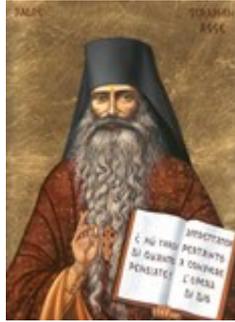


HOW TO READ GENESIS

(Excerpts from "Genesis, Creation and Early Man" by Hieromonk Seraphim Rose)

http://www.hexaameron.ro/Hexaameron/Facerea_en.html



How to read Genesis, fundamental principles:

1. We are seeking truth. We must respect the text of Genesis enough to recognize that it contains truth, even though that truth may seem unusual or surprising to us. If it seems to conflict with what we think we know from science, let us remember that God is the Author of all truth, and anything genuinely true in Scripture cannot contradict anything that is genuinely true in science.
2. The Scripture is Divine in inspiration. We will look more closely below at what this means; but for a beginning, it means that we must look in it for truths of a high order, and if we find difficulty in understanding anything we should suspect first our own lack of knowledge rather than a deficiency in the inspired text.
3. We should not hasten to offer our own explanations of "difficult" passages, but should first try to familiarize ourselves with what the Holy Fathers have said about these passages, recognizing that they have spiritual wisdom that we lack.
4. We should also beware of the temptation to seize on isolated, out-of-context quotes from the Holy Fathers to "prove" a point one would like to make. For example, I have seen an Orthodox person, wishing to prove that there was nothing "special" about the creation of Adam, quote the following statement from St. Athanasius the Great: *"The first-created man was made of dust like everyone, and the hand which created Adam then is creating also and always those who come after him."* This is a general statement about God's continuous creative activity which no one would think of contradicting. But the point this person wanted to make was that there was no real distinction between the creation of every living man and the creation of the first man - and specifically, that the body of Adam could have been formed by natural generation in the womb of some not-quite-human creature. Can such a statement legitimately be used as a "proof" on this question?

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

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

5. If we ourselves think we can add something to the understanding of the text for our days, let it be done cautiously and with full respect for the integrity of the text of Genesis and the opinions of the Holy Fathers. And we should always be humble in this attempt - the science of our own days has its

failings and mistakes, and if we rely too much on it we may find ourselves with wrong understandings.

6. Specifically in this course we will be trying first to understand the Fathers, and only then to offer our own answers to some questions if we have them... In the Holy Fathers we find the "mind of the Church" - the living understanding of God's revelation. They are our link between the ancient texts which contain God's revelation and today's reality. Without such a link it is every man for himself - and the result is a myriad of interpretations and sects.

GENESIS

¹ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

² And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

³ And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

⁴ And God saw the light, that [it was] good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

⁵ And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

⁶ And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

⁷ And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which [were] under the firmament from the waters which [were] above the firmament: and it was so.

⁸ And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

⁹ And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry [land] appear: and it was so.

¹⁰ And God called the dry [land] Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that [it was] good.

¹¹ And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, [and] the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed [is] in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

¹² And the earth brought forth grass, [and] herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed [was] in itself, after his kind: and God saw that [it was] good.

¹³ And the evening and the morning were the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

¹⁵ And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

¹⁶ And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: [he made] the stars also.

¹⁷ And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,

¹⁸ And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that [it was] good.

¹⁹ And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl [that] may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

²¹ And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that [it was] good.

²² And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

²³ And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

²⁵ And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that [it was] good.

²⁶ And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

²⁷ So God created man in his [own] image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

²⁸ And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

²⁹ And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which [is] upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which [is] the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein [there is] life, [I have given] every green herb for meat: and it was so.

³¹ And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, [it was] very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

² And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

Abstract:

Day I - Sunday - sky, earth, darkness, light, water, day, evening, vernal equinox

Day II - Monday - Heaven's firmament, water parting

Day III - Tuesday - land, seas, plants, grass seed, fruitful trees after their kind

Day IV - Wednesday - Sun (in the sign of Aries), Moon (full), midday, midnight, seasons, planets, stars, constellations, galaxies, zodiacal signs

Day V - Thursday - All aquatic creatures, including mammals, flying creatures including insects

VI Day - Friday - mammals, amphibians and reptiles, 6 hour (12 a.m.) Man

THE SIX DAYS OF CREATION

(Excerpts from "Genesis, Creation and Early Man World" of Hieromonk Seraphim Rose)

1:1 *In the beginning...*

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

A beginning in a mystical sense is denoted by the statement: *I am the first and the last, the beginning and the end* (Apoc. 1:8).... In truth, He Who is the beginning of all things by virtue of His Divinity is also the end.... Therefore, in this beginning, that is, in Christ, God created heaven and earth, because *all things were made through Him and without Him was made nothing that was made* (John 1:3).

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

"Let us inquire how God speaks. Is it in our manner?... Does He manifest His hidden thought by striking the air with the articulate movement of the voice? Surely, it is fantastic to say that God needs such a roundabout way for the manifestation of His thoughts. Or, is it not more in conformity with true religion to say that the Divine will joined with the first impulse of His intelligence is the Word of God? [i.e., Christ]. The Scripture delineates Him in detail in order that it may show that God wished the creation not only to be accomplished, but also to be brought to this birth through some co-worker. It could have related everything fully as it began, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," then "He created light," next, "He created the firmament." But now, introducing God as commanding and speaking, it indicates silently Him to Whom He gives the command and to Whom He speaks.... This way of speaking has been wisely and skillfully employed so as to rouse our mind to an inquiry of the Person to Whom the words are directed."

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

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

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



1:1-2 God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was form and void (Septuagint: invisible and unfinished).

St. Basil asks:

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

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

"The good architect lays the foundation first, and afterwards, when the foundation has been laid, plots the various parts of the building, one after the other, and then adds thereto the ornamentation.... Why did not God ... grant to the elements at the same time as they arose their appropriate adornments, as if He, at the moment of creation, were unable to cause the heavens immediately to gleam with studded stars and the earth to be clothed with flowers and fruit? That could very well have happened. Yet Scripture points out that things were first created and afterwards put in order, lest it be supposed that they were not actually created and that they had no beginning, just as if the nature of things had been, as it were, generated from the beginning and did not appear to be something added afterwards."

St. Ephraim says:

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

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

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

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

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

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

1:2 And the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.

Here we see the activity of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity in die creation. St. Ambrose writes: *"There was still to come the plenitude of the operation in the Spirit, as it is written: "By the Word of the Lord the heavens were established and all the power of them by the Spirit of His mouth" (Ps. 32, 6)... The Spirit fittingly moved over the earth, destined to bear fruit, because by the aid of the Spirit it held the seeds of new birth which were to germinate according to the words of the Prophet: "Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created and Thou shall renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 103:32)."*

St. Ephraim gives us a homey image of the activity of the Spirit on the First Day: *[The Holy Spirit] warmed the waters and made them fertile and capable of birth, like a bird when it sits with its outstretched wings on its eggs and by its warmth gives them warmth and produces fertility in them. This same Holy Spirit represented for us then an image of Holy Baptism, in which by His moving over the waters He gives birth to the children of God. The Holy Spirit also participated in the other days of Creation, for Job speaks of "the Divine Spirit which made me" (Job 33:4).*

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

St. Ambrose writes:

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

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

"The light which appeared on earth was like either a bright cloud, or a rising sun, or the pillar that illumined the Hebrew people in the desert. In any case, the light could not disperse the darkness that embraced everything if it had not extended everywhere either its substance or its rays, like the rising sun. The original light was shed everywhere and was not enclosed in a single definite place; it

dispersed the darkness without having any movement; its whole movement consisted in its appearance and disappearance; after its sudden disappearance there came the dominion of night, and with its appearance this dominion ended. Thus the light produced also the three following days.... It aided the conception and bringing forth of everything that the earth was to produce on the third day; as for the sun, when it was established in the firmament, it was to bring to maturity what had already been produced with the aid of the original light."

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

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

"God, as judge of the whole work, foreseeing what is going to happen as something completed, commends that part of His work which is still in its initial stages, being already cognizant of its termination.... He praises each individual part as befitting what is to come."

1:4-5 And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night.

St. Basil comments on this passage:

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

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

St. Basil continues:

Evening, then, is a common boundary line of day and night; and similarly, morning is the part of night bordering on day. In order, therefore, to give the prerogative of prior generation to the day, Moses mentioned first the limit of the day and then that of the night, as night followed the day. The condition in the world before the creation of light was not night, but darkness; that which was opposed to the day was named night; wherefore it received its name later than the day did.... Why did he say "one" and not "first"? It is more consistent for him who intends to introduce a second and a third and a fourth day, to call the one which begins the series "first." But he said "one" because he was defining the measure of day and night."

This First Day of creation (no matter how "long" one may guess it to be) is the beginning of the cycle of seven days (each with its "day" and "night") which continues up to our own days. Those rationalist commentators who see in the "seven days" and the fact that "evening" precedes "morning" merely a projection backwards of later Jewish customs show themselves totally out of harmony with the Patristic way of viewing these things, and they are therefore unable to answer the question: where and why did the Jews derive these customs? In the Patristic view, the revealed text can and does give the literal *origins* of the world and the reasons for the Jewish customs (which are now Christian - for our church day also begins with Vespers, the evening service). Thus we have come to the end of "Day One," the First Day of creation. It has established the measure of time for all succeeding ages (because "before" it there was no time; time begins with it). And in another sense also it is a day unlike those that follow it, as St. Ephraim explains:

"Thus, according to the testimony of Scripture, heaven, earth, fire, air, and the waters were created out of nothing; while the light which was created on the First Day and everything else that was created after it were created out of what existed before. For when Moses speaks of what was created out of nothing he uses the word "created" (Hebrew: *bara*): *God created the heavens and the earth*. And although it is not written that fire, the waters and the air were created, it is likewise

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

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

The very idea of "creation out of nothing" or "from non-being" sharply distinguishes the Genesis account from that of all pagan myths and speculations about creation. In the latter it is some kind of "demiurge" or "fashioner-god" who forms the world out of already existing matter - which, as the Holy Fathers say, thus is a kind of "god" also. Genesis describes the *absolute* beginning of the whole world, not its development from something already existing; even the creations of the following five days, as we shall see, although they come out of the matter which has already been created, are something radically new which cannot be understood as a mere development of the first-created matter. The speculations of modern thinkers who try to trace the world back to some ultimately simple matter which develops by itself can be seen to be akin to the ancient pagan speculations; the radicalness of the Genesis explanation is beyond them both-precisely because it comes from God's revelation and not the guesses and projections of men.

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

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

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

Similarly, St. Ambrose writes: "The Angels, Dominations, and Powers, although they began to exist at some time, were already in existence when the world was created. For all things "were created, things visible and things invisible, whether Thrones or Dominations or Principalities or Powers. All

things," we are told, "have been created through and unto Him" (Col. 1:16). Indeed, God said to Job: "When the stars were made, all My angels praised Me with a loud voice" (Job 38:7, Septuagint). We will see on the Sixth Day how Adam was tempted by satan, and therefore we know that the battle of the proud angels in heaven, as described in the Apocalypse (12:7-8) has already been fought before then, and satan has already "fallen like lightning" (Luke 10:18).



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

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

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

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

"Since both a second name and a function peculiar to the second heaven was recorded, this is a different one from that recorded in the beginning, one of a more solid nature and furnishing a special service for the universe.... We believe that this word has been assigned for a certain firm nature which is capable of supporting the fluid and unstable water. And, surely, we need not believe, because it seems to have had its origin, according to the general understanding, from water, that it is like either frozen water or some ... translucent stone ... almost like the air in transparency. Now, we compare the firmament to none of these things. Truly, it is peculiar to a childish and simple intellect to hold such notions about the heavens.... We have been taught by the Scripture to permit our mind to invent no fantasy beyond the knowledge that has been granted it....

Not a firm and solid nature, which has weight and resistance, it is not this that the word "firmament" means. In that case the earth would more legitimately be considered deserving of such a name. But, because the nature of the substances lying above is light and rare and imperceptible, He called this (a) firmament, in comparison with those very light substances which are incapable of perception by the senses. Now, imagine some place which tends to separate the moisture, and lets the rare and filtered part pass through into the higher regions, but lets the coarse and earthly part drop below, so that, by the gradual reduction of the liquids, from the beginning to the end the same mild temperature may be preserved."

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

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

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

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

The very phenomenon of rain is not mentioned in the text of Genesis until the time of Noah; and then it is not an ordinary rain but a kind of cosmic catastrophe: "All the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights" (Gen. 7:11-12).

Immense - to us, nearly unimaginable - amounts of water were loosed on the earth reducing it virtually to its state on the First Day of creation, when the "deep" covered the earth. The rains we know today could not cause this to happen; but the text describes something even worse: an immense underground supply of water was loosed, and the "firmament" - the atmospheric condition that preserved a permanent reservoir of water in the air, evidently in the form of clouds such as the planet Venus has even now - was literally "broken" and emptied its contents upon the earth.

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

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

In view of all this, it would seem that the time after the Flood is a whole new epoch in human history. The comparatively "paradise conditions of the earth up to the time of Noah, when a universal temperateness prevailed over the earth and abundant vegetation supplied the needs of man without the need to eat meat (Noah is the first to receive God's permission to eat flesh; Gen. 9:3), gives way to the harsher post-Flood earth we know, when there is "seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,

summer and winter" (Gen. 8:22), and men no longer live nine hundred years as did Adam and the early Patriarchs, but very quickly are reduced to the seventy or eighty years which is the general limit of our life even up to now.

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

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

It is tempting for us, in the pride of our scientific knowledge, to speculate about the *how* of this event: Did the waters flow into underground reservoirs? Did the land rise up? The Scripture does not say and for this reason the Holy Fathers say little on this subject. St. Ambrose writes:

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

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

"As for the question, how any single thing came into existence, we must banish it altogether from our discussion. Even in the case of things which are quite within the grasp of our understanding and of which we have sensible perception, it would be impossible for the speculative reason to grasp the "how" of the production of the phenomenon; so much so, that even inspired and saintly men have deemed such questions insoluble. For instance, the Apostle says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen are not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3)... While the Apostle affirms that it is an object of his faith that it was by the will of God that the world itself and all which is therein was framed,... he has on the other hand left out of the investigation the "how" of this framing.... Let us, following the example of the Apostle, leave the question of the "how" in each created thing, without meddling with it at all, but merely observing incidentally that the movement of God's will becomes at any moment that He pleases a fact, and the intention becomes at once realized in nature."

In all that has to do with the Six Days of Creation, therefore, the Holy Fathers offer few guesses (and they are always tentative) regarding *how* God created; and we likewise should refrain from projecting our knowledge of the "how" of the present creation (to the small extent that we know it) back to the first-created world.

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

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



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

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

"Let the earth bring forth herbs." And in the briefest moment of time the earth, beginning with germination in order that it might keep the laws of the Creator, passing through every form of increase, immediately brought the shoots to perfection. The meadows were deep with the abundant grass; the fertile plains, rippling with standing crops, presented the picture of a swelling sea with its moving heads of grain. And every herb and every kind of vegetable and whatever shrubs and legumes there were, rose from the earth at that time in all profusion.... "And the fruit tree," He said, "that bears fruit containing seed of its own kind and of its own likeness on the earth. At this saying all the dense woods appeared; all the trees shot up, those which are wont to rise to the greatest height, the firs, cedars, cypresses, and pines; likewise, all the shrubs were immediately thick with leaf and bushy; and the so-called garland plants - the rose bushes, myrtles, and laurels-all came into existence in a moment of time, although they were not previously upon the earth, each of them with its own peculiar nature."

St. Ephraim the Syrian states precisely:

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

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

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

Plants and trees appeared on earth, as the Fathers repeat again and again, before the very existence of the sun.

St. John Chrysostom writes:

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

St. Basil states:

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

Ambrose waxes eloquent on this subject:

"Before the light of the sun shall appear, let the green herb be born, let its light be prior to that of the sun. Let the earth germinate before receives the fostering care of the sun, lest there be an occasion for human error to grow. Let everyone be informed that the sun is not the author of vegetation. . . . How can the sun give the faculty of life growing plants, when these have already been brought forth by the life-giving creative power of God before the sun entered into such a life as this? The sun is younger than the green shoot, younger than the green plant. The vegetation and trees brought forth seeds, "each according to its kind." This expression of Scripture is a key one in Patristic thought; we will devote a lengthy discussion to it under the Fifth Day of creation, when living creatures were brought forth likewise "each according to its kind."



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

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

For this reason, such apologists for the evolutionary interpretation have to believe that the sun was really created on the First Day with the heavens, but only *appeared* on the Fourth Day - apparently after the cloud covering of the earth during the first three days had lifted.

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

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

visible from earth on the Fourth Day. That they universally reject this explanation can only mean that the text of Genesis does not allow it.

St. John Chrysostom writes: "He created the sun on the Fourth Day so that you might not think that it produces the day." St. Basil teaches: "The heavens and the earth had come first; after them, light had been created, day and night separated, and in turn, the firmament and dry land revealed. Water had been collected into a fixed and definite gathering. The earth had been filled with its proper fruits; for, it had brought forth countless kinds of herbs, and had been adorned with varied species of plants. However, the sun did not yet exist, nor the moon, lest men might call the sun the first cause and rather of light, and lest they who are ignorant of God might deem it the producer of what grows from the earth...."

If the creation of light had preceded, why, now, is the sun in turn said to have been made to give light?... At the time (the First Day) the actual nature of light was introduced, but now this solar body has been made ready to be a vehicle for that first-created light.... And do not tell me that it is impossible for these to be separated. I certainly do not say that the separation of light from the solar body is possible for you and me, but that that which we are able to separate in thought can also be separated in actuality by the Creator of its nature...

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

St. Ambrose makes a special emphasis on this point:

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

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

But Divine revelation, as interpreted by the Holy Fathers, tells us the contrary: that the earth comes first, both in time and in significance, and the sun comes second. If our minds were not so chained to the intellectual fashions of the times, if we were not so fearful of being thought "behind the times," we would not have such difficulty in opening our minds to this alternative explanation of the world's beginnings.

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

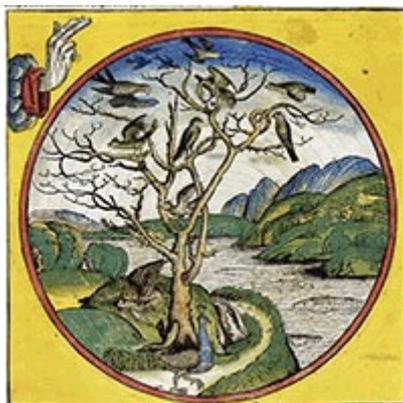
In our days it has become fashionable and easy to believe that everything "evolved," by absolutely uniform laws which we can now observe, from a primordial blob of energy or matter; if one needs

"God" to explain anything, it is only to be the "creator" of this blob, or the initiator of the "big bang" that supposedly has produced everything there is. Today it requires a broader mind, less chained to "public opinion," to begin to see the enormity of the creative acts of God as described in Genesis. The Holy Fathers - the most "sophisticated" and "scientific" minds of their time - can be the unchainers of our fettered minds.

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

One could, of course, conceive of a sun much smaller than the one we know and much closer to the earth, while preserving its apparent size as seen from the earth. But such a sun would expend its energy many times more rapidly than our present sun does. Evidently God made the sun the size and the distance from earth it needs to have if it is to give to earth the amount of light and heat it requires to support life to the end of this age, when *the sun shall be darkened* (Matt. 24:29)... Rather, God made the division into male and female foreseeing the fall of man and that the increase of mankind would require a passionate mode of generation.

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



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

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

"The blessed Moses, instructed by the Spirit of God, teaches us with such detail ... so that we might clearly know both the order and the way of the creation of each thing. If God had not been concerned for our salvation and had not guided the tongue of the Prophet, it would have been sufficient to say that God created the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and living creatures, without indicating either the order of the days or what was created earlier and what later.... But he distinguishes so clearly both the order of creation and the number of days, and instructs us about

everything with great condescension, in order that we, coming to know the whole truth, would no longer heed the false teachings of those who speak of everything according to their own reasonings, but might comprehend the unutterable power of our Creator."

Thus, on the Fifth Day, he writes:

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

St. Basil writes:

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

And St. Ambrose:

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

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

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

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

When He said: "Let it bring forth," (the earth) did not produce what was stored up in it, but He Who gave the command also bestowed upon it the power to bring forth. Neither did the earth, when it heard, "Let it bring forth vegetation and the fruit trees," produce plants which it had hidden in it; nor did it send up to the surface the palm or the oak or the cypress which had been hidden somewhere down below in its womb. On the contrary, it is the Divine Word that is the origin of all things made. "Let the earth bring forth"; not, let it put forth what it has, but, let it acquire what it does not have, since God is enduing it with the power of active force."

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

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

"There is nothing truer than this, that each plant either has seed or there exists in it some generative power. And this accounts for the 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."

And further:

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

Similarly, St. Ambrose teaches:

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

And the same Father says even more decisively:

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

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

"What pure and untarnished generations follow without intermingling one after another, so that a thymallus produces a thymallus; a sea-wolf, a sea-wolf. The sea-scorpion, too, preserves unstained its marriage bed.... Fish know nothing of union with alien species. They do not have unnatural betrothals such as are designedly brought about between animals of two different species as, for instance, the donkey and the mare, or again the female donkey and the horse, both being examples of unnatural union. Certainly there are cases in which nature suffers more in the nature of defilement rather than that of injury to the individual. Man as an abettor of hybrid barrenness is responsible for this. He considers a mongrel animal more valuable than one of a genuine species. You mix together alien species and you mingle diverse seeds."

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

"There is no danger that the precept of God, to which nature has accustomed itself, may become void in future time by a failure of propagation, since today the integrity of the stock is still preserved in the seeds. We know that cockle and the other alien seeds which often are interspersed among fruits of the earth are called "weeds" in the Gospel. These, however, belong to a special species and have not degenerated into another species by a process of mutation from the seed of the wheat plant. The Lord told us that this is so when He said "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while men were asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat." We gather from this that weeds and wheat certainly seem to be distinct both in

name and in kind. Hence, the servants, too, said to the householder, "Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? How then does it have weeds?" He said to them, "An enemy hath done this." One is the seed of the devil; the other, that of Christ which is sown in accordance with justice. Therefore, the Son of Man sowed one and the devil sowed the other. For that reason the nature of each is distinct, since the sowers are opposed. Christ sows the kingdom of God, whereas the devil sows sin. How, therefore, can this kingdom be of one and the same race as sin? "This is the kingdom of God," He says, "as though a man should cast seed into the earth."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Thus, St. Ephraim writes:

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

St. Basil teaches:

“The soul of brute beasts did not emerge after having been hidden in the earth, but it was called into existence at the time of the command. With this act of creation, all is ready for the appearance of man, who is to be lord over it all. But this magnificent creation is not merely for the practical use of man. There is something mystical in it; being the good creation of the All-good God, it can raise our minds to Him. ”

St. John Chrysostom writes:

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

"The Divine Scripture indicates here that God rested from His works; but in the Gospel Christ says: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). In comparing these utterances, is there not a contradiction to be found in them? May it not be so; in the words of the Divine Scripture there is no contradiction whatever. When the Scripture here says: "God rested from all His works," it thereby instructs us that on the Seventh Day He ceased to create and to bring out of nonexistence into existence; but when Christ says: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," it thereby indicates to us His uninterrupted Providence, and it calls "work" the preservation of what exists, the giving to it of continuance (of existence) and the governance of it at all times. Otherwise, how could the universe exist, if a higher hand did not govern and order everything visible and the human race?" Viewing the marvel of what happens every day in what we have become accustomed to call "nature" - the development, for example, of a fully mature plant, animal, or even human being from a tiny seed - we cannot help but see the continuous creative activity of God. But this is not all the same as the Creation of the Six Days, the original bringing into being of everything there is. The first chapter of Genesis describes this unique and unrepeatable creation.

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

St. Ephraim the Syrian teaches:

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

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

He created heaven and earth at the time when the months began, from which time it is fitting that the world took its rise. Then there was the mild temperature of spring, a season suitable for all things. Consequently, the year, too, has the stamp of a world coming to birth.... In order to show that the creation of the world took place in the spring, Scripture says: "This month shall be to you the beginning of months, it is for you the first in the months of the year" (Ex. 12:2), calling the first month the springtime. It was fitting that the beginning of the year be the beginning of generation.”

PATRISTIC EXEGESIS

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.

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 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’.... 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." (Hexaemeron, IX, 1)

Clearly, St. Basil is warning us to beware of "explaining away" things in Genesis which are difficult for our common sense to understand; it is very easy for the "enlightened" modern man to do this, even if he is an Orthodox Christian. Let us therefore try all the harder to understand the sacred Scripture as the Fathers understand it, and not according to our modern "wisdom." And let us not be satisfied with the views of one holy Father; let us examine the views of other holy Fathers as well.

One of the standard patristic commentaries on the book of Genesis is that of St. Ephraim the Syrian. His views are all the more important for us in that he was an "Easterner" and knew the Hebrew language well. Modern scholars tell us that "Easterners" are given to "allegorical" interpretations, and that the book of Genesis likewise must be understood in this way. But let us see what St. Ephraim says in his commentary on Genesis:

"No one should think that the Creation of Six Days is an allegory; it is likewise impermissible to say that what seems, according to the account, to have been created in the course of six days, was created in a single instant, and likewise that certain names presented in this account either signify nothing, or signify something else. On the contrary, one must know that just as the heaven and the earth which were created in the beginning are actually the heaven and the earth and not something else understood under the names of heaven and earth, so also everything else that is spoken of as being created and brought into order after the creation of heaven and earth is not empty names, but the very essence of the created natures corresponds to the force of these names." (*Commentary on Genesis*, ch. 1) 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 12 hours each. (Ibid.)"

Again:

"When in the twinkling of an eye (Adam's) rib was taken out and likewise in an instant the flesh took its place, and the bare rib took on the complete form and all the beauty of a woman, then God led her and presented her to Adam. (Ibid.)"

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 24 hours, which he divides into an "evening" and "morning" of 12 hours each.

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 interventions 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 24 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." (Hexaemeron, V, 6) Again, he says:

"Let the earth bring forth." This brief command was immediately mighty nature and an elaborate system which brought to perfection more swiftly than our thought the countless properties of plants." (Hexaemeron, V, 10) Again, on the Fifth Day:

"The command came. Immediately rivers were productive and marshy lakes were fruitful of species proper and natural to each." (Hexaemeron, VII, 1)

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.... As of the earth He said only: 'Let it bring forth'-and there appeared a great variety of flowers, grasses, 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 creeping things, such a variety of birds, that it is impossible even to enumerate them with words. (*Homilies on Genesis*, VII, 3)

And again St. 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. (*Homilies on Genesis*, XV, 2-3)

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 even until now." (Homily XIV, 5) [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" (Gn. 2:19) but only the remnant of them?] St. John Chrysostom says, when speaking of the rivers of Paradise:

"Perhaps one who loves to speak from his own wisdom here also will not allow that the rivers are actually rivers, nor that the waters are precisely waters, but will instill in those who allow themselves to listen to them, that they (under the names of rivers and waters) represented something else. But I entreat you, let us not pay heed to these people, let us stop up our hearing against them, and let us believe the Divine Scripture, and following what is written in it, let us strive to preserve in our souls sound dogmas. (*Homilies on Genesis*, XIII, 4)

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. (*Homilies on Genesis*, XIII, 3)

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. 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.” (*Homilies on Genesis*, XIII, 3)

St. John of Damascus explicitly describes the allegorical interpretation of paradise to be part of a heresy, that of the Origenians:

“They explain paradise, the heaven, and everything else in an allegorical sense.” (*On Heresies*, 64) 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”. (*Seven Homilies*, IV, 5)

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.” (*Homily on the Theophany*, XII)

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 Mt. Tabor, there rose up the Western rationalist Barlaam. Taking advantage 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 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?" (*Defense of the Holy Hesychasts*, Triad II, 3:21-22.) 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 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 heaven 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 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 timescale 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.