging, eternal, and noetic dwelling place. The heavens on the one hand will be incomparably brighter, in a manner indeed quite new, different and more radiant than the visible heavens, while the earth on the other hand will take on a new and inexpressible beauty, an unfading verdure, ornamented by radiant flowers, varied and spiritual. It will be an earth in which, as the sacred word has it, righteousness will have its dwelling place (cf. 2 Pet. 3:13). The sun of righteousness will shine sevenfold more brightly, and the moon will gleam twice as bright as the sun which illumines it now (cf. Is. 30:26). The stars will be like our sun—if, indeed, these are the same stars as are spoken of in the sublime thoughts of the wise. All things there are beyond speech, transcend thought, save only that they are spiritual and divine, united to the intelligible world, and comprise another, noetic Paradise and heavenly Jerusalem, made like and united to the heavenly world, the inviolable inheritance of the sons of God (cf. Rom. 8:21).¹⁷¹

When St. Symeon says that all things in the cosmos, including man, will become “spiritual and divine,” he is referring to nothing less than their deification. Deified in both soul and body, man will freely experience God’s Uncreated Energy (grace) through his bodily senses. In the words of St. Gregory Palamas,

In the very blessed existence of the age to come, in “the sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36), who, according to the Gospel of Christ, will have received an angelic dignity, it will be the body which is as if hidden. With the victory of the *nous*, the body will become so subtle that it will no longer appear to be material, and it will no longer limit the activity of the *nous*. In this way, they will enjoy the Divine Light in their bodily senses.¹⁷²

From this Patristic testimony we see how, through Christ, man and the rest of creation will not only be restored to their original



The general resurrection. At top: trumpeting angels. At bottom: righteous women.
Details of a fresco from the Cathedral of St. Dmitry, Vladimir, Russia, ca. 1195.

incorruption; they will also become what they *would have become* if the first Adam had fulfilled his calling from God. It will be remembered that, according to St. Maximus, man's original designation was not only to become deified himself but also to bring the whole created universe into a state of deification, so that "the whole [would be] wholly penetrated by the whole of God."¹⁷³ Further expounding St. Maximus' teaching, Vladimir Lossky writes: "Since this task which was given to man was not fulfilled by Adam, it is in the work of Christ, the Second Adam, that we can see what it was meant to be."¹⁷⁴ Thus, as St. Maximus writes in discoursing on Christ's words "My Father is working even now, and I am working" (John 5:17), it is in the work of Christ that we behold "the grace effective to deify the universe."¹⁷⁵

All that has been described here—the immutable glory of the future age—has been made possible by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. Through the totality of Christ's work of redemption, man is spiritually united with God and deified; man can attain to Paradise and heaven after death; and, at the general resurrection, man's body and the entire creation are to be renewed as an incorruptible, spiritual and divine dwelling place.

VIII. THE ORTHODOX DOCTRINE OF PRELAPSARIAN INCORRUPTION AS IT RELATES TO ORTHODOX SOTERIOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY

From the foregoing discussion it can be seen how the Orthodox teaching on the original incorruption of the world has direct bearing on Orthodox soteriology. The Scriptural-Patristic doctrine that death entered the world as a consequence of man's sin forms a foundation for the doctrine that the sinless Savior innocently took upon Himself that consequence—that is, by dying on the Cross—in order to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," to "bear the sins of many" (Heb. 9:26, 28), to *redeem* mankind from all the consequences of sin.

As we have seen, when Adam fell his corrupted nature, now diseased with sin, made him subject to physical death. All his descendants inherited that corrupted nature, and thus all were obliged to die. Christ alone, being totally sinless, was not obliged to suffer death; and

therefore, in His voluntary death and in His resurrection which inexorably succeeded it, He destroyed death both spiritual and bodily. Let us recall the words of St. John Damascene quoted earlier: “Since our Lord Jesus Christ was without sin … He was not subject to death, since death came into the world through sin.” Yet “the Lord,” writes St. Gregory Palamas, “patiently endured for our sake a death He was not obliged to undergo, to redeem us, who were obliged to suffer death.”*

Here we see clearly how the *physical, causal connection* between Adam’s act of sin and the presence of death in the world forms the basis for understanding the physical, causal connection between Christ’s undeserved death and the overcoming of the consequences of sin in the world. As Fr. Seraphim Rose pointed out,

Christ died on the Cross. This was a real, physical event, not an image or allegory; and through it comes an actual change in man’s condition, both spiritual and bodily. It gives us salvation: not figurative salvation, but actual salvation. Likewise, Adam tasted of a tree and thereby lost Paradise. This, too, was a real, physical event, bringing about an actual change in man’s spiritual and bodily condition.**

The Orthodox teaching on prelapsarian incorruption is also foundational for understanding St. Paul’s oft-repeated teaching—which we have seen elucidated by St. John Chrysostom***—of sin and death entering the world through *one* man and then being overcome by *One* Man. St. John Chrysostom said that the truth that our redemption could come from only One Man is evidenced by the fact that the consequences of sin came from only one man. In fact, St. Chrysostom states that, in the fifth chapter of Romans, St. Paul repeatedly juxtaposed the “one” Adam with the “One” Christ precisely in order to demonstrate the reality of the world’s redemption by Christ—particularly to those Jews who believed in the Genesis narrative but not (yet) in Christ. For St. Paul as for the Holy Fathers, faith in the real Second

* See the full quotations on pp. 749–50 above.

** See p. 282 above.

*** See pp. 751–52 above.

Adam as the Redeemer from ruin cannot be divorced from belief in the real first Adam as the cause of that ruin.*

Certainly, the Orthodox teaching on the original incorruption of *man* (specifically) is most germane to the Orthodox doctrine of redemption, since it was a man (Adam) who brought sin and death into the world, and it was a Man (the God-man Jesus Christ) Who overcame them. At the same time, however, this Scriptural-Patristic teaching cannot be separated from that of the incorruption of the rest of the cosmos before the fall, since as we have seen the visible creation was made for the sake of man, is dependent on man, and must be in the same condition as man. The incorrupt and potentially immortal body of man before the fall, as described in detail in the Patristic writings, could not have existed in surroundings filled with death and corruption; and hence it is to be expected that the common vision of the Holy Fathers, in accordance with Holy Scripture, holds that the cosmos was originally incorrupt as well.

As the doctrine that man and the world were incorrupt before the fall is directly connected to Orthodox soteriology, so also is it connected

* Besides the passages already quoted (Rom. 5:12–19, 1 Cor. 15:21–22), there are other places in the Pauline epistles where the Apostle writes of Adam and Eve, recounting the Biblical descriptions of their creation and fall: “The first man Adam was made a living soul” (1 Cor. 15:45; cf. Gen. 2:7); “The serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety” (2 Cor. 11:3; cf. Gen. 3:1–6); “Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Tim. 2:13–14; cf. Gen. 2:21–3:6). Again, referring to the creation of Eve from Adam, St. Paul writes: “Man is not from woman, but woman from man; nor was the man created for the woman, but the woman for the man” (1 Cor. 11:8–9; cf. Gen. 2:18–22). In keeping with the plain meaning of these passages of St. Paul, the Patristic commentaries on them assume a belief in an actual, historical Adam and Eve. See, for example, St. John Chrysostom’s commentary on 1 Timothy 2:13–14 (*Homilies on Timothy* 9, NPNF 1 13, pp. 435–36), where the Saint affirms the existence of Eve as a singular person, distinguishing between her and the female sex generally.

That Adam and Eve were real persons was affirmed by Christ Himself, Who said that the “blood of Abel,” their second son, was shed “from the foundation of the world” (Luke 11:51, 50; cf. Gen. 4:8). Christ also spoke of the creation of Adam and Eve, quoting from the book of Genesis: “But from the beginning of the creation God ‘made them male and female’” (Mark 10:6; cf. Gen. 1:27).

to eschatology. It provides a basis for understanding the words of the Apostle Paul in the way that the Holy Fathers understood them: “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.... The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:21–22, 26). It underpins the doctrine that Christ came in order to *give back* to man what Adam had lost at the fall, physically as well as spiritually, and that, through Christ’s death and resurrection, there will be a restoration, perfection, and spiritualization of the incorrupt first-created world. From St. Irenaeus in the second century, who said that creation will be “restored to its primeval condition” at the general resurrection, to St. Justin of Celije in the twentieth century, who wrote that nature will then “begin to shine with its primordial sinless, immortal beauty, the same as it had before the fall,” we have seen the connection that the Fathers have drawn between the original and the final states of the creation. In the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa, the promise of the final state is predicated on belief in the original one, and vice versa:

Now the [general] 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 our life is compared to the angels.¹⁷⁶

Highlighting this interrelationship between the original and final states of man and the cosmos, Fr. Seraphim pointed out that

the two correspond and only differ ... in that the future state of the world will be fully spiritual, corresponding to the “spiritual body” of the men who will dwell in it, and no longer will it be possible for its incorruptibility to be lost. Do we Orthodox Christians believe that we will *actually* be immortal and incorruptible in that next life—if God will only number us among the saved—or only metaphorically and allegorically so? If we believe and think as the Holy Fathers do,

then our future incorruptibility will be *real*, as was that of the creation and of Adam before his disobedience.*

Thus we see how our *belief* as Orthodox Christians is all of one piece. Our belief that death came into the world through human sin (cf. Rom. 5:12) is linked with our belief that Christ the God-man has redeemed the world by means of His death (cf. Heb. 9:15). In the same way, our belief that man and the cosmos were incorrupt in the beginning is tied to our belief that they will be incorrupt in the future age.

IX. A COMPARISON OF THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN AND EVOLUTIONIST WORLDVIEWS

Having set before us the Scriptural-Patristic teaching on the original state of man and the cosmos, on their fall into a condition of death and corruption, and on their redemption through Jesus Christ, let us now contrast this integral Orthodox Christian worldview with evolutionism, which also stands on its own as an integral outlook on the world.

The first thing that becomes apparent in comparing these two worldviews is that the Scriptural-Patristic doctrine on the state of man and the world before the fall stands in conflict with evolutionary doctrine.

In the Orthodox view, man was created and first lived in incorruption, then fell into corruption; in the evolutionary view, man came into existence already in a state of corruption. In all its facets, the Orthodox Patristic teaching on the exalted condition of man before the fall—spiritual, mental, and physical—contrasts sharply with the evolutionary narrative of man’s origin and history. As Fr. Seraphim remarked in a letter:

The evolutionary philosophy of “up from the beasts” certainly seems irreconcilable with the Christian view of “fall from Paradise,” and

* See p. 650 above.

our whole view of history will certainly be determined by which way we believe!*

Like the Orthodox Church's teaching on the original state of man, her teaching on the incorrupt world that man first inhabited has no place within the evolutionary worldview. While we must acknowledge along with Fr. Seraphim that we do not know the precise nature of the world's incorruption before the fall, there can be no doubt that the condition of the "very good" (Gen. 1:31) first-created world as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and in the consensus of the Holy Fathers is *not* the same as the condition of the world out of which, according to evolutionism, man first emerged—that is, a world of suffering, violence, bloodshed, and carnivorous activity; of infirmities and disease; of poisonous plants and animals; of thorns and thistles; and, finally, of death and corruption (decay).

It is the Patristic view of the origin of death and corruption that is seen most glaringly—and most essentially—to stand in conflict with the evolutionary paradigm. According to the Orthodox Christian worldview outlined above, suffering, death, and corruption entered the world—not merely as a potentiality but as an actuality—when man committed his first act of disobedience to God. In the evolutionary worldview, on the other hand, death and corruption were present throughout the entire evolutionary process by which man came into existence. In the Orthodox worldview, death and corruption are seen as aberrant relative to the original, "very good" state of creation, including the original state of man. In the evolutionary worldview, on the contrary, not only is death a normal condition, but it is even *responsible* for the origin of all living things, including man.

In the concluding paragraph of *The Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin affirmed this idea of the creative power of death—a power which he saw manifested over aeons, as less fit organisms have died and more fit ones have survived:

Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most ex-

* See p. 638 above.

altered object of which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals [including man] directly follows.¹⁷⁷

In more recent times, this idea was expressed in neo-Darwinian terms by a well-known proponent of evolutionism, Carl Sagan:

The secrets of evolution are death and time—the deaths of enormous numbers of life-forms that were imperfectly adapted to the environment; and time for a long succession of small mutations that were by *accident* adaptive, time for the slow accumulation of patterns of favorable mutations.¹⁷⁸

Elsewhere Sagan was even more bold in asserting the role of death in the origin of man:

Only through an immense number of deaths of slightly maladapted organisms are you and I—brains and all—here today.¹⁷⁹

Thus, just as the doctrine of death entering the world through man's sin forms an integral part of the Orthodox worldview, so the doctrine of death as a necessary agent in man's origin forms an integral part of the evolutionist worldview. Two more contradictory views can scarcely be conceived.

According to evolutionary doctrine, after millions of years of deaths of imperfectly adapted life-forms, including the deaths of our ape-like "ancestors," pre-human hominids emerged into human beings. If one accepts this view, the Scriptural-Patristic teaching on the original, incorrupt state of man and the world and on man's fall and its consequence—death—cannot be accepted on its own terms. One must either discard this teaching or else reinterpret it in order to make it mean something other than what it says.* All attempts to reinterpret this Scriptural-Patristic teaching in an evolutionist way—including the notion of Fr. Seraphim's interlocutor Dr. Kalomiros, that man's sin

* Not only "Christian evolutionists" but also "old-earth/progressive creationists" have no choice but to conclude, contrary to traditional Christian teaching, that there were millions of years of death and decay before human sin. See p. 451n above.

brought death and corruption into the world *retroactively**—have shown themselves to be either fanciful or painfully contrived.

Earlier we presented the Patristic teaching that man's sin brought about his spiritual death, which is separation from God, and that this in turn brought about his physical death. If one attempts to combine this Orthodox teaching on the origin of death with the evolutionary understanding of the origin of man, one is led to the impossible conclusion that man's separation from God provided the mechanism that helped produce him.

The essential conflict between the Orthodox and evolutionist worldviews does not, however, stop with the question of the origin and original condition of man and the world. As we have shown in the

* Dr. Kalomirov introduced this idea in a letter to Fr. Seraphim; see p. 452n above. In a subsequent letter, Kalomirov proposed yet another idea by which to reconcile the Orthodox and evolutionist worldviews. An incorruptible Paradise, he said, was made by God some time after the creation of the cosmos (which had been in a state of corruption from the beginning due to the retroactive effect of man's sin millions of years in the future), and this incorrupt realm was "superimposed on the fallen condition of creation, touching the earth partly and for a limited time." The first man, who "was not *man* when as an animal he was born from his animal mother," became both human and incorrupt when the grace of God was breathed into him; and as an incorrupt being he was led into Paradise, where he lived until he had to return to the already corruptible earth (letter of Dr. Kalomirov to Fr. Seraphim, Feb. 21, 1976).

In both these related notions, an inevitable arbitrariness is evident. Besides standing in opposition to the Scriptural-Patristic testimony that the first man was specially created, not born, Kalomirov's formulation and others like it run counter to the Orthodox teaching that death and corruption entered the entire visible creation at the fall. As we have seen, the Holy Fathers, following a straightforward reading of St. Paul, wrote that *when* man sinned (not before), "creation," "created beings," the "cosmos," etc., were delivered to death and corruption; e.g., St. John Chrysostom: "When [man's] body became corruptible, the creation itself also became corruptible" (*Homilies on Romans* 14). In speaking of the state of incorruption before the fall, the Fathers never said that it belonged exclusively to Paradise. As St. Symeon the New Theologian affirmed in the passage quoted earlier, "God did not ... just give Paradise to our ancestors at the beginning, nor did He make only Paradise incorruptible. No! ... The whole world had been brought into being by God as one thing, as a kind of paradise, at once incorruptible yet material and perceptible" (*Ethical Discourses* 1.1).

previous section, our understanding of the creation, the first-created world, Adam and the fall is inextricably linked with our understanding of our redemption and of the glory of the future age. Therefore, if our understanding of the original state of man and the world and of the primordial fall is compromised by an evolutionist outlook, then our belief in the redemption of man and the world through Christ's death and resurrection will be compromised as well.

How precisely does evolutionism undermine one's belief in the Orthodox doctrine of redemption? As we have seen, it is incongruous to believe in millions of years of evolution—through “death” and “time,” as Carl Sagan says—and at the same time to believe that the original creation was incorrupt, and that death entered the world as a result of man's sin. And if one does not believe, as did the Apostles and Holy Fathers, that death entered the world as a consequence of man's sin, it is a non sequitur to believe the Orthodox doctrine that Christ the God-man took upon Himself that ultimate physical consequence of sin while being Himself wholly sinless, in order to overcome all the consequences of sin. It is, further, a non sequitur to believe the doctrine that Christ came in order to return to man all that he had lost at the fall, both in body and in soul, and that, through Christ's redemptive work, man and the cosmos will be restored to their original state of incorruption, while at the same time being granted the spiritualization and deification that were originally intended for them.

Earlier we have shown how the physical, causal connection between man's first sin and the presence of death in the world underpins the same connection between Christ's death and the overcoming of all the consequences of sin. By eroding the first connection, the doctrine of evolutionism erodes the second as well.* Therefore, if one does not believe in the historical link between sin and death, one's belief in the

* Furthermore, evolutionism undermines the soteriological teaching of St. Paul—and, after him, of St. John Chrysostom—that, as sin and death entered the world through one man, so were they overcome by One Man (see pp. 751–52, 775–76 above). As we have seen in the writings of St. Chrysostom, the fact that the consequences of sin came from only one man demonstrates that our redemption from them could come from only One Man. If, however, one attempts to make Christianity compatible with the evolutionary narrative of human origins, one has little choice but

objective meaning of Christ's death for the cleansing of sin (cf. I John 1:7) is deprived of its foundation. The fact that sin causes death, and death only results *from sin*, is what makes the death of the only sinless One salvific and different from every other death, and reveals the unique mystery of His offering.*

In Orthodox Christianity, a Savior is needed to intervene in history in order to reverse the fall into death and corruption. In evolutionism, by contrast, since death and corruption were part of the original, "normal" condition of the world—having been present for millions of years before human sin and having comprised one of the key mechanisms that brought man into existence—there is no place

to regard Adam the first-created man not as a real, historical person but only as a symbolic character representing an unspecified number of humans which at some point evolved from other hominids. In denying the existence of the "one" through whom sin and death entered the world, this compromised view removes the objective basis of St. Paul's explication of redemption by One, Jesus Christ.

* This connection was not lost on the main public champion of Darwin's theory in the nineteenth century, T. H. Huxley, who dubbed himself "Darwin's bulldog" and was called by Darwin himself "my good and kind agent for the propagation of the Gospel—i.e., the devil's gospel" (letter of Darwin to Huxley, Aug. 8, 1860). Not many years after Darwin's death, Huxley called attention to what he termed the "hopelessly untenable" position of compromising "Christian evolutionists" who tried to salvage the Christian doctrine of salvation while denying the historicity of the fall and its consequences: "If one may play fast and loose with the story of the Fall as a 'type' or 'allegory,' what becomes of the foundation of Pauline theology?—'For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive' (1 Cor. 15:21–22). If Adam may be held to be no more real a personage than Prometheus, and if the story of the Fall is merely an instructive 'type,' comparable to the profound Promethean mythus, what value has Paul's dialectic?" (Huxley, "The Lights of the Church and the Light of Science" [1890], in *Science and Hebrew Tradition*, pp. 236).

In a yet more pointed fashion, the same observation has been made by today's most prominent advocate of evolutionism, Richard Dawkins. Deriding the compromises made by "Christian evolutionists," Dawkins has said: "Oh, but of course the story of Adam and Eve was only ever symbolic, wasn't it? Symbolic?! Jesus had himself tortured and executed for a symbolic sin by a nonexistent individual? Nobody not brought up in the faith could reach any verdict other than barking mad!" (from Dawkins' television documentary *The Root of All Evil?*, Channel 4 [U.K.], broadcast Jan. 2006).

for a sin-induced “fall” into death and corruption that would need reversing. Thus it is that evolutionism, which was first devised as a way to explain the origin of living things without recourse to a Divine agency, is seen to deny not only the need for a Creator, but also the need for a Savior.

This point has been stated clearly and profoundly by St. Justin of Celije:

In this earthly world of “evolution” everything is natural;* there is no place for sin. That is why it is ridiculous to speak of the Savior and of salvation from sin. In the final analysis everything is natural: sin, evil, and death. For if everything comes and is given to man through evolution, then what is it that has to be saved in man, inasmuch as there is nothing immortal and intransitory in him, but all is from the earth, earthly, earthen, and as such is transitory, corruptible, and mortal? In such a world of “evolution” there is no place for the Church, which is the Body of the God-man Christ. That theology which bases its anthropology on the theory of “scientific” evolution is nothing but a contradiction in terms. In reality, it is a theology without God and an anthropology without man.^{180 **}

X. THE PERSONAL RELEVANCE AND APPLICATION OF THE ORTHODOX TEACHING

Having examined in some depth the Orthodox teaching on the first-created world, the effects of the fall, and the redemption of man and the cosmos, we will now, in conclusion, consider how this teaching can inform our attitude and perception of ourselves, of our fellow human beings, and of our natural environment.

Without the Orthodox Christian understanding of the origin of death and corruption, those who believe in God may be inclined to

* Here St. Justin is using the word “natural” in the same sense that St. Nikolai Velimirovich uses it in the above-quoted passage, “Death Is Unnatural”; see pp. 736–38 above.

** See the letter from which this passage has been taken on pp. 810–12 below.

blame Him for the many forms of suffering that arise in this fallen world, as well as for the deaths of loved ones. On the other hand, those who do not believe in God may point to the broken aspects of creation as “proofs” that there is, in fact, no Creator. For us Orthodox Christians, however, the true reason for the corruption of creation has been explained long ago in the Bible and in the writings of the Fathers. We recognize that suffering, illness, death, and decay—together with all the other manifestations of corruption—were not part of God’s original “very good” creation. They are present because *man* brought them into the world through his sin.

An awareness of what was in the beginning and what occurred at the fall, then, can serve to uphold our faith in the face of both the hardships of life and the attacks of unbelievers. Far from blaming God or doubting His existence when confronted with suffering and death, we can see these realities as signs of God’s mercy. As we have seen from the Patristic writings, although God did not create man and the cosmos corruptible, when man sinned He *allowed* death and corruption to enter the world in order to serve for man’s benefit. Death prevents sin from being immortal, while the sufferings incurred in man’s corruptible state serve to blunt his pride and irrational love of sensual pleasure, and to point him back to the true Source of his life, which is God and not the world. Thus, the consequences of sin are at the same time therapeutic correctives against sin. Through hard experience coupled with faith, we can learn to accept these correctives with thankful hearts, realizing they are given to us for our healing and salvation.

Furthermore, understanding the full effects of the fall can help instill in us greater repentance for our sins and greater compassion for the creation. Although we do not bear the guilt of the fall of our first ancestors, still we participate in the sins of the family of Adam, having been born into this world with a corrupted nature that inclines us toward sin. Thus, when we see brokenness in our fellow human beings or in the material creation, we should recognize that we ourselves are enmeshed in that which, in the beginning, brought about this universal state of corruption. This realization can, in turn, inculcate in us compassion for God’s creation in its brokenness.

In contemplating the incorrupt cosmos that was in the beginning,

as well as its restored and perfected state beyond the general resurrection, we can also become aware of God's plan for His creation, His economy. In this way we can grow in spiritual knowledge of created things according to God's intentions for them, and at the same time harbor a more vibrant hope in the future renewal of the cosmos, when God's plan for it will have been fulfilled. As we have heard from the teachings of St. Barsanuphius of Optina, we can still find "delights and consolations" through beholding the "fragments" that remain of God's original handiwork.* However, it is only by being cognizant of the original and final states of creation that we can appreciate the beauty that God created in the beginning, unmarred by human sin, and the corresponding yet even greater beauty that is to come. Such an appreciation can help us to apprehend spiritually what St. Maximus has called "traces" of God's majesty in the sensible creation,** and through them be led to a deeper knowledge of our Creator.

Finally and most importantly, understanding what was in the beginning and what occurred at the fall can fill us with a more fervent gratitude toward our Lord Jesus Christ, Who both restores what the first man lost and brings into being what the first man was meant to attain. As we have seen, it is only by recognizing that death entered the world because of sin that we can fully appreciate why the sinless Christ *died* for the salvation of the world: why He undeservedly took upon Himself the final physical consequence of sin in order to overcome all the consequences of sin, "trampling down death by death"¹⁸¹ and giving life to the world. In knowing *why* He did this, we can give more fitting glory to Him for having, with His death on the Cross, "offered one sacrifice for sins forever" (Heb. 10:12), and for becoming, in His resurrection, the "firstfruits" of our rising from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

To Him—through Whom man and the visible creation were made incorrupt in the beginning and are to be immutably returned to incorruption, made spiritual, and deified—is due glory forever. For "Behold," He says, "I make all things new" (Apoc. 21:5).

* See pp. 709–10 above.

** See p. 697 above.

APPENDIX TWO

Modern Saints and Elders on Evolutionism

(Arranged by date of repose)

By the editor*

1. St. Ambrose, Elder of Optina

St. Ambrose (1812–1891) is considered the pinnacle of a century-long succession of holy elders of Optina Monastery, whose God-given clairvoyance and God-revealed counsels attracted spiritual seekers from throughout Russia. Elder Ambrose lived during the time when Darwinian ideas were first making themselves known in Russia. In an aphorism that has come down to us, he identifies as nonsense the evolutionary notions of the origin of living things and the descent of man:

“Don’t believe at face value all kinds of nonsense without investigation: that something can come into being [of itself] from dust, and that people used to be apes.”^{1**}

2. St. Theophan the Recluse, Bishop of Tambov

St. Theophan the Recluse (1815–1894) was, together with St. Philaret (Drozdov) of Moscow and St. Ignatius (Brianchaninov) of the Caucasus, one of the great and holy transmitters of Patristic theology in nineteenth-century Russia. Steeped in the wisdom of the Fathers

* General remarks about this material are found in the editor’s preface, pp. 80–82, 81n above.

** In the original Russian, the second part of this saying forms a rhyming couplet.

MODERN SAINTS AND ELDERS ON EVOLUTIONISM



St. Ambrose, Elder of Optina.



St. Theophan the Recluse.

not only on an intellectual but also on a profound experiential level, he wrote classic works on the spiritual life and commentaries on Holy Scripture, and translated many Patristic works into Russian, including the complete *Philokalia*. In order to help his fellow believers remain firm in the Orthodox Faith within the context of modernity, he read widely in the fields of philosophy and science, and stayed abreast of the latest intellectual currents.

Like his earlier contemporaries Sts. Philaret and Ignatius, St. Theophan transmitted the authentic Patristic teaching on the creation and original state of man and the universe. Unlike them, he lived to see the growing acceptance of the opposing worldview of Darwinism in the modern West.* Realizing that this worldview was encroaching into Russia, he warned his contemporaries of it in no uncertain terms.

* As noted above (p. 508n), however, it is likely that St. Ignatius did encounter the newly promulgated Darwinian theory four or five years before his repose in

In the following passage, St. Theophan compares the disbelief of the Sadducees in Christ's time with that of the evolutionists of his own:

"The Sadducees had a seemingly insoluble objection to the resurrection; but the Lord resolved it with a few words to them, and so clearly that everyone understood and acknowledged the Sadducees to have been beaten by the truth of His word. What the Sadducees were then, unbelievers of all sorts are now. They have heaped up a multitude of fanciful suppositions for themselves, elevated them to the status of irrefutable truths and plumed themselves on them, assuming that nothing can be said against them. In fact, they are so ungrounded that it is not even worthwhile speaking against them. All of their sophistry is a house of cards—blow on it and it flies apart. There is no need to refute it in its parts; it is enough to regard it as one regards dreams. When speaking against dreams, people do not prove the absurdity in their composition or in their individual parts, but only say, 'It's a dream,' and with that they resolve everything. It is the same with the theory of the formation of the world from a nebula and its supports,* with the theory of abiogenesis** and Darwin's origin of genera and species, and with his last dream about the descent of man.*** It is all like delirium. When you read them you are walking in the midst of shadows. And scientists? Well, what can you do with them? Their motto is 'If you don't like it, don't listen, but don't prevent me from lying.'"²

1867. At that time, speaking of the natural sciences, St. Ignatius commented on the "arbitrary fantasies and hypotheses in the works of materialists," and warned of the need to differentiate between these "absurd ravings" and the genuine findings of science.

* A reference to the nebular hypothesis, according to which a nebula, left over from the sun's formation, contained dust particles that acted as supports for the gradual accumulation of matter, leading to the formation of the earth and the other planets in the solar system. Formulated in the eighteenth century by Emanuel Swedenborg, Immanuel Kant, and Pierre-Simon Laplace, the nebular hypothesis is today the predominant naturalistic explanation of the origin of the Solar System.

** A reference to the modern naturalistic theory of how life on earth arose from inanimate matter.

*** A reference to Charles Darwin's books *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871).

In the same work St. Theophan speaks again of naturalistic theories of origins that had made their appearance in his time: "The truth of God is simple; can a proud mind study it? Such a mind would rather think up its own things: sensational things, although empty and as weak as a spider's web. To see that this is so, look at the current theories of the creation of the world: they are like a somnambulistic or drunken delirium. And yet how good they seem to those who invented them! How much energy and time are wasted on this—and all in vain! The deed was accomplished simply: 'He spake, and they came to be. He commanded, and they were created' (Ps. 148:5). No one can think up anything better than this solution."³

The evolutionary theory of the descent of man from animals, wrote St. Theophan, is the consequence of man's running from God's authority and toward the unrestrained satisfaction of the passions. "What ought we to preach?" the Saint asked. "We should cry to all, 'Sons of the Kingdom [of Heaven]! Don't run from the Kingdom into bondage and slavery'—for they are in fact running. Some are captivated by freedom of mind. They say, 'We don't want the bonds of faith and the oppression of authority, even Divine authority; we'll figure things out and make up our minds for ourselves.' So they have made up their minds. They have built fables in which there is more childishness than in the mythology of the Greeks—and they magnify themselves.... Others are enticed by the broad path of the passions. They say, 'We don't want to know positive commandments or the demands of conscience—this is all abstract: we need tangible naturalness.' And they have gone after it. What has come of it? They have bowed down before dumb beasts. Has not the theory that man originated from animals arisen from this moral fall? This is where they have gone! And everyone runs from the Lord, everyone runs...."⁴

Elsewhere St. Theophan wrote that Darwinism, together with other godless philosophies from the West, is deserving of formal condemnation by the Orthodox Church: "These days many nihilists of both sexes, naturalists, Darwinists, Spiritists, and Westernizers in general have multiplied among us. All right, you're thinking—would the Church have been silent, would it not have proffered its voice, would it not have condemned or anathematized them if there had been some-

thing new in their teaching? To be sure—a council would have done so without doubt, and all of them, with their teachings, would have been given over to anathema. To the current Rite of Orthodoxy* only the following item would have to be added: ‘To Büchner, Feuerbach, Darwin, Renan, Kardec,** and all their followers—anathema!’ But there is no need, either for a special council or for any kind of addition. All of their false teachings were anathematized long ago. At the present time, not only in principal cities but in all places and churches the Rite of Orthodoxy ought to be brought in and celebrated, so that all the teachings contrary to the word of God might be collected and that it might be proclaimed to everyone what they must fear and from what teachings they must flee, and all might know. Many are seduced intellectually only through ignorance, and therefore a public condemnation of pernicious teachings would save them from destruction. If the action of an anathema is terrible to someone, then let him avoid the teachings that lead to it. Let him who is afraid of it for the sake of others bring them back to a healthy teaching. If you who are not favorably disposed to this action are Orthodox, then you are going against yourself; and if you have already lost sound teaching, then what business do you have concerning what is done in the Church that supports it? After all, you’ve already separated yourself from the Church and have your own convictions, your own way of looking at things—well, live with them then. It’s all the same whether or not your name and your teach-

* The Rite of Orthodoxy is served in churches on the Sunday of Orthodoxy (the First Sunday of Great Lent), usually with a hierarch officiating. During the Rite, anathemas are pronounced on heresies condemned at the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

** Ludwig Büchner (1824–1899), an avid proponent of Darwinism, was one of the main exponents of scientific materialism in the nineteenth century; he is considered the father of atheistic “evangelism” in Germany, the counterpart of Thomas Henry Huxley in England. Ludwig Andreas von Feuerbach (1804–1872), a German philosopher and anthropologist, taught that God was but a projection of man’s inner nature and needs; his materialism/atheism, though at times inconsistent, exerted a strong influence on the philosophy of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Ernest Renan (1823–1892) was a French philosopher who submitted the Old Testament, the life of Christ, and Christian history to thoroughgoing rational analysis, removed from faith in the miraculous and the Divine. Allan Kardec (1804–1869) was the systematizer of Spiritualism in France.

ing are uttered under the anathema: you are already under anathema if you philosophize against the Church and persist in this philosophizing.”⁵

St. Theophan predicted that, if naturalistic evolutionary notions of the world’s origin continued to be propagated, the resulting loss of faith among the Russian people would help pave the way for the overthrow of the Orthodox Christian government of Russia. Less than three decades later, his prediction would be fulfilled. As he observed:

“People have suddenly had a thought and have started to write about preserving faith. But they don’t want to block the source of unbelief. This source is the spread of the teaching that the world formed by itself, according to which there is no need for God and the soul does not exist—it’s all atoms and chemistry, nothing more. This is being preached at [university] rostrums and in literature. He who breathes these fumes is inescapably stupefied, and loses his sense and faith.... Until these books are destroyed; until professors and literary men are forced not only *not* to hold to this theory, but even to demolish it—until then—faithlessness will grow and grow, and with it, self-will and the destruction of the present government. That’s the way the French Revolution went.”⁶

Already in his time, St. Theophan saw that science was increasingly becoming a godless enterprise which worked from the assumption that “nature is all there is” and that therefore materialistic explanations can account for everything that exists.* At the same time he saw that the natural sciences were being falsely held up as the most reliable and authoritative source of all knowledge. In various places he spoke of this increasingly pervasive problem:

“There is not a single science which could be established solidly on its own principles. Something can be obtained from all the sciences. But this is not something that gives one the right to cite science as a decisive authority. It is not science itself [that is the problem], but scientists who twist science however they want. Consequently, there are only the conjectures and inferences of scientists.”⁷

* On this, see pp. 21–28, 89–91, 98–102, 462, 632 above.

“In vain do people think highly about the world and its laws, about nature and its forces, as if there were something untouchable, indisputable and inviolable in them. Under the appearance of science they are devising for themselves an idol-worship that is more destructive than the mythological idol-worship of the ancient Greeks. No, brethren—it is not by the laws and forces of nature that the life of each one of us is upheld, but by the power of God acting within us. The Lord, ‘upholding all things by the word of His power’ (Heb. 1:3), bears each one of us by the same word of His power.

“Let us maintain this thought in our mind and imprint it in our heart. The all-active power of God bears us over the abyss of nothingness, and ‘we live, and move, and have our being’ (Acts 17:28). If He takes away His Spirit, if He removes His hand, we will disappear and will no longer be remembered among the living. But if the Lord holds us, then He touches us. He does not merely see us mentally; no, He touches us, as one hand touches another or as the air touches one’s body. How consoling and awesome!”⁸

Elsewhere St. Theophan reflected on what can happen to a person’s outlook when he does not keep scientific knowledge in a position subordinate to his Christian faith:

“A pure spirit [*nous*] contemplates God and receives from Him knowledge of mysteries. But even the spirit, combined with the body, after the diversity of the creations of the visible world has been revealed to it through the senses, having been enlightened by the same inward illumination from above, must contemplate in these creations all the mysteries of the knowledge of God and the mysteries of God’s making and governing of the world, so that even when faced with this great amount of knowledge it can remain unperturbed in the same single Divine contemplation. But, having fallen, a person is captivated by the diversity of created things and even overwhelmed by impressions from them, which supplant within him the very thought of God. Studying created things, he goes no further than what he sees in them—their composition and interrelations—and, not receiving illumination from above, does not see in them the clear reflection of God and the Divine mysteries. The world has become for him a tarnished mirror, in which nothing can be seen but the mirror itself. Hence a great amount of

knowledge suppresses within him the knowledge of the one thing;* it turns him away from it makes him cold toward it. Such is the price and such is the fruit of science in a fallen state.”⁹

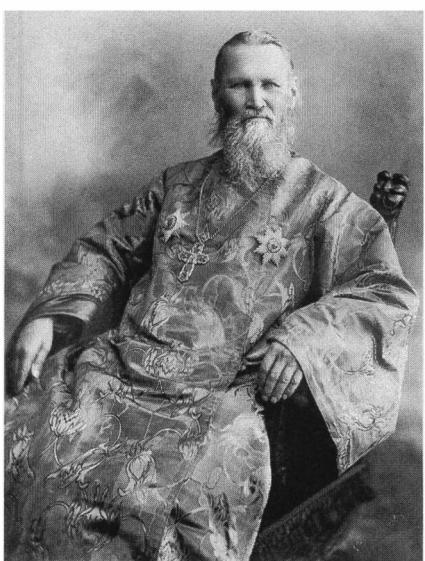
Rather than let the materialist’s version of science modify the content of their Faith, Orthodox Christians should allow their Faith to inform their understanding of the natural world, for it is only this Faith that can provide the ultimate explanation for man and the cosmos. As St. Theophan affirms: “A believer has the full right to insinuate himself with spiritual things into the material realm, while materialists crawl with their matter, without a twinge of conscience, into the spiritual realm. Right-mindedness is on our side, while incoherence is on theirs. And this is not because every sandpiper praises its own swamp; rather, it is to the point. Matter cannot be either a power or a purpose. Both are outside of it. Matter can only be a means and a field for spiritual powers, in accordance with the spiritual origin (the Creator) of all things.”¹⁰

3. St. John of Kronstadt

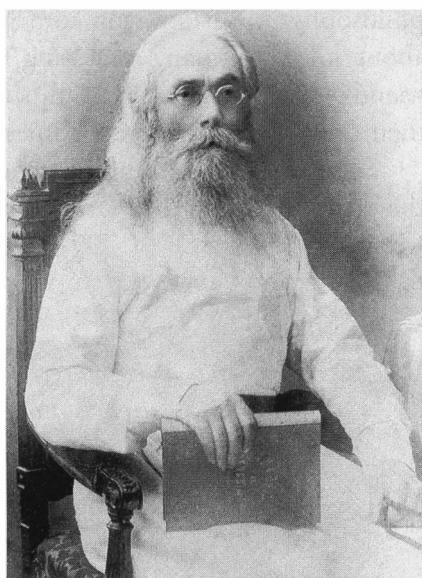
A renowned miracle-worker, pastor, and preacher, St. John of Kronstadt (1829–1908) was very active in charitable and missionary work among the most destitute and disenfranchised segments of Russian society. He was the author of several works of basic Christian instruction, among which was his aforementioned *Talks on the Days of Creation*. When the theory of evolution began to spread throughout Western Europe and into Russia, he immediately recognized it for what it was: a philosophy resulting not from simple observation of the natural world, but from loss of faith in God. In his sermons he made the following incisive comments:

“Half-educated people and over-educated people do not believe in a personal, righteous, omnipotent, and unoriginate God, but believe in an impersonal origin and in some kind of evolution of the world and all beings ... and therefore they live and act as though they will not have to give an answer to anyone for their words and deeds, making

* I.e., the “one thing ... needful” (Luke 10:42).



St. John of Kronstadt.



St. Barsanuphius, Elder of Optina.

gods of themselves, their reason, and their passions.... In their blindness they reach the point of insanity, deny the very existence of God, and maintain that everything stems from blind evolution (the teaching that everything comes into being of itself, without the participation of a Creative power). But he who has an intellect does not believe in such insane ravings.”¹¹

4. St. Barsanuphius, Elder of Optina

St. Barsanuphius (1845–1913) was among the last of the long line of clairvoyant elders of Optina Monastery. Like his contemporary St. John of Kronstadt, he noted the moral ramifications of the acceptance of evolutionist philosophy. To his spiritual children he said: “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 and the conquerors are triumphant. 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.”¹²

See also St. Barsanuphius’ exposition of the Orthodox teaching on the creation’s original incorruption, and on how the cosmos changed with the fall of man (pp. 709–10 above): a teaching clearly antithetical to the evolutionary origin story.

*5. Holy Hieromartyr Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky),
Metropolitan of Kiev and Gallich*

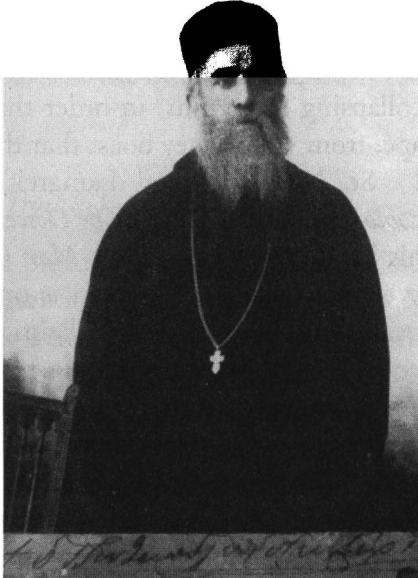
Metropolitan Vladimir (1848–1918) was the first bishop to be martyred under the Communist yoke in Russia. He was shot and stabbed in Kiev by the Bolsheviks while the All-Russian Church Council was taking place in Moscow. On hearing of St. Vladimir’s martyrdom, the Council, led by the holy Patriarch Tikhon, set aside the Sunday closest to his death (Jan. 25/Feb. 7) for the annual commemoration of all of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. He was glorified as a saint by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1992.

Among St. Vladimir’s writings one finds his thoughts on evolutionism. He, too, saw the rise of evolutionism as a symptom of modern society’s loss of belief in the Christian God, and recognized it as being profoundly antithetical to traditional Christian anthropology. “Only at the present time,” he wrote, “has such an audacious philosophy found a place for itself, which overthrows human worth and tries to give its false teaching a wide dissemination.... Man did not originate from God’s hands, it says; in an endless and gradual transition from imperfection to perfection he developed from the animal kingdom, and as little a soul as animals have, so little does man have.... How immeasurably deeply does all this degrade and insult man! From the highest step in the progression of creation he is reduced to the same level as the animals.... There is no need to refute such a teaching on a scientific basis, although it would not be difficult to do this, since unbelief has far from proved its position.... But if such a teaching finds more and more followers at the present time, this is not because the

MODERN SAINTS AND ELDERS ON EVOLUTIONISM



Holy Hieromartyr Vladimir.



St. Nectarios of Pentapolis and Aegina.

teaching of unbelief has supposedly become inarguably true, but because it does not hinder a corrupt heart that is inclined to sin from giving itself over to its passions. For if man is not immortal, if he is nothing more than the attainment of the highest development of the animals, then he has no business with God.... Brethren, do not listen to the pernicious, poison-bearing teaching of unbelief, which lowers you to the level of animals and, depriving you of human worth, promises you nothing but despair and an inconsolable life.”¹³

6. St. Nectarios (Kephalas), Metropolitan of Pentapolis and Wonderworker of Aegina

St. Nectarios (1846–1920), a much-venerated miracle-worker, theologian, philosopher, and educator of modern Greece, wrote many books and pamphlets for the spiritual edification of the faithful. In his

Study concerning the Immortality of the Soul and the Holy Memorial Services (1901), he wrote of the moral implications of evolutionary theory: “Those who deny the immortality of the soul undermine both the moral law and the foundations of societies, which they want to see collapsing into ruins, in order that they might prove that man is an ape, from which they boast that they are descended.”¹⁴

St. Nectarios read Lamarck’s evolutionary treatise *Philosophie zoologique* and Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*. Discussing these works in his book *Sketch concerning Man* (1893), St. Nectarios contrasted the evolutionary view that man is only *quantitatively* different from the beasts with the Orthodox Christian view that he is *qualitatively* different.* The Saint wrote: “The two volumes of the work *Philosophie zoologique* are in their entirety intended to uphold the degrading evolutionary theory regarding man. The first volume seeks to prove that the human organism evolved from that of an ape, as a result of chance circumstances. And the second volume seeks to prove that the distinctive excellences of the human mind are nothing but an extension of a power which the animals have, differing only in degree. Having weak and badly set foundations ... Lamarck claims to prove that in earlier times nature produced through marvelous evolution one species from another, earlier one. He seeks to establish a gradual chain having successive (not contemporaneous) links and thus to produce finally the human species through a metamorphosis that is the reverse of the truth, and not less marvelous than the transformations one reads about in myth!...”

“The Darwinian theories imagined that they arrived at the solution of the anthropological question by accepting the mode of evolution. These theories, not being based on sound foundations, instead of solving the problem rendered it more enigmatic, because they denied the validity of revealed truth, viewed man as belonging to the same order as the irrational animals, denied his spiritual origin and attributed to him a very lowly origin. Their failure had as its chief reason the negation of his lofty origin and of his spiritual nature, which is altogether alien to matter and to the physical world. In general, without the ac-

* Fr. Seraphim would later make the same point; see pp. 219, 660 above.