

THE SIX DAWNS

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THE SIX DAWNS

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PREFACE

Very carefully clear your minds of all Western conceptions, whether they are theological, philosophical, or scientific. You must forget what is taught [about creation] in your public schools and also your reaction to this teaching. All of it is conditioned by human reason and speculation and has as a background a Roman Catholic rationalistic mentality which was also inherited by Protestants. It has infected many "Orthodox" minds as well. The first chapter of *Genesis* is the narrative about a sequence of events that took place through the word and acts of God. God spoke and creatures came into being. How? It is a mystery. In any case, creation did not come into being instantly, but followed a sequence of manifestations, a development over six different "days." What shall we call this progress of creation in time, if not evolution?

St. Gregory of Nyssa is very clear on this: "Man was made last, after the plants and animals, because nature follows a path that gradually leads to perfection... Thus, nature - I mean the various properties of life -- makes an ascent as if by steps, from the smallest forms to perfection... The Lawgiver sees a necessary sequence of order for the last to be perfect."

Even if evolutionists today are atheists and they believe in blind and accidental evolution without God's will and action, we should not reject evolution itself. Evolution was taught thousands of years ago by *Genesis* and explained by the holy Fathers centuries before Darwin. God created the universe in time and with a path from the simplest to the more complex, finishing with His perfect creature: man--perfect because of His image in man, as we shall see, and not because of man's material nature.

Study the first chapter of *Genesis* carefully, and you will see that creation is described there exactly as modern science describes it. The only difference is that the Bible uses fewer words. But be careful, you must not confuse pure science with the various philosophical theories that try to explain the facts discovered by science. Facts are one thing (pure science) and the explanation of facts (philosophy) is another. Evolution is a fact that no one can contest by searching in the Holy Scriptures and the holy Fathers, or in that "book" which is called the Earth. You must not confuse evolution (fact) with evolutionary theories. These are human conceptions--not always atheistic but always human and rationalistic--whose purpose is to explain how evolution took place. There are many theories of evolution. The theory of Darwin is one, the theory of Lamarck is another, the theory of DeVries is another.

Do not be occupied with these theories. Let men try to explain the mystery of creation with their poor but presumptuous minds. We know we cannot enter into these mysteries. At every such attempt we hear the Lord asking us, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" But even if we are not able to explain them, we must stand

before the facts with reverence, because facts are truth. And if we must reject rationalistic philosophy, scientific or not, we must not reject pure science, because the Bible says it was given by God to man: "He hath given men science that He may be honored in His wondrous works." (*Sirach* 38:6)

But to us, much more important than science is the Bible itself, and it teaches that God created in an evolutionary manner. *Genesis* and science teach the same thing. But Western Christianity was so scandalized by the discoveries of science and corrupted by philosophical rationalistic ideas about creation, it rejected evolution, giving it over to the hands of atheists as a perfect weapon against Christian faith. And to be sure, many lost faith because of evolution. Both "Christians" and atheists were teaching that if evolution was a fact, the Holy Scripture, and with it the Christian faith, was wrong. But those ["Christians"] who studied in schools of science, or even in regular schools, clearly saw that evolution was a fact.

The Western [religious] mind may be for or against evolution, but it remains always rationalistic. Clear your thought of all that; throw away every preconceived notion. Make your mind clear as a blank sheet of paper and start to study *Genesis* and the holy Fathers.

Alexandre Kalomiros
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(The text above is from a thesis/letter in English by the author, written at the request of an Orthodox Christian monastic community in the U.S.)

PART I. THE WORLD

I. Genesis

The first book of the Old Testament, *Genesis*, is divided into two units that are very unequal in size. The first unit is the history of creation. The second unit is the history of the Patriarchs.

Because the first unit narrates what took place in the six days of creation, it is called the *hexaemeron* (Gr. *six days*). It goes from the beginning of the book to Verse 3 of Chapter Two. It describes concisely, though with absolute accuracy, the six stages of creation's development in time. The mystical meaning of the six days is completed in the seventh day, which seals the *hexaemeron*.

It is impossible for us to understand the Holy Scripture correctly if we are not fully aware that the *hexaemeron's* text is different from the rest of the book of *Genesis*.

The Augustinian theology of Western Christianity could not accept the idea of change or evolution of any kind, in any species, because it would mean that the eternal archetypes of the species in the mind of God, of necessity, were also subject to change and, therefore, not eternal. The pagan philosophical idea of eternal archetypes is one of the heretical presuppositions in Augustinian theology. Another closely related heretical presupposition of Augustine is the teaching that the uncreated energies of God--His creativity, prescience, providence, and will, for example -- are the uncreated divine essence itself. For Augustine, and (or the pagan philosophers, God is *actus purus*, or pure energy. So evolution of the species not only meant changeability in the archetypes that are eternally part of God's uncreated energy/essence, but it also meant changeability in the divine essence. And if change takes place in God, He is not eternal and changeless by nature. Indeed, then, He is not God. For the West, therefore, evolution was tantamount to proof of the nonexistence of God, that is, God as He had been imagined by the West. Thus, Western Christianity, in its classic tenets, was bound to a kind of philosophical or, one might even say, ontological fixity of the species. (GSG)

Starting with Verse 4 of Chapter Two, *Genesis* narrates another story, a different story from the one of creation. After a brief reference to creation in Verses 4 and 5, a hint in Verse 6 about the Holy Spirit as the fountain of life watering the face of the earth, and a concise ontological description of man, the narrative about Paradise begins.

The setting of Paradise is clearly defined. "God planted Paradise toward the East in Eden..." (2:8-14) And the man whom God placed in Paradise "to cultivate it and to keep it" (2:15) now has a name and is called Adam. "And the Lord God took the man He had formed and put him in the garden of delight to cultivate it and keep it..." (2: 15-16)

The second unit of the book of *Genesis*, then, begins a narrative about a specific blessed and holy place and about a man and a woman who have names. In the *hexaemeron's* narrative, on the other hand, *Genesis* speaks about the creation of the universe, of the earth, of the plants, of the animals, and of men. There is no mention in it of Adam and Eve. The *hexaemeron* narrates a more general history. After the *hexaemeron*, however, a more specific history begins--the history of people who knew God and spoke with Him – the history of Israel. Paradise is a prefiguring of the Kingdom of God, and Adam is the first Patriarch of Israel, which is the nation that knows God.

If we are not keenly mindful of the differences in purpose of the two narratives and we regard one as the continuation of the other, we shall fall into confusion. The *hexaemeron's* narrative is the more general framework for *Genesis's* second narrative, the specific account of humanity's acquaintance with God.

The book is called *Genesis* because it is not only a narrative of creation, but because it is a narrative mainly of the genesis [i.e. beginning] of the Church of Christ – the genesis of the Kingdom of God in time, which starts with Paradise, Adam, and Eve.

2. The genesis of the Church

A common but basic error made by Christians today is to think that the Church of Christ was non-existent before Christ. Since grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (*Jn.* 1:17), they say the Church therefore was non-existent before Him.

Nevertheless, it is a foundation of our faith that we have known God only because His Son and Word became flesh. There was never any other possibility of acquaintance with God. In the Old as well as the New Testament, people knew the same Divine Person – God the Word Incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The mystical reality of the presence of the Risen Christ throughout history was always the common consciousness of the Church. We Christians today have forgotten it, even though the Church's hymnology and the writings of the Fathers constantly remind us of it. Simple texts have become incomprehensible in our generation. An example is the much-loved hymn by Kassiani the Nun: "I shall kiss Thine immaculate feet," says "the woman fallen into many sins," the feet "whose steps resounded in Eve's ears in Paradise at sunset, when she hid in fear." (*Great Wednesday rnatins*) What could be more natural for the Christians who came before us to understand? With her hair the sinful woman wipes Christ's feet and wets them with her tears – the same feet Eve heard walking in Paradise after her disobedience, and she hid in fear.

God in the Old Testament, with Whom Adam and the Patriarchs and Prophets of Israel spoke, is none other than the Son of the Virgin, Who "dwelt among us" (*Jn.* 1:14) and Whom "we have heard, Whom we have seen with our eyes, Whom our hands have touched" (1 *Jn.* 1: 1). The appearances of the Incarnate Word of God to the righteous of the Old Testament are of the same nature as that of Christ's appearances to His disciples after His resurrection. The encounters of the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Myrrh Bearers with the Risen Christ are the mystical communication of corruptible

human nature with the incorruptible, with the human nature that the Son of God took on Himself and made incorruptible. They are encounters with the Divine Person of the Word in His human nature, because it is impossible for man to approach the divine nature of the Word. They are encounters with Christ's *resurrected* nature, the one that became eternal, the one with which He emerged from the tomb and ascended to the heavens, and not the temporal one with which He walked among us. Ultimately, it is communion with the Divine Energy that illuminates, guides, and sanctifies.

How it was possible for people who lived prior to His Incarnation and Resurrection in history to see Him and speak with Him, of course, is something incomprehensible to us humans. We creatures are bound to the current of time and have great difficulty understanding that our Maker and God does not live in time and is not governed by it. Time is a dimension of creation. But God is the Maker and Creator of creation and therefore of time. The laws and dimensions of creation bind and govern us creatures, but not our Maker and Creator. God is free and independent of His creation.

But the kind of time that belongs to our resurrected nature has its own laws and its own makeup, as does the whole of resurrected nature; so also the nature of angels has its own makeup and time. For us who live in a state of corruptibility it is not possible to comprehend incorruptible and resurrected nature's time. We shall taste of it only after the resurrection of the dead, when time as we know it now "shall no longer be."

Therefore, it should not seem so strange that *Genesis* narrates the genesis of the Church. The people of the Old as well as of the New Testament were the people of God. The Holy Spirit illuminated them all and moved them. It is, what made their souls the souls of faithful people who had knowledge of God and communion with Him. The people of the O.T. awaited the first coming of Christ, and the people of the N.T. await His Second Coming. And the people of both the O.T. and the N.T. await the same eternal Kingdom and have a partial foretaste of it. The people of the N. T., of course, with greater experiential knowledge, wait for Him to come again in glory in His Second Coming and to "make all things new." All of us who are of Jesus Christ are the mystical Body of Christ. All, both of the O.T. and the N.T., "who are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham" (Gal. 3:9). All of us are the seed of Abraham, "which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16).

St. Callistus the Patriarch says, "I see miraculously fulfilled what was once promised of old to Abraham by the *Incarnate* Word manifestly saying, 'I shall multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand at the edge of the sea'...The seed of Abraham which is thus multiplied is the Lord Jesus Christ, Who alone is the super fulfillment, having the power and unity of the Divinity ...and the race of Abraham, being directly descended from him." (*Philokalia*, Vol. 4, p. 322)

3. The hexaemeron

The purpose of this small work is not to deal with the whole book of *Genesis*, or to count the stars in the mystic firmament of the Holy Scripture. Our attention shall be centered on the *hexaemeron* only – the history of creation – with but one aim: to help dissolve the misconceptions regarding its critical points that have accumulated through ignorance. It is our basic obligation to the truth to admit that, when we read those few but sweeping lines of the first page of the Holy Scripture, what we see and understand is anything but clear, and our predetermined impressions and popular preconceptions do anything but help us.

We Orthodox Christians know the Holy Scripture is part of the written Tradition of the Church. Therefore, we can study and examine Tradition only within the Tradition of the

Church, according to the commandment we have from the Lord, so we can understand it correctly. Only the Church is without error, and only within the Church shall we see light. And the mouths of the Church are her holy Fathers in the homophony of their teaching.

With only these presuppositions we begin the difficult journey in the Paradise of the Holy Scripture. The journey is dangerous because lying in waiting is the serpent who advises us to lean on human knowledge, promising us, "Your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods." (*Gen. 3:5*) But we know we are truly called by our Creator to become "gods and the sons of the Most High." It is not something we can have by our own power and initiative, however, for it is a gift of the Incarnate God. This is why we do not depend on our own devices and on human wisdom, but have recourse in all that the holy people of God taught, who are the abodes of the Holy Spirit and the genuine servants of Christ.

No opposition to human science is intended here, for that is a gift of God. "He hath given men science that He may be honored in His wondrous works." (*Sir. 38:6*) Rather, the antithesis is to human wisdom, the prideful confidence in the human mind. Science is the knowledge of things as much as is possible to man, Human wisdom, however, is self-conceited confidence. It makes us certain that we have comprehended and explained facts and things, a confidence that every so often is proved false, yet arrogant man does not come to his senses.

The experiences and knowledge that have accrued from the study of creation in recent centuries cannot of themselves enlighten man so he can see correctly. Knowledge requires an interpreter. And it is why every man faces a dilemma: which interpreter to choose – human or godly wisdom?

Let us choose godly wisdom that never disheartens man. Anyone who studies and correctly understands the *hexaemeron* with the aid of the Holy Scripture and the holy Fathers will see that all the mysteries of creation are illuminated in a singular manner, and science's knowledge receives the only interpretation possible. The Lord has extended His hand to us poor, weak men. Let us also stretch forth our hand and firmly grasp His. The result will be to experience light.

4. The "seed" of the universe

According to the teaching of Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nyssa, the Fathers of the Church who wrote the most about the creation of the world and of man, the universe originated from a "seed." The stars, the plants, the animals, people – we are all shoots that sprouted from the same initial seed. The first minuscule matter and energy contained the divine foundations of all things.

Just as every property of a tree is contained in its seed, even when the tree does not exist, likewise every property of the universe was in that initial seed when the universe did not exist. And as the seed of a tree first sends up a small shoot that grows and branches, spreads out and becomes taller, so did the "seed" of the universe. We creatures each developed and appeared in our turn, as did the tree's trunk, branches, leaves, and fruit. "All things, even before each of them existed, were in God's first impulse of creation as if it were the energy of some kind of seminal force that established the beginning of all things." (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, P.G. 44, 77D) Therefore, since all material creatures originate from the same singular "seed" that the power of God made, we have a natural kinship between us.

God willed to create the world by means of seeds. It is apparent in plants and animals, which all come from seeds that contain in them all the properties of the whole

plant or animal, even if it has not yet developed. From seed every living thing develops little by little and progressively. In the same way, the universe and everything in it developed and spread forth from an initial divine foundation that contained within it the seeds of everything that was created in the course of time.

This is God's method, and it is universal. "The sower went forth to sow his seeds." All the other seeds, of plants, of animals, of people, are types of the initial seed of the universe. The creative and cohesive energy of God willed to put the progeny of the universe and of every creature in that first beginning. "In the beginning..." (Gen. 1:1) The heaven and the earth and all that the earth has given forth were potentially in that initial seed which, "in due season," gave forth all things that have come into existence.

The first beginning "had pangs of birth and was ready to give birth to all things because of the force implanted in it by the Creator. Yet, by divine command, it awaited the assigned times to bring forth to visibility all that it carried within." (Basil the Great, *On the Hexaemeron*, Homily II, 3).

St. Gregory adds, "The foundation of all things that was laid at once by the unutterable power of God was, as Moses called it, 'the beginning,' that is, the summation, in which all things are contained... In an instant, God laid down the beginnings and causes and forces for all things collectively. And in the first impulse of His will, He brought together the essence of all things: heaven, ether, stars, fire, air, sea, land, animals, plants..." (P.G. 44, 72A, B)

All things, therefore, originate from a single beginning, from one "seed" into which God placed the fertile power that generated them when their time had come. All things have a kinship between them since they have a common descent from that seed in the beginning. They are shoots, branches, leaves, and fruit of the same tree. "Thus, the sequence in nature, which was received in the beginning from the first command, in turn brings all things into being through the process of time until it arrives at the consummation of all things." (Basil the Great, *Hex.*, Hom. V, 10)

In nature there is a single, unique sequence since its roots and its origin are in the first command of God, which was inclusive of all things. "As in wheat or any other seed, the complete form of the plant is contained...the seminal force is shown by a certain natural order," says St. Gregory of Nyssa (P.G. 44, 229C-237C). And so it was in the beginning: contained in the "seed" of the universe was the potentiality of the entire universe that appeared and developed gradually with the passage of time, just as a tree takes its final shape little by little. "Thus, nature--I mean the various properties of life," says St. Gregory, "makes an ascent as if by steps, from the smallest forms to perfection." (P.G. 44, 148C)

Created nature is a changeable thing; only the divine nature is changeless and stable. "Therefore, such is the nature of all that was made, always growing or waning, having no visible, permanent stability," says Basil the Great. (*Hex.*, Hom. I, 5) St. Gregory says, "It is impossible for created nature to exist without change." (P.G. 44, 184C) Launched with the infinitesimal and all-inclusive primordial "seed" of the universe by God's command, the creation of nature thus developed slowly and advanced "from the smallest forms to perfection" and appeared, as if by steps, ascending the ladder from lower creatures to higher creatures and revealing the "seminal force" with order.

And since creation was a progressive development of the already existing seminal world, it followed an ascent from the imperfect to the perfect. "Man was made last, after the plants and animals," says St. Gregory, "because nature follows a path that gradually leads to perfection." (P.G. 44, 145) He adds, "Man was made last, after every living thing, the Scripture says... The Lawgiver sees a necessary sequence of order for the last to be perfect." (P.G. 44, 148B)

5. Time

When St. Gregory says, "All things were in God's first impulse of creation," naturally, among "all things" he also includes time, in which all things move and develop. For time is nothing but a dimension of the universe, an interconnection between the motion of each of its elements. Time, mass, and space are dimensions of the universe. We who are part of the universe have these dimensions as the interconnection of our being. But God, the Creator of time, mass, and space, has no natural relation to these and is outside of them. Between God and His creatures lies an ontological abyss, an absolute differentiation. Nothing in creation can be compared with God, because God is the absolute Other.

Because time is a dimension of the universe, it began simultaneous to it. Time and the universe are interconnected and interdependent meanings and realities. As St. Basil says, "Being therefore of one nature with the world, the animals, and the plants, the current of time was created, a flow that continuously hastens to run with the world and stops nowhere...Approximately such is the nature of all that was created, always growing or waning, having no visible permanent stability...He created 'in the beginning,' that is, in the beginning of time, because when it says everything was made 'in the beginning,' of course it does not mean that time is of prior origin than the rest of creation." (*Hex.*, Hom. I, 5)

Time, in whose duration all things grew, is a component of the universe itself. St. Basil says, "Time is a dimension that is coextensive with the composition of the world." (P.G. 29, 560B) There is no universe without time, or time without a universe. God did not need time in order to create. Creation needed it because time is part of creation, its fourth dimension. Time means motion and development. For God, yesterday, today, and tomorrow are equally present since He is not ruled by time as we are.

God, then, did not need the time of six "days" to complete His creation. Creation needed it since time is its dimension, its unfolding, its development. The initial seed contained time within it just as it included even the whole universe. The universe and time unfolded and developed together from that primordial "seed" that God created outside of time.

"It was not difficult for His omnipotent hand and His infinite wisdom to create all things in *one* day," says St. John Chrysostom, "but what am I saying--in *one* day? Even in an *instant*.' He worked in that manner, however, because it was not for His need that He created, for He needs nothing, but He brought all things into being because of His love for man and His kindness. This is why He creates little by little, and He gives us a clear teaching about these events with the tongue of the blessed Prophet (Moses). Thus, having learned accurately, we will not have the mentality of those who think with human reasoning." (*3rd Homily on Genesis*, P.G. 53, 35)

What, then, is one "day" of the *hexaemeron*? "One day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day." (2 *Pe.* 3:8) "Therefore, if you say a day or an aeon, you express the same meaning." (Basil the Great, *Hex.*, Hom. II, 8)

6. "In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth"

"In the beginning" God made all of creation. The heaven and the earth are all things, every material element. And all things, heaven and earth, have a beginning. Creation has a beginning. It is not beginningless like God. It came into existence from non-existence, and its existence is entirely dependent on God. It is not self-existent. It exists

only because God wants it to exist. Only God is self-existent. Only He is self existence. He told Moses, "I am that I am," or "I am the Existing One (Ο Ων)," that is, He is Self Existence, the Fountain of Existence, Existence itself. He freely sustains all things in existence, not out of any necessity, but out of His boundless love.

"In the beginning God made the heaven." What does "heaven" mean? In no way does it mean the angels and what we call heavenly noetic beings and heavenly intelligences. When *Genesis* speaks of heaven it means the material universe: stars, galaxies, nebulae, every kind of matter in space. In his *2nd Homily on Genesis*, St. John Chrysostom says, "In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth...The Scripture says nothing about the invisible powers. It does not say, 'In the beginning God made the angels or the archangels.' And there was a reason. It was speaking to the Hebrews, who were very preoccupied with temporal matters and were unable to imagine any kind of noetic thing. It guides them from things perceptible to the senses, to the Creator of all things. And, therefore, learning about the Builder of the universe from created things, they could worship the Creator, instead of worshiping things that were made."

Confirming the same thing, St. Basil says, "As it appears, there did exist something even before this world, something that our mind can contemplate, but it was left undescribed because it is inappropriate knowledge for those who are now just beginning to learn and, in knowledge, are as yet infants." (*Hex.*, Hom. I, 5) Thus, the creation of noetic beings, the creation of the angels, was left unmentioned.

One of the common misinterpretations made by people who study *Genesis* is the notion that the sun, the moon, and the stars were not created in the beginning but on the fourth "day" of creation, when these heavenly bodies became visible from the surface of the earth. We shall return to this point later, but for the present let us remain with the basic fact that "heaven" in *Genesis* refers to the material universe: the sun and moon and stars that were all created on the first "day" of creation.

"By the two extremes (of heaven and earth) Moses alludes to the existence of everything," says Basil the Great, "assigning a prior beginning to the heaven and saying that the earth is second in existence. Nevertheless, whatever exists between the two extremes was likewise made with them. Even though he says nothing about the elements of fire, water, and air, use your intelligence, and you will understand, first of all, that all [elements] are mixed with all others and that, along with the earth, you will also find water and air and fire." (*Hex.*, Hom. I, 7)

All things already existed from the first day of creation. "God created the heaven and the earth, not each one by halves, but the entire heaven and the whole earth, including the substance itself with form. He is not merely the inventor of the shapes, but the Creator of the very nature of all that exists...The Scriptural narrative is silent and exercises our mind to work, giving it a few things in order to be able to deduce from them the remainder." (Basil the Great, *Hex.*, Hom. II, 3)

Therefore, the sun, the stars, and the moon already existed from the first "day," even though they were not visible. That is to say, they were not visible from the earth.

7. "... and the earth"

"God created the heaven and the earth." (1:1) What is the reason for this emphasis on the earth?

God's perspective is not at all like that of astronomy. By astronomy's standards, this planet is small and indeed one of the smallest of heavenly bodies. But in actuality, it is the most important heavenly body, equal to the whole universe in importance. The reason for this, however, is not because the earth is where man lives, but because the

earth is where the Lord Jesus Christ was born. It is the land of the God-Man, the spot in the universe where the eternal will of God was fulfilled and the hypostatic union of God with His creation took place.

Even if we were to suppose that other inhabited planets exist in the universe, their life would be nothing in comparison to life on earth. Man, the ruler of the earth, is also ruler of the universe because he was made in the image of the Son of Man--the man par excellence--Jesus Christ, in whose face we see God Himself because Jesus is His Son and Word. Any other life, on this or any other planet, even if it were biologically equal to ours, would not in the least approach the ontological and spiritual worth of but one creature in the universe: man. For it is this creature who is made in the image of God, that is, according to the prototype of Jesus Christ, Who rose from the dead and ascended to the heavens and is seated on the throne of God.

For this reason, *Genesis*, having mentioned the heaven once, gives no further information about the universe and describes only what took place on earth. In other words, it describes whatever an observer could have seen from the earth's surface, whatever Moses probably saw in a vision and wrote about it.

8. The water

It is clear from the second verse of *Genesis* (1:2) that the earth was covered by a dense layer of water vapor. It was dense enough to block every ray of the sun from passing through, so that complete darkness reigned on the surface of the earth. The water that had been in vaporous form because of the heat of the earth's crust began to cool slowly and change to liquid. It covered the whole earth like an enormous ocean. The change from vapor to liquid caused the clouds that covered the earth to disperse, and the diffused rays of the sun were able to pass through to illuminate the surface of the earth. This is exactly what *Genesis* relates with the words, "And God said, let there be light, and there was light." (1:3) And later the vaporized water parted altogether from the water of the ocean, and a space was made between the two that *Genesis* calls the "firmament" (1:6-8). This is the sky between the earth and the clouds. Much later, on the fourth day of creation, the vapors diminished further, the clouds began to break up and scatter the way we see them today, and the heaven cleared and opened. Upon the heaven clearing up, the sun and moon and stars appeared at the same time before the face of the earth, and from this point everything that existed on the surface of the earth was illuminated by direct and not only diffused rays of the sun.

To help us better understand what happened, Basil the Great gives us a precise picture: " 'But the earth was not visible and unfinished (1:2),' Moses says. 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, generally what was the lack of preparation of the earth? And for what reason was it not visible? ...Since nothing of what was to sprout and grow existed yet, it was reasonable for the narrative to call it incomplete...It said the earth was not visible for two reasons: because either man was not in existence to see it, or it was under the water that covered it and it was impossible to be seen. The waters had not yet been gathered into their places that God made later and called 'seas.' What, then, is 'not visible?' First, something that bodily eyes naturally cannot see, such as our thought. It is also something that is naturally not visible but covered by something else, such as iron in the depth [of the earth]. I think it is with this meaning exactly that the earth is called invisible, since it was covered by water. And later, of course, since light may not have been made yet, it is not at all strange that the

Scripture also calls it invisible because it was still in darkness and the air over it had not yet been illuminated...

"Therefore, since it does not say that God created the water but that 'the earth was not visible,' think for yourself by what it was covered that it was not plainly seen. Certainly fire was able to cover it, but fire gives light and can be seen through, allowing whatever it covers to be seen, rather than darkening it. And neither was the air opaque at that time. And air by nature is thin and transparent, admitting all forms of visible objects and displaying them for the eyes of observers. So what remains is for us to understand that water abounded on the surface of the earth because the liquid had not yet settled to its appointed place. And for this reason the earth was not only invisible, but unfinished as well, because when an abundance of water covers it, even now, the earth is prevented from bearing fruit. Therefore, the same cause made the earth both invisible and unfinished." (Hom. II, 1, 3)

And what is the meaning of the words "And darkness was on the face of the deep" (1:2)? The Saint continues, "Here again are more occasions for myths and sources of impious fabrications by men who twist the sayings [of Scripture] to agree with their own conceptions. They do not explain the darkness to be what it really is: air that does not receive light, or a place that is shaded or, in any case, bereft of light for any reason. They explain it as an evil power, or rather as self-existent evil itself that is adversarial and hostile to God... Why, O man, do you flee far from the truth, with intentions that will occasion your destruction? The expression is simple and understood by everyone. It says the earth was not visible. What was the reason? Because it was covered by the 'deep.' And what is the meaning of the 'deep?' A great deal of water of unfathomable depth..." (Hom. 1I, 4)

"When the heaven was made by God's command, in a moment it extended to fill its region, and it enclosed all that was in it as a continuous mass capable of dividing what was contained within from what was outside of it, thus making the space it enclosed unlighted by cutting off external light. Three things together are necessary for a shadow to exist: the light, a mass, and an unlighted place. Therefore, the darkness that covered the earth was due to the shadow of the heavenly mass [of vapor]. Try to understand me through this clear example: At midday you set up a tent of thick, impenetrable material and you shut yourself up in this improvised darkness. This is how you should imagine that darkness...At that time the water covered everything. This is why the darkness necessarily was said to be over the deep." (Hom. II, 5)

It is clear from the preceding texts that on the first day of creation the heaven was completed, including the sun, the moon, and all the stars. But they were not visible; neither was their light able to reach the surface of the earth due to the layer of water vapor that covered the earth. Later, when the vapors dispersed, the diffused light of the sun was able to reach the surface of the earth and illuminate it, much as it does on cloudy days. The vapors thinned out as the water cooled and passed from a gaseous to a liquid state. In this way the earth was hidden by a vast ocean that covered it completely. Dense clouds remained suspended in the atmosphere. Between these clouds and the ocean there was clear space, which the Scripture calls the "firmament" (1:6-8). Finally, much later, on the fourth day of creation, the clouds dispersed and broke up and separated as we see them today, permitting the clear sky to appear, and the sun, the moon, and the stars with it. (St. John Chrysostom explains these things in exactly the same way in his *Third Homily on Genesis*.)

9. The Spirit of God

Another very important point where we ought to stop is the meaning of the passage "And the Spirit of God was stirring, above the water." (1:2) These words are of primary significance and are a key to understanding the beginning of life on the earth. And again, Basil the Great shows us their meaning:

"The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God because this name is given to It alone by the Holy Scripture. There is no other Spirit of God named, but the Holy Spirit, Who completes the Divine and Blessed Trinity. How, then, was It stirring above the waters? I will tell you an explanation that is not my own, but that of a Syrian who was as distant from worldly wisdom as he was near the knowledge of truth. He used to say that the [Syriac] language of the Syrians is more expressive and more closely approaches the meaning of the Scripture because it is related to Hebrew. The meaning of the phrase is this: The words 'stirring above,' they say, are in place of 'warming with fostering care,' that is, the Spirit was imbuing the nature of the waters with life, in the image of a bird brooding on its eggs and injecting them with some vital power as they are being warmed. He says, then, that in [his] language, the Spirit was 'stirring' means It was preparing the nature of the waters to bring forth life. And for the few people who inquire about it, this ."'s an effective reply to show that the Holy Spirit is not lacking in the creative energy." (Hom. II, 6)

On this point, St. John Chrysostom is clearer yet. He says, "The Spirit of God was stirring above the water. What is meant by this? It seems to me it means that a fertile power was in the waters, and it was not merely inert and static, but active and prolific. Because anything that is inert is perfectly useless, but anything that is active and mobile is useful for many things. Therefore, to teach us that the water, which was of such enormous dimensions, had within it a fertile power, the Scripture says, 'The Spirit of God was stirring above the water.' And this was not said in the Holy Scripture without a purpose, but because, further down, it narrates how all living things, by command of the Creator, originated from the waters." (*Third Homily on Genesis*)

We see that the Fathers of the Church knew and taught that life on earth began to develop on the first "day" of *Genesis*, in the dark waters that covered the whole earth and which the Holy Spirit kneaded so they could become the womb of life. And this, in fact, was not an instantaneous action but something that progressed with time, in other word.": a continuous causal activity of the Holy Spirit. This is made clear by the continuous duration of the tense of the verb in "was stirring over" (επεφέρετο, in the Septuagint O.T.). The Holy Spirit was stirring above the waters continuously, and not just once, like the bird continuously sitting on its eggs, imparting slow and steady development to the embryos in them. This shows the continuous effect of the activity of God in the development of creation within time. God acts in all of creation's dimensions, and time is one of those dimensions. The Holy Spirit acts upon the immense and dark ocean and creates life in it.

10. One day (the first day)

"And there was evening, and there was morning: one day." (1:5) To understand *Genesis* properly, we need to pause at another stumbling block – the meaning of the word "day."

Why does the Septuagint O.T. not call the first day of creation "first," but "one," "one day?" Because the first day is an image and a prefiguring of that Sabbath which is the preeminent "one of all Sabbaths, the queen and mistress" of all Sabbaths. It is an image and prefiguring of the day of the Resurrection, which is the beginning of the "eighth

day," the incorrupt, eternal, and unending day. Therefore, *Genesis* names the first day "one day," because it is an image of eternity.

Basil the Great asks, "Why did Moses say 'one' and not 'first'? For someone who was about to speak of the 'second' and 'third' and 'fourth' day, would it not have been more consistent to call the day that preceded the others the 'first' day? Nevertheless, he called it 'one'...He named the summation of time not 'first,' but 'one,' so that by its name it may make clear its relation to the unending age...the great and pre-eminent day of the Lord...the day without evening and without succession, which the Psalmist has also named the 'eighth day' because it is outside of our seven-day cycle of time. Thus, if you say a day or an aeon, you express the same meaning." (*Hex.*, Hom. II, 8) Therefore, if the first day is an image of eternity, we can see that in *Genesis* the word "day" does not have the usual everyday meaning, but a mystical one.

Similarly, as we shall see later (Part II, Ch. 23), there is a mystical meaning of the seventh day, too, on which the Lord rested from all His works. The mystical meaning of the "days" of *Genesis*, of course, is not related to our measurement of time or to the day-night and 24-hour cycle that is used here only as an image and type of other deeper and mystical things. The meanings in the Holy Scripture do not have human shallowness, but indicate things that man can begin to understand only with the light of the divine mysteries, i.e., the events of the New Testament, and in the reality that is grace. "My ways are not like your ways," says the Lord.

11. Let the waters bring forth...

So we are looking at an astounding narration. The earth is covered with water vapor that is impenetrable by light. The vapor cools little by little and becomes liquid, forming a vast, dark ocean that covers everything. In time, a "firmament" separates the liquefied water of the ocean and the vaporized water of the clouds, and light falls on the vast ocean that covers the entire earth; it is a diffuse light like that of a cloudy day. And later God commands the water to be gathered into the system of seas, and the dry land to appear. And on the dry land, the herb of grass springs up and then the trees with hard wood because, even before the sun and the other heavenly bodies appear, diffuse light falls on the vegetation. Only later, when the clouds had further dispersed, the luminaries appeared in the heaven which light our paths and enable us to distinguish day and night, signs and seasons, and days and years.

Perhaps Moses is describing things which the grace of God, in a mystical manner, enabled him to see as they had happened, like some immense vision when he encountered the Lord Jesus Christ on Mount Sinai. *Genesis* does not give details about the various stages of life in the oceans. It says only that the Holy Spirit "was stirring above the water," and it gives us to understand that the "Giver of life" was imbuing the nature of the waters with life and filling the waters with reptiles, that is, with "creeping living things" (1:20). *Genesis* is not a manual of astronomy or zoology. It makes no mention at all of insects; it is as if they never existed. Neither does it speak at all of the outer universe. It makes only succinct references to the most essential things, using few words, but words of decisive meaning.

Only when life came up out of the sea onto dry land on the fifth day does the Scripture begin to give more details: "And God said, Let the waters bring forth creeping living things and winged creatures onto the earth that fly in the firmament of heaven." (1:20) The phrase "let the waters bring forth" is a clear command by God to the waters to bring out onto the land something which they already contained, that is, the reptiles.

The verb "bring forth" used by the Septuagint O.T. is ἐξάγω (exa'go): "to lead or bring something out." What, then, did the "waters bring forth...onto the earth?" Nothing more than they contained: fish. By the command of God, fish began to come out of the sea onto the land. They walked on their fins and tails, slowly going in and out of the water.

Thus, fish gave forth creeping amphibians on the fifth day of creation. But the command of God did not stop there. He said, "Let the waters bring forth creeping living things and winged creatures onto the earth that fly in the firmament of heaven." The fish gave forth not only reptiles, but also "winged creatures onto the earth that fly." According to the Holy Scripture, therefore, the first winged creatures, the first birds of the fifth day, were directly related to the reptiles brought forth by the waters. In other words, they were flying reptiles.

Fish, reptiles, birds – three animal species with great similarities in anatomical and zoological characteristics. And all three lack the ability to bear live offspring in their bodies. They lay eggs in which their offspring develop, outside their mother's body.

"And God made the great whales." (1:21) Which whales is *Genesis* speaking of here? It is not speaking of what we call whales today, of course. Whales are highly developed animals with the ability to bear their offspring in their bodies. Consequently, they are mammalian, animals of the sixth day. The Scripture is speaking here of other whales, of the enormous reptiles called dinosaurs.

The Holy Scripture here no longer presents the animals that walk on the earth on the sixth day as having any relation with the sea, but with the dry land: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind, quadrupeds and reptiles and wild beasts of the earth according to their kind." (1:24) "Let the earth bring forth..."

The reptiles and birds that appeared on dry land on the fifth day have as their origin the sea. The sea brought them forth; they came out from it. The "quadrupeds" and "wild beasts" and "reptiles" of the sixth day now have the land as their origin. In other words, they came from animals that no longer lived in the sea like those of the fifth day, but on the land.

The animals of the sixth day, the "quadrupeds" of Holy Scripture, are very similar among themselves, but very different from the animals of the fifth day. The animals of the fifth day develop their fetuses outside their own bodies. The animals of the sixth day develop their fetuses in their bodies. The fifth day is the period of the reptiles; the sixth day is the period of the mammals. The reptiles, of course (and among them are birds that were flying reptiles), continued to exist on the sixth day and to develop along with the mammals. But alongside the old reptiles that had four legs to move about with on the sixth day, there were also reptiles with no feet at all, that crept about without them: the snakes.

"And God made the wild beasts of the earth according to their kind, and cattle according to their kind, all the reptiles of the earth according to their kind, and God saw that they were good." (1:25) "Wild beasts...cattle...quadrupeds...reptiles of the earth," the animals of the sixth day. The Scripture names all mammals "quadrupeds," all carnivorous mammals "wild beasts," and all grazing mammals "cattle." It calls "reptiles of the earth" all land reptiles in contrast to the reptiles of the sea, that is, the reptiles that lived in the sea and came directly from sea animals, as were the reptiles of the fifth day.

12. The kinship of creatures

We see *Genesis* teaches that God appointed to creation a development in time, from the simple to the complex, from the incomplete to the more complete, from the lower to

the higher. The world was not created in an instant, but in six successive periods of perfection, with the most perfect creatures coming into existence on the last day. Life ascended in steps, from the lowest forms to the highest. This is the lesson of the *hexaemeron*: the development and kinship of creatures.

There is a close relationship and kinship among all things that were created. Creatures are not alien to one another; they are not disconnected from one another. They constitute branches of the same tree and shoots from the same primordial seed. Creation is not a mosaic of unrelated pieces that the Creator has patched together. It is an organic whole. Things are not independent of one another, but are connected by something that unites all created things with an unbreakable bond--a natural connection. The universal natural connection that joins all things among themselves without exception is the bond of physical birth; one created thing is born from another. It is difficult to emphasize this fact sufficiently. There are no gaps in the continuous chain of creatures that are born one from the other. On the tree of creation there are no branches that are independent and disconnected from one another as if they were suspended only in air. Life is not discontinuous. No plant or animal gives birth to itself. There is no automatic birth. God does not will for us live as autonomous and egoistic beings. There are no gaps between individuals and between species.

One of the basic errors in understanding the *hexaemeron* is the idea that the fixity of species emphasized by *Genesis* rules out a universal bond among all created things, and that the first individual of each species is detached and independent without any relation to other living beings. Those who support this delusion, in actuality, teach the ontological fragmentation of creation, and they reject the foundations of the Christian Faith.

It is a fundamental Christian teaching that in the human nature of Christ the whole of creation is recapitulated or summed up, not only all of humanity, not only the human nature, but the entire universe – the stars, the plants, the animals, anything that has existence. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," says St. Paul, in the earnest expectation of the redemption of the children of God, the redemption that was accomplished in the person of the risen Christ. This redemption is given for all of creation precisely because creation is a unique and unbroken whole. All of creation fell into corruptibility and death in the person of one man, the first Adam. The same creation in its entirety rose up to eternal life and incorruptibility in the person of the second Adam, Christ. The fall of the whole creation in the person of one man happened precisely because the entire tangible world is one unified nature. We are made from the dust of the stars. The stars, the earth, the mountains, and all living creatures are under corruptibility and death because one free and reasoning creature, man, cast them there. And for the same reason, all of them emerged from the condition of corruptibility and death into life and incorruptibility because one man, the God-Man Jesus Christ, brought them out of it by joining in His person the created and the uncreated and by imparting to the created the immortality of incorruptibility, the eternity and life of the uncreated.

The unity of human nature with the whole of creation is the reason as much for corruptibility as for salvation, incorruptibility, and eternity. Because in the person of Christ all of creation and not only humanity became joined to its Maker.

Before the appearance of man on earth, all living things, even the stars of the universe, were dying because of man, in a period when man did not yet exist. Mollusks and fish were dying in the oceans in the first days of creation, not only before man appeared on the sixth day, but much earlier than the appearance of the first reptiles on land on the fifth day. Why were they dying before the existence of man if not because they were connected with him ontologically? If man was not to come from them, why

were the fish in the oceans, the reptiles, and the birds of the fifth day eating one another because of the fall? Why would nature have to suffer from the beginning, to groan and travail, if not because of the free action of the last creature to appear on the earth, if not because all creatures were connected one with the other in an unbroken natural bond? And what natural bond exists in nature other than genealogy, the fact that we are born one from the other?

Man's revolt against God not only had consequences from the appearance of man and after it; it had the same consequences for everyone and everything that lived before it, long before it. It was because of the ontological unity in creation, which is not contingent upon the course of time. Of course, it was not because of some kind of revenge by God. The will of God was nothing but a prescription for life, and man's revolt against it brought corruptibility and death upon creation for the simple reason that it separated man from the source of life and immortality, which is God. It was man and not God who raised up a wall that separated him from his Creator. And it was this separation that brought corruptibility and death, since life and incorruptibility are God.

Therefore, the result of the transgression was ontological, not judicial. It struck the nature of creatures because it deprived nature of the life giving energy of grace. The nature of man is shared by all. And it is common not only to all men, but to all creatures, because we humans are made from dust, like all things in the universe. "And God made man dust of the earth." (2:7)

In the person of Christ, the spiritual nature of Divinity was united to the material nature of humanity. And through humanity in the person of Christ, Divinity came in contact with nature, with the entire creation: with animals, plants, and stars, on the one hand; and with angels and heavenly intelligences, on the other. But we know very little about the heavenly intelligences, and the dimensions in which they live are beyond us. Thus, it is wise for us to be silent and, at the same time, to know that the mystery of the salvation of the world applies directly to them as well.

God took on human and not angelic nature, because it contains elements of the entire creation – noetic and animalistic. The noetic nature of angels does not share the nature of animals, but the nature of men shares both. Thus, man has elements of the entire creation, and he is the representative par excellence of the nature of creation.

So, we and all of creation are a singular, organic whole – humans, angels, animals, plants, inert things, reasoning and unreasoning beings. And all receive the vivifying sap of the divine energy that keeps us in existence and nourishes us spiritually.

The grace and gift of God are transmitted to all creatures according to their purpose. Just as in some trees the energy of the sun and water become a sweet fruit and in others they are a bitter and deadly portion, it is the same in reasoning creatures. And just as some creatures are large trees that give an abundance of nourishing fruit while others are humble herbs, it is the same with all of God's creatures. All receive the grace and gift of God, and each responds according to its nature and purpose.

13. Variations in species

If we descend one from the other without a break or gap between us and the species have a fixity that we can observe and is also emphasized by the Holy Scripture, how, then, did we develop into so many varieties of plants and animals? How did the primordial seed of the universe sprout so many limbs and branches on this wondrous and imposing tree of life that we know and live in, and of which we constitute one division?

Every seed develops in approximately the same manner. While we can observe and know many of the mechanisms of this mystery of life, it is only with great difficulty that we are able to understand some of the others. And still others escape our understanding altogether. Life is the daily miracle we live in. We see it and we don't see it. We touch it, and just when we think we've grasped it, it slips between our fingers.

How are variations in species created when the fixity of species is a given? Hybridization is one mechanism that creates varieties. Alteration in genes is another very significant mechanism, and there are others. The combination of all of them in concert with time produced the varieties we know. Indeed, the providence of God is the regulator and coordinator of all that takes place. Nothing is by chance. God does not work like a sculptor. He has His own ways. Who can contend that, because we know the mechanism by which we were born from our mother, we were not really created by God?

The creation of each man, of each one of us, presents in sharp relief how all creatures were made. In our mother's womb we are a one-celled organism like the first organisms that swam in the dark ocean in the first days of creation. We develop into a fetus that even has rudimentary gill slits that are of no use to us. The fetus develops and is completed and born as an infant. The infant becomes a toddler, later a teenager, and finally an adult. "The first-made man," writes Athanasius the Great, "was made from the earth, as are all men. And the hand of God that created Adam then is the same hand again that, now and always, creates and forms all who are born after him." (P.G. 25, 438) And as Basil the Great writes, "Our amazement at the greatest phenomena is not lessened because it is discovered how one of those extraordinary things comes about." (*Hex.*, Hom. I, 10) Truly! When we became fully cognizant of the fact that the stars are not merely bright ornaments in a rotating dome, but huge suns, even larger than our own, amidst galaxies in an immense space, our amazement and awe before our Creator became incomparably greater because the grandeur of creation became clear. This is how it is always; it suffices for one to have a heart and an open mind and not to have lost his ability to be astonished. Before our eyes, creation takes new dimensions, always greater and always more amazing. And we not only marvel, but we also understand the Holy Scripture better.

A research scientist said if he were asked to provide a one-page summary of all the knowledge that exists today regarding the world and creation, he would not be able to find anything better than the first page of the Holy Scripture. It is true. But most people understand neither the Holy Scripture properly, nor the world.

PART II. MAN

1. Behold the man

The events in the New Testament are the key to understanding the Old Testament. We are not able to approach the mystery of man and creation by studying only the Old Testament. Without the New Testament we are incapable of penetrating the wondrous reality that is man.

Who is the *true man*? Who disclosed to creation and to history, to the angels and to men, the true man, man as God wished him to be? Who was the man of the eternal will of God, and where and how did we see him?

Peter, James, and John encountered the true man in all His glory on Mount Thabor and beheld Him "as each was able to." They saw Him in that mystery which surpasses

every dimension of time and place: the encounter of the whole Church, the Church before and after Christ, the Church of the living and the dead and of the Prophets and the Apostles, with the risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ, in the immanence of the Divine Energy and the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Thabor is not an episode of history, but an exodus from history and an entry into the eternity of the Kingdom of the Heavens. The Christ Whom the three Apostles and the two Prophets saw and spoke with is the Christ Who shall come in glory to judge the living and the dead in His Second Coming. He is the Christ of the eternal life and kingdom, of the New Jerusalem. He is the one Who shall extinguish the sun and become the incomparable Sun of all creation Himself.

The three Apostles saw the true man and bore witness of Him to us. They saw Him as no one else has seen Him either before or since, but as we shall all see Him on that great day when He shall come to judge the living and the dead. And His judgment which is just is none other than that Energy which intoxicated Peter with its sweetness and made him say those "foolish" things: "It is good for us to be here. And let us make here three tabernacles: one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." (*Mk.* 9:5; *Lk.* 9:33) It was a judgment day as it were because Peter and the others were intoxicated by love and wished to remain there forever. Those who do not have love, however, instead of Paradise which the Apostles tasted of, shall taste of damnation by their own predisposition, even though the same illuminating Energy is shed abundantly upon the righteous and the unrighteous. But for them it shall be damnation because they do not love Christ but hate Him. He is the true man. He is the man of the eternal will of God, the center of creation, the deified human nature, the deified creation that is joined without confusion to the divine nature in the person of the Son and Word of God.

He is the true man, the son of man, the son of the Virgin, the condemned man of human justice, the crucified one, the entombed one, but also the risen one who sits on the throne of Divinity. The true man is not corruptible but incorruptible.

"And God said, Let us make man according to our image." He Who sits on the throne of the Godhead is in the image of the persons of the Holy Trinity. He is one of those persons and has a nature that, because of its unconfused union in His person with the divine, has been deified. Christ is the image of the Father.

The reason we cannot understand the Old Testament without the New Testament is this. We believe our father, the father of humanity, is Adam, the first-made man. This is only partly correct. Adam is the ontological beginning of our corruptible nature. Our corruptible nature, however, is not our true nature. Humanity's true Adam, its true root, is not the first Adam but the second, the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him an understanding of man is not possible. He is the true man in whose image humanity was made. Without Him there is no understanding of creation, because He is the end and purpose of all things that were made.

From the first Adam we have our *old nature*, our biological existence; we have the "coats of skin" made for us by God to protect us from the consequences of the fall. As St. Gregory of Nyssa said, we have the "second creation by God," in other words, our natural properties that God's providence supplied so we may survive the destructive consequences of our departure from Him.

We receive our *true nature*, however, the incorruptible, glorious nature, from the Son of God and Son of Man, Jesus Christ, Who became flesh, arose from the dead, ascended, and sat as a man on the throne of God. He took to Himself our corruptible nature and rendered it incorruptible and eternal, lifting it up to the right hand of God in ineffable glory. He is the true man, the immortal, incorruptible and eternal man. It is only through our communion with the Body and Blood of this man that we who are made of

soil become "communicants of the divine nature" (2 *Pe.* 1:4) The communion of the Church's children with the Body and Blood of the Risen One is the only fulfillment of the "precious and greatest promises" of humanity's participation in eternal life, the life that our earthen nature lacks. He is the true father of humanity, because He did not give temporal but eternal life.

Adam fell asleep but bringeth forth death from his side. And Thou, falling asleep, O Word of God, pourest forth from Thy side life unto the world. With Thy side pierced as a pelican, O Word, Thou hast given life to Thy mortal children, sprinkling them with life giving springs.

(Lamentations of Great Friday, 2nd Stasis)

What was last to come in history was in reality the first. Everything was made because of It; everything that was made has the same Reality as its ultimate purpose.

It was God's eternal will to offer His life, the life of the Holy Trinity, to all the reason-endowed creatures He would bring into being, not out of some kind of necessity, but out of pure love. An unbridgeable gulf, however, separates created nature from the uncreated nature of Divinity. The difference between created and uncreated nature is so vast that even the most perfect of angelic creatures cannot overcome it. A creature is always alien to Divinity no matter how perfect it may be. But God already had His plan even before He created. He would bridge the chasm between God and His creatures Himself. The Son and Word of God would, in His person, in His hypostasis, unite the two unbridgeable and different natures, the created and the uncreated. And this way He would transfuse the life of the uncreated to the created nature.

2. God after God

Only in Christ can the events of creation be explained. Only the Incarnate Word gives meaning to man and to all of creation. The flesh made from soil that the Word took on arose and ascended to "the right hand of God" changed from corruptibility to incorruptibility. It entered into the life of the Holy Trinity, and made man "more honorable than the Cherubim and incomparably more glorious than the Seraphim." It is from this point that our history ought to begin when we are speaking of man, or of God's entire creation. It should not begin from the first Adam but from the second, and not from the first Eve but from the second.

But the second Adam, Christ, is *theanthropos* (God-Man). He is a *divine* person and, alongside His divine nature, He took on ours, the human nature, and deified it. The first *human* person, however, who became what God really intended man to be in his true nature is the Queen of the Heavens, before whom angels and men kneel, our real mother who bore us unto eternity. She is the outstretched hand of all creation, the hand that God took hold of and deified by grace, the hand through which our whole nature was deified since it is the common nature of all human persons. And from our human nature the gift of God is extended to all creatures: to noetic and to fleshy beings, to light and aerial angelic orders, as well as to heavy, stony and fiery stellar bodies, to each according to its nature and receptivity, because all creatures are connected by an indissoluble bond.

That is why the glory of the All-holy Mother of God is so great. She is the point of contact between the created and the uncreated, the point where Life, incorruptibility and immortality, enters into all of creation. For this reason the Church sings, in the words of a theotokion by St. Andrew of Crete:

Hail thou God after God, who hast honors second after the Trinity, and, receiving the fullness of the gifts of God, thou transporteth them to all, to angels and to men; thou bride of the Father, spotless mother of the Son, and holy and all-illuminated temple of the Spirit; all-pure one, the most purposeful and ultimate perfection of all creation, for whom the world was made. And in thy birthgiving, the eternal will of the Creator was fulfilled.

All angelic natures and the entire vastness of the universe are nourished by the life of the Mother of God who, for us creatures, is God after God, since it is through her that we receive the fullness of God's gifts. She is the only creature who receives the energy of the Holy Trinity directly, and it is she who conducts that energy to all, to angels and men. She and the Word of God are the two persons who embrace and fulfill the mystery of the eternal will of the Creator, the two persons, one created and one uncreated, who gave to all of creation the endless sea of divine gifts. The Word gave on behalf of Divinity, and she received on behalf of creation. She gave all that she had, the human nature, to her Son, and He gave all that He had, divine life, to His mother. O the depth of divine love!

The unconfused union of the divine and human natures that took place in the womb of Mary, the humble virgin, is the source of our true nature. Because the image of God, after which we humans are made, is not some abstract idea, but a living thing: our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the living image of the invisible God.

It is not possible for creatures to see God, to converse with Him, to taste of His Divine Life. But this is precisely what the purpose of the eternal will of God was. God's desire was for all creatures to participate in the inner life of the Holy Trinity. God gave us by His grace that which He has by His nature. He invited us to become gods, to become just like Him, not to acquire His nature, of course, but to become like Him in all that His nature has. He invited us to become gods, not in nature but by grace. He made us co-inheritors with His Only-begotten Son. It means He gave us everything that belongs to the Son of God. And the Son of God has everything His Father has.

How could this be so if it is not possible for creatures to see the divine nature? It is not possible for creatures to see God and to live; nevertheless, the love of God found a way. He came to us, not with His own nature but with ours. He shared in our life and invited us to share in His. We saw the face of the Word of God in human appearance, we conversed together in human language, we sat at the same table, we fell into His arms, we heard the beating of His heart, we shared His food. The eyes of God Who became a man gazed deep into our eyes, and we into His. That is how we became acquainted with God person to person. We came face to face with God without being burned by the fire of Divinity.

The Son of God became a man in order to come into personal contact with His creatures, to establish a bond of friendship with them, and to transmit the Divine Life to what He had made. Thus He opened the path for each of us to enter into and live the Divine Life of the persons of the Holy Trinity as an equal among equals by granting to our nature His incorruptibility and His immortality. Man sits next to God now, at His right hand. Our true nature is there and so is our true fatherland. The Queen of the Heavens, the Mother of God and of us all in eternity, is there.

This is the true glory of man: he became God after God and has honors second after the Holy Trinity. And this is what we are called to: through her to become like her, to sit on the throne of God, by grace to commune as equals with the persons of the Holy Trinity. Because this is what the infinite love of God has desired.

3. Firsthorn of all creation

In seeing Christ, we behold the face of God albeit in a human form. That human form makes Him approachable by us. One person, the Word of God, has two natures – human and divine, one visible to us and the other not visible. It would be impossible for us to live if we were to see the Divinity, but it is very easy for us to look upon a man like ourselves. That man, however, is the very Word of God. This is the humility of God that comes from His love for us.

It is He Whom Moses saw on Sinai. He is the man with Whom Jacob wrestled and asked for His blessing. And when he received it, Jacob said, "I have seen the face of God, and my life has been preserved." (Gen. 32:24-31) Before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, it was to Him and the two angels that Abraham extended hospitality and washed their feet, and "he served them and they ate." (Gen. 18) It is He Who spoke with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden: "And they heard the voice of the Lord walking in Paradise at sunset. And Adam and Eve his wife hid from the face of the Lord God." (Gen. 2:8)

The Incarnation of God was immanent and at hand in the entire history of creation. The Apostle Paul writes that it is Christ "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things are sustained." (Col. 1:15-17) All things were made by Him and for Him. And He exists before all things, and He sustains in existence all creatures, visible and invisible, angelic and earthly. All things came to be and were created by the Word of God in order to be united with Him, Christ the Incarnate Word, Who, in His person, united creation with Divinity. St. Athanasius says, "In the person of the Word of God, man beholds the image of God the Father, and according to that image was man himself made." (P.G. 25, 8)

"Firstborn of all creation" does not refer to a fleshless Word, but to the Word in the flesh, to Christ. It is this Incarnate Word Who precedes all creatures; He is "before all things" (Col. 1:17). For Divinity there is no "before," because God does not have His being in time. "Before" refers to creation, because creation exists in time. Therefore He Who is before all creatures, visible and invisible, is the man Christ, the eternal will of God and "firstborn of all creation."

The image of God, the image according to which man was made, is not the new-born Christ in the manger, or the one who hungered, or the man who thirsted and perspired and needed sleep, but the risen Christ, the incorruptible God-Man as He appeared in glory in His Kingdom when He took His disciples up to Thabor. The true grandeur of man does not exist in man as we see him and know him now, no matter how special he may be. The grandeur of man is in his *prototype* and in what we have all been invited to become in the new earth and the new heavens, in the New Jerusalem, in His eternal Kingdom.

4. Thou art dust

In his nature, man is soil of the earth; in other words, he is nothing. "And God made man dust of the earth." (Gen. 2:7) He made him soil. "Earth thou art, and to earth thou shalt return." The Church tells us to look in the graves, "for man is bare bones and food for worms, and stench." (*Service for the Dead*)

Man has nothing divine in his nature, regardless of all the pagan myths that try to make us believe man's soul has a divine nature. In his own nature, body and soul, man is dust of the earth. Only by the grace of God and the economy of the Incarnation of the

Word, man becomes what we have seen above. Man does not have self-existence. He is totally dependent upon God His Creator.

Divine grace, the creative energy of God, made us climb the steps that advanced us from soil of the earth to one-celled organisms in the water, to trilobites, to mollusks, to fish, to amphibians, to birds, to mammals, to humanoids, until we arrived at becoming man. And doesn't each of us pass through all of these stages of life? In the beginning of our existence aren't we a one-celled organism? Doesn't the human fetus pass through all the degrees of development that the animals once climbed? Doesn't the human fetus have rudimentary slits that in fish become gills for breathing in the water? Doesn't each of us grow to full development and completion little by little, passing from infancy to childhood, adolescence, and to maturity as a man or woman?

What are we in ourselves but "soil of the earth?" Why are we scandalized by the fact that we are animals that descend from other, lower animals, and that they came from the "soil of the earth?" We must have truly lost touch with Orthodox Christian teaching to be so scandalized by the truth that is thunderously shouted by Holy Scripture, the hymnology of the Church and her teachers and fathers? Our Orthodox Christian faith is a faith of humility. We Orthodox Christians know that according to our nature we are nothing, a zero that God brought into being from nonbeing. And rather than letting it fall into non-existence again from whence it came, He elevated it and made it the throne of God and more honorable than Cherubim and more glorious than the Seraphim. The glory we acquired is God's and not our own. We are Christians, we are not idolaters.

It was idolatry that made creation into a god. Ignorance about the Creator caused men to make a god of creation and to assign to it the properties of God. They thought creation was everlasting and beginningless, incorruptible and immortal. They explained the corruptibility and death they saw before them daily as localized phenomena in nature's cyclical changes that had no universal effect on it. They proclaimed the incorruptibility and immortality of matter, and the divinity of the universe's soul, of which each human soul is a part. Because they were ignorant of God they said man is God, and so is his soul in particular; it is the quintessential man. They gave to man's soul divine properties: beginningless existence and immortality. They said death is nothing but a change of bodies along the way of the soul's transmigrations. The soul, in the final analysis, is a personless fragment of the universal soul in an ocean of such emanations of souls. They are swept up in a stream that is ever flowing in an eternal and endless cycle.

Idolatry is a faith of pridefulness, a seed of Lucifer in the minds of people who do not know God. Idolatry can have many forms and variations of the basic teaching, but at its nucleus it always has creation as its god, that is, man as God, since he is the pinnacle of creation. We humans are by our nature gods since our soul is divine and immortal. Therefore what need do we have of God? What need do we have of the resurrection He gave us? "We shall hear you on this again," they said politely to the Apostle Paul when he preached on the resurrection of the dead to the deeply pagan city of Athens. "What are you telling us, Jew? The resurrection of the dead? What use is it to us? We are gods. We may change bodies, we may lose our memory, but our immortal soul enters into another body and our immortal existence is perpetuated. And if we are perfect, we remain in the Elysian fields as spirits liberated from the body's burdensome matter that we had been entangled in because of some carelessness. Why are you speaking to us about the resurrection of the dead? We can do without your Jewish teachings. Don't you understand you are in Greece, the land of the spirit, of knowledge and wisdom? Don't you realize you are speaking to intelligent and cultivated people?"

That is how idolaters speak and think. They believe in an immortal, that is, divine, soul and in incorruptible and eternal matter. They believe in the divinity of the Universe. Their gods are merely shapers of eternal, beginningless, uncreated matter.

But we Christians know the Maker and Creator of all things. We know Him Who brought all things into existence from non-existence, from nothing. We know that He alone is the One Who Is (*Ex. 3:14*). He alone is true being, and anything that exists receives its existence from Him, from His love. We know that He alone is immortal by His own nature, while all creatures, even the most perfect angelic powers, came into being from non-existence. Properly, by their own nature, they should return again to non-existence, but the grace of God eternally sustains their existence and being out of love alone.

We Christians know we have nothing in our being that is by nature immortal, whether it be the body, or the mind, or the spirit, or the soul, or whatever we may call it. It is why we have enormous gratitude in our heart to our Maker and Creator Who promised to keep us in existence eternally and joined us to Himself through the Incarnation, the becoming man, of His Son and Word. We also have humility, because we know that in our nature we are soil, we are nothing.

5. And man became a living soul.

"And God formed man of the dust of the earth, and He blew the breath of life into his face, and man became a living soul." (*C en. 2:7*)

Truly, how difficult it is for us to understand those words that are so clear and simple. In his makeup man is dust of the earth. The breath of life has no relation to his makeup; it has no relation to his earthen nature. It was given to him separately. The word "breath" and the word "spirit" (Gr. *pnōē* and *pneuma*) have the same origin and the same meaning. It is the same Spirit that "was stirring above the water" (*Gen. 1:2*). The "breath of life" that God blew into man's face was the same energy of the Holy Spirit that vitalized the waters on the first day of creation. The "breath of life" was not associated with water only in the beginning. Even today it is associated with water because it is the same energy of the Holy Spirit that moves over the water of baptism and gives life to the baptized. In the beginning, the energy of the Holy Spirit gave life to all things. At the end, the same energy of the Holy Spirit gave to reason-endowed creatures the true life.

In our times, the usual but baseless interpretation of the passage is that first God made man's body without a soul, like a clay statue. And then He placed the soul in his body, with the blowing of one breath into man's face.

The Fathers of the Church are emphatic that in the making of a man there is no time difference. The body is not born first with the soul entering it later. Man is complete with all of his elements and his entire integral nature from the moment of his conception. Only idolaters teach that the soul enters the body later. Christians never accepted such teachings. The Holy Scripture says, "And God formed man of the dust of the earth, and He blew the breath of life into his face, and man," that is, the whole man, "became a living soul." The Holy Scripture would not have said "man" if it was a reference only to a soulless body. A body without life is not a human body, but a corpse; it is not a man, but the remains of a man.

The breath of life that the Holy Scripture speaks of here is not the breath of temporal life, but the breath of true and eternal life. The breath of life that God blew into man's face did not give man a soul, but it made his soul, that is, his life, a *living* soul. From the energy of the Holy Spirit that God blew into his face, man acquired true life, a living soul, eternal existence.

It is a vestige of the pagan mind when we seek after a certain nobility in the origin of man. There is no nobility in our origin, in our nature. The nobility is in the Creator of man, not in man. We are scandalized when we learn our children are taught in school that man's biological ancestors were lower humanoids, and we forget that the Holy Scripture throws a very humbling truth in the face of our haughtiness: we do not just come from lower animals, but from the inert and lifeless soil.

6. Nature and person

Unfortunately, one of the most basic causes of confusion in the Christian understanding of man is due to the semiliteracy and rationalism of many Christians. Such semiliteracy and rationalism take the Christian distinction between nature and person and confuse it with the pagan distinction between body and soul, and between matter and spirit.

Christians distinguish between the Builder and the building, between the Creator and creation. Only God is true spirit. If we speak of a spirit with regard to angels and men, it is in order to express only relative differences between various creatures or their properties; in essence, matter and creation are one and the same. Only then is the distinction between spirit and matter appropriate for the Christian, when by Spirit we mean God, and by matter we mean the creation by God.

The confusion arises from the fact that the Fathers of the Church describe man as having a dual nature. They speak of the body and the soul, of matter and spirit, of something earthen and material in man and something spiritual and divine. And since a pagan history and language preceded us, and we Christians use the same pagan terms, it is easy to fall into a pagan trap and think that the Holy Scripture and the Fathers speak of two different natures in man, one spiritual and one material – the soul and the body.

If it were true, as they say, that man is compounded of two different natures, then Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, would not have had two natures, but three: the Divine and two human natures – the body and the soul, the spiritual human nature and the material human nature. No Christian would suggest such a thing. Yet those who speak of two natures in man do not realize this is what they are really saying. Nevertheless, the most basic dogma of our faith is: "The Word became flesh" and nothing else, only flesh.

Flesh is the human nature which the Word of God took on in becoming incarnate. This human nature is one, and it is common to all people. The nature of man is one, but humans are many, and each is different from the other. We are so different from one another that, in the entire history of mankind, there has never been a man who was the same as someone else. So which is it? What makes each of us a unique and unrepeatably being? Do we, perhaps, have one nature common to us all, the flesh, as well as another nature, an extra nature that is different in each of us? Well then, how many human natures are there? As many as there are people, as well as the common nature called the flesh? Christ, however, took only the nature common to all of us, but not the nature of each of us, which is unique to each of us, because then He would need to have billions of natures. How, then, did He join all of us to Divinity? How did He save us from corruptibility and death? How did He save us from returning to non-existence, to which we should return as creaturely beings made from nothing?

Naturally, those who argue for two different natures in man would have to say the Word of God took only the common nature of man, the flesh. And He did not take the other, the unique nature of each of us, since it had no need of salvation, of resurrection,

of being made incorruptible, because it was eternal and incorruptible in itself. In other words, they would say the Word of God took the bodily human nature since it had need of resurrection and of being made incorruptible, but He did not take on the soul since it is divine, and only the divine nature is immortal and incorruptible.

A variation of this heretical view of man and the Incarnation of God is the theory of Makrakis regarding a *triple* nature of man. According to him, man does not have two, but three natures: the body, the soul, and the spirit. Being creatures, both the body and the soul are corruptible and mortal, but the spirit is divine since it is part of the Holy Spirit. Essentially, both versions of this heresy argue that man is partly mortal and partly divine. And both versions are clear examples of rationalism and scholasticism that are totally alien to the Christian faith. And both versions try to comprehend man while ignoring a reality that is essentially unknown to paganism – the reality of the person.

7. The person

The *person* is not a nature. God is one nature in three persons. The nature of God is common to the three persons. Each of the three persons, however, is unique.

The fact that God created man "in the image of God" implies, among other things, that in man, as in God, the same distinction exists between nature and persons. And like God, man is one in his nature, but many in persons.

What makes us all human is our nature which is common to all of us. What makes each of us a unique and unrepeatably being is our person. We have seen what our nature comes from and how it was created. Our person, however, is a mystery. Although it is something we experience daily in ourselves and in the people around us, it is a totally intangible mystery.

In essence, what makes us human, different beings from the animals, is the existence of our person. The person exists only in reason-endowed beings: in God and in the image of God – in men and angels. Animals do not have a person; they have a nature only.

What is our person, and where is it? Our person is the stamp or impress of a seal upon our earthen nature. The seal is divine and unique; it is the person of the Word of God. The impressions of the seal are as many as there are people. They are called images of God. The prototype [or original] of a royal seal or ring is of gold, but the impressions of the seal are of the material upon which the gold ring was pressed, that is, of wax or clay. The design that is transferred is that which is on the golden royal ring.

In our instance, the divine seal is the person of God's Word. The clay which receives the seal is our earthen nature. The design which is pressed onto the earthen nature is the image of God. The act of pressing the divine seal on the earthen nature is the Incarnation of the Word of God.

The sealing of our earthen nature with the person of the Word of God is not only an historic reality. It is chiefly an ontological reality above and beyond time, with its foundations built upon the God-Man Jesus Christ.

The divine properties of our being, therefore, do not originate in our earthen nature, but in the image of God that has been pressed upon that nature. Those properties are freedom, reason, immortality, the capacity to receive the energy of the Holy Spirit, the possibility of creativity, and the like. These are not characteristics of a nature, but of a person.

Our person is not what is called the soul, for we humans are not the only ones who have a soul. All animals and all plants have a soul. Soul means life. Whatever has life has a soul. Life and soul have identical meanings. What, then, is the person?

Like all mysteries, the person is not something that can be defined. It is the intangible "something" that the Incarnation of the Word gave to humans and made them resemble Him and become His images capable of receiving the grace and energy of the Holy Spirit. It is not a nature; it is not a second nature. It is a property of our earthen nature, but one given to it from outside of itself, from the impress of the Divine Person of the Son and Word of God upon each of us. This is what makes each of us a unique being, unrepeatable, free, known to God and, therefore, everexistent in the divine memory so that, even after death and the dissolution of our nature, it remains "in the hand of God." The divine memory is existence and eternal life in God.

The person is what remains of man after death. It is what connects him with the new nature that he will acquire in the resurrection. It is what bridges the old body of corruptibility with the new body of incorruptibility and makes both the old and the new body the body of the same unrepeatable man.

Perhaps an example from the material world will help us with an insight into the incomprehensible mystery we are speaking about. There are many materials in nature. When they come in contact with fire, some of them burn, some of them harden, some of them melt and dissolve. But some, even though they are of a nature altogether different from fire, are constituted in such a way that when they come in contact with fire they too become fire. One such material is iron. Away from fire, iron is a material like many other materials. But when it comes in contact with fire it becomes red hot, it glows, radiates, and heats without ever ceasing to be in its essence iron. The fire does not give it a second nature, but it gives it properties that its nature does not have. Iron is constituted in such a way that it is receptive to the properties of fire and becomes itself fire as long as it is in contact with the fire.

Man too is something like this. He has properties that he got because the Word of God became man and took our nature upon Himself. The Incarnation of the Word of God acts in the nature of man and makes him a person. The breath of the Holy Spirit acts upon the person because it is able to receive the Holy Spirit, and man becomes a living soul.

"And God formed man of the dust of the earth, and He blew the breath of life into his face, and man became a living soul." In his nature man is dust of the earth. He has personhood because it is God's will for him to be in His image, and He became man for him. Upon that personhood God blew the breath of life, the grace of the Holy Spirit. And man became a living soul in the same way that iron is receptive of fire and, when it comes into contact with fire, it too becomes radiant from the energy of the fire.

8. The confusion

The confusion that exists about the subject of the soul has its roots in paganism. Basically, Christianity expressed itself and spoke to the world in the Greek language. But the Greek language, like all other languages that Christians used, except for Hebrew, is a language of pagan origin that was Christianized. The words remained the same, but they took on new meaning. Among the pagan words that took on another meaning in Christianity was the word "soul." This word took on two different meanings in Christian literature. The first one is the meaning used in the Holy Scripture: *soul equals life*. "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's the same shall save it." (Mk. 8:35) The second meaning with which this word was used by the Christianized, former pagan world, that is, by the Christians from the nations, is that *soul equals person*.

The idea of the person was not at all familiar to the pagan world. The pagans did not know what person means since, for them, God *is* creation, He is the universe; God is *Pan* (Gr. *all that exists*). But this *Pan* of pagan pantheism is personless. For pagans the ultimate destiny and perfection is for them to become identical with the personless Pan. The person, for them, the individual soul, is a lesser state that must be transcended. Universality requires all things to lose their distinctiveness.

For Christians, however, the meaning of the person is the most basic concept in our faith. We have not known God as a nature, but as a Person. A nature is manifested and exists in the person. To us the nature of God, however, is inaccessible, unapproachable, but we have known and experienced the Person of God because He willed to come in our midst with our nature. God has revealed that our persons are images of His Person, capable of being "partakers of His divine nature" (2 Pe. 1:4). And since they are images of His Person, they can receive the fire of the divine nature and become themselves fire, without being fire by nature.

But since the concept of the person, which was of such critical importance to the Christians, was unfamiliar, the properties that belong to the person were assigned to the familiar word "soul." And "soul" was used to express the meaning of person. But the word "soul" did not cease to be burdened with its old pagan meaning of a second nature, a spiritual nature of man.

The person is a mystery – the mystery of the divine seal upon the earthen human nature. The mysteries are not familiar to man. But the pagan meaning of the soul held no mystery: a different nature is intertwined and coexists with material nature. It is the spirit that becomes intertwined with matter. The body dies and the material nature dissolves, but the spirit remains as a second, independent nature. These are very easy things for the rationalistic mind to grasp. Thus, for some Christians the meaning of the word soul slowly regained the ancient pagan meaning, and man, at least in the people's mind, became compounded of two natures.

In this way, a spiritual nature of its own was imputed to the personality of man that remains after the body has dissolved. This means, of course, a clear return to paganism. In this conception, man's person is preserved after death because it has its own independent existence and nature, and not because it remains "in the hand of God," in the knowledge of God which is *true* existence and is also completely dependent on God. An immortality of this kind, therefore, would be of the same nature as the immortality of God. And even if it were believed to be given by God, in the final analysis, it would be self-sufficient and independent. God, of course, could have given such an immortality outright; it would have been a gift from God by grace. But if it were given, from that moment man would have perceived it as his own natural possession, in other words, as a second nature in man. Thus, he would believe he is compounded of two natures, of mortal matter and *immortal spirit*. (Let us not even discuss the fact that there are many people who argue passionately and fanatically that the soul is immortal by nature and not by grace.)

The source of our immortality is the Resurrection of Christ. Christ raised our earthen nature and made it incorruptible. There is no other source of immortality except the Resurrection since there is no second nature in man. What we call immortality of the soul is nothing but the identity of the human person sustained in God. Our person is the same in both the state of corruptibility and the state of incorruptibility, before the Resurrection and after. In what we call the soul's "life after death" there is no dimension of time since, after death and the dissolution of the body, our persons are "in the hand of God," and in God time does not exist. After death, souls do not live another autonomous

life, since they are not natures but persons. Their life and existence is God, the prototype of the seal that is called the "person."

Because people cannot comprehend such mysteries, it is easy to slip into pagan rationalism. In the time up to the general Resurrection, souls after death do not live in a bodiless state as if they are spiritual natures that have been separated from their bodies. A time period of this kind exists only for the living, for the natural world, of which one dimension is time. The state of death has never been described by the Church, because it is not a state that is a natural state and describable. It is the preservation of the person and the subsistence of our being – in God. Whatever is in God is outside of nature and indescribable. The souls have no direct contact at all with the living; they neither perceive nor sense the world and the flow of time. Nevertheless, souls, the persons of the saints, receive our prayers and respond to them. But this does not take place in a natural way. Our prayers to the saints are received by God, and through God the saints respond and intercede. They do not have self-existence of their own. Nevertheless, the dead exist and live, not in time and not by nature, but by God.

Whatever anyone may grasp of these truths, so be it. The mystery of the distinction between *nature* and *person* is the most basic one in our faith. We do not comprehend the mysteries, but we live them. Anyone who lives Orthodoxy understands something of what we have said. All others try to comprehend Orthodoxy with their brain, but the mysteries do not fit in the brain.

Our nature is material and earthen, as is the entire nature of creatures. Our persons are the divine seal upon this earthen nature; they are the effect of an event on our nature, the event of the Incarnation of the Word. The Incarnation of the Word added the impress of the Person of the Word upon our nature and made man the image of God. It is the person that makes us humans; it is the person that bridges our presurrection corruptible nature with the incorruptible nature that the Resurrection shall give us. That resurrected nature already exists in the Person of Christ. Whatever it is that we are, we are it in Christ. We can escape the confusion of what man is only if we understand that Christ is the very root of our being and the foundation of our existence.

9. The breath of life

St. Seraphim of Sarov says to Motovilov, his student, "We have become so inattentive to the work of salvation that we misinterpret many other words in Holy Scripture as well, because we do not seek the grace of God and, in the pride of our minds, we do not allow it to dwell in our souls. That is why we are without true enlightenment from the Lord, which He sends into the hearts of men who hunger and thirst wholeheartedly for God's righteousness.

"Many explain that when the Bible says, 'God breathed the breath of life into the face of Adam the first-created, who was created by Him from the dust of the earth,' it must mean that till then there was neither human soul nor spirit in Adam, but only the flesh created from the dust of the earth. This interpretation is wrong, for the Lord made Adam from the dust of the earth with the constitution which our dear little father, the holy Apostle Paul describes: 'May your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (*1 Thes. 5:23*)

"And all these parts of our nature were created from the dust of the earth, and Adam was not created dead, but an active living being like all the other animate creatures of God living on earth. The point is that if God had not breathed afterwards into his face, this breath of life (that is, the grace of our Lord God the Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son and is sent into the world for the Son's sake), Adam

would have remained without having within him the Holy Spirit, Who raises him to Godlike dignity. However perfect he had been created and superior to all other creatures of God, as the crown of creation on earth, he would have been just like all the other creatures which, though they have a body, soul, and spirit, each according to its kind, yet have not the Holy Spirit within them.

"But when the Lord God breathed the breath of life into Adam's face, then, according to Moses' word, 'Adam became a living soul' (*Gen. 2:7*), that is, completely and in every way like God, and like Him, forever immortal." (p. 15, *A Wonderful Revelation to the World: Conversation of St. Seraphim of Sarov with N.A. Motovilov*, 1953, Jordanville, NY)

We have here a clear, patristic voice confirming for us that:

1. The usual explanation by today's Christians that Adam was created by God as a clay statue, a corpse, and the breath that God blew into his face was supposedly the soul arises from the fact "we have departed from the simplicity of the early Christian knowledge, because the pride of our mind does not allow the grace of God to dwell in our souls. That is why we do not have the true enlightenment from the Lord" and we invent "myths."

2. Before he received the breath of God, Adam was a living creature like all the other animals on earth, with all of his physical characteristics, having a spirit, soul, brain, heart, just as all animals have, each according to its species.

3. The "breath" of God does not have a natural or biological meaning; it is not one of the natural elements in man. Rather, it is the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit, given to man by Christ.

The breath of God, the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit, is the same as that which is implanted as a seed in Christians by the Church through Holy Baptism. And, if man's freedom permits, it germinates and puts forth holiness and the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

What really makes man different from the other animals is the fact that, in contrast to the animals, he has the ability to receive the energy of the Holy Spirit. What gives man this ability is not his biological superiority, and it is not the superiority of his brain. The ability of man to receive the energy of the Holy Spirit, if he wishes, is not given to him by anything natural. It is given to him by the fact that he is created in the image of God (*Gen. 1:27*), in other words, he is a person (*Gen. 2:7*).

"And God formed man of the dust of the earth, and He blew the breath of life into his face, and man became a living soul." Here the Holy Scripture gives us three ontological truths about man: 1. In his makeup man is dust. 2. The breath from God was given to what He called "his face." [In the Greek Septuagint O.T., the word for "face" also means "person."] 3. The breath was the "breath of life" that made man a "living soul." In other words, man, like all creatures, is dust; however, he has a face upon which God blew the "breath of life" that made him a "living soul."

In order to better understand the distinction between just *soul* and *living soul*, we need to recall what Christ said to the man who wished to follow Him, but asked if he may first go to bury his deceased father. Christ said, "Let the dead bury their dead." (*Mt. 8:22*) What is clear is that the Lord considers as dead all those who do not have a living communion with God, regardless of whether they are biologically alive or dead. All are essentially dead, except that those who are biologically alive are able to bury those who are biologically dead. Consequently, what makes man truly alive, what makes him a *living soul*, is something not found in all men. It is something given only to those who are disposed to accepting it, to those who freely wish it. It is not a natural component of man like the soul; rather, it is a divine gift and energy beyond nature: the gift and uncreated energy of the grace of the Holy Spirit. The acquisition of this gift of the Holy Spirit is the

purpose of our life, as St. Seraphim so vividly taught Motovilov, his student. This is what we were created for, and it is to it that we are invited.

10. Paradise and those outside

Where is Paradise? In the end, what became of that Paradise where Adam and Eve lived and where God walked? What is the relation between that old Paradise and the Future Age of the New Earth? What relation does it have with the New Jerusalem?

Paradise is whatever and whoever receives the uncreated divine energy of the Holy Spirit. Every saint is Paradise. The Church of Christ is Paradise.

In the lives of many saints we see that the world around them becomes transformed into a corner of the ancient Paradise; this is true mainly of the world of reasonless creatures. Plants and animals behave like those that were in Paradise. The same is true of people of good disposition. Even nature acquires paradisiac qualities. Fire does not burn them; they walk on top of the water; they fly through the air; poisons do not harm them; illnesses are cured; cold does not affect them. The grace of the Holy Spirit radiates all around them and affects creation around them.

What might be foreign to our understanding and seem unheard of to us is the idea that outside of Paradise there lived not only animals and vegetation, but people as well, many people. Nevertheless, the Holy Scripture allows us to clearly infer this reality if we make even a small effort to study it.

After the disobedience, God "cast out Adam and settled him outside of the garden of delight" (*Gen. 3:25*). Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. After Cain killed his brother, we hear him saying in conversation with Christ, "If Thou castest me out this day, from the face of the earth, and I shall be hidden from Thy presence, and I shall be groaning and trembling on the earth, then it shall be that everyone who finds me would slay me. And the Lord God said to him, 'Not so, anyone that slays Cain shall suffer sevenfold vengeance. And the Lord God set a mark upon Cain lest everyone that found him might slay him.'" (*Gen. 4:14-15*) The one and only sign or mark in our faith is the Cross. In other words, God sealed Cain with the sign of the Cross that protects from every evil. The masculine pronoun for "everyone" (πας) is used here to refer exclusively to people and never to animals. Therefore, it was only other people that posed a danger to Cain. Living on the earth were not only he and his parents, but other people also.

The wife of Cain is another puzzle. Who was she? Those who argue that Cain married a sister forget that Adam and Eve did not have other children until two hundred and thirty years after the death of Abel. "And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she bore a son, and called his name Seth, saying, 'For God hath raised up to me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew...And Adam lived two hundred and thirty years, and begot a son after his own form and after his own image, and he called his name Seth. And all the days of Adam which he lived after his begetting Seth were seven hundred years, and he begot sons and daughters.'" (*Gen. 4:25; 5:1- 3*) Thus, the daughters of Adam and Eve are mentioned only after the birth of Seth. Cain, of course, did not wait two hundred and thirty years to get married. Besides, *Genesis* mentions the wife of Cain immediately after Cain conversed with Christ and received the mark of the Cross. (Let us put aside the fact that those who say Cain married his sister accept incest as something normal.)

Immediately after the birth of his first son, Cain built an entire city. "And Cain knew his wife, and having conceived, she bore Enoch, and he built a city, and he named the city after the name of his son, Enoch." (*Gen. 4: 17*) For whom did Cain build an entire city, for his three-member family? Who was Enoch's wife?

Cain was a tiller of the soil and Abel was a sheep herder. Among Cain's direct descendants we find cattle herders, the inventor of the psaltery and the harp, ironsmiths such as Thobel, who "was a smith, a maker of both brass and iron" (*Gen. 4:22*). All of this was before Adam and Eve had their third son Seth. In other words, this was in the iron age, a relatively late period of man, and Adam and Eve were still living.

When we add up the years of Adam's life and of his descendants, we find that Adam must have lived very recently, that is, about five thousand, five hundred years before Christ. It is a very late period in human history. Outside of Paradise, therefore, there existed not only other people, but *many* other people.

11. The first-made man

Why, then, do we call Adam the "first-made" man?

What does first-made mean? There were two Adams, the first and the second. The first one begot us unto corruptibility.

The second one begot us unto incorruptibility. Neither was the first one chronologically first, however, nor was the second one chronologically last. Each of them was preceded and followed by many people.

The first "first-made" man, the first Adam, is the cause of corruptibility and death. In him are the roots of the present state of creation that we see and feel in and about us and those around us, including men, animals, plants, and stars.

The second Adam, Christ, is the cause of the Resurrection and incorruptibility. He is the "firstborn of the dead" in the Resurrection and in eternity; He is the Head of eternal Life, the root of the New Creation--the New Earth and the New Heavens.

Adam is neither the biological nor the historical forefather of mankind, but the first-made *ontologically*, not only of mankind, but of all creation. He is the root of the universe we see and know today. He is the man chosen by God to recapitulate in his person all of creation as God had formed it so it could survive the angel Satan's assault and its consequences. Divided into male and female beings by God, creation wears the "coats of skin" (*Gen. 3:22*), our biological nature, the attraction of the sexes, and it exists under the need of material sustenance, propagation, protection, and death.

Adam is the representative of creation, who displayed both creation's inclination toward an eternal life of incorruptibility in Paradise, and its fall into a life of pains and groanings, a life amidst thorns and thistles, a life of sweat and impending death. (*Gen. 3:16-19*). It is Adam who showed to this corruptible world the glory and blessedness man is invited to, how close man is to God but also the depths man may fall to when he departs far from Him. Adam showed how great, but also how small and insignificant man is, how insignificant and unfortunate he is alone, and how blessed he is when he accepts to live in the warmth of His Maker's love.

Adam is the human race's leader in sin, in the fall and disobedience, but he is also the leader in returning to his Maker. He is the leader in the fall because he is the most unjustifiable sinner. He is the leader in returning by repentance because, of all the sinners on the earth, he was the first to return to the Lord.

He is the most unjustifiable because no one enjoyed the grace of God and Paradise as he did; no one else directly received the breath of the Holy Spirit on his face. And before him, no one else saw Christ and spoke with Him and was guided by His commandments. But he is also the teacher of repentance to all of mankind, the leader of the return to the Lord God for men who abandoned Him "and have dug pits of broken stones for themselves."

Adam is the first man who knew God face to face, the first member of the Church of Christ, the first Patriarch of the People of God, and the first among those to whom "God was known." That is why Orthodox icons of the Resurrection depict Christ raising Adam and Eve before all of the other righteous.

Adam's disobedience and fall into sin and death has been overemphasized, and we pay little attention to the other half of the story, to his repentance and return. It is not only a matter of his *personal* repentance and return; he blazed the trail for all who repent on earth. He was the pathfinder for all who return to God.

With Adam and Eve begins the history of Israel, the history of the people who knew God, amidst all the nations of the world that did not know Him. Adam is not only the first man who knew Christ, the first who was essentially a faithful Christian, he is the first and furthest forefather of Christ and the beginning of His genealogy in the flesh and in time.

12. Genesis

As we already said in the beginning, the book of *Genesis* is divided into two units. The first unit (Chapter One and verses 1-3 of Chapter Two) is about the creation of the world and *all of mankind*. The second unit (the remainder of the book from the fourth verse of Chapter Two to the end) is nothing but the history of those people to whom God revealed Himself, *who knew* God and who sinned and repented before God. It is the history of Adam and his descendants.

The first chapter, the first unit, makes no mention of Adam and Eve, of Paradise, of the breath of God. But it emphasizes very strikingly the creation of man in the image of the Holy Trinity: "And God said, Let us make man in our image and likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea..." (1:26) The interchangeability of the singular and plural is typical in references both to God and to man, and it is the key to understanding the text: "And God [singular] said, Let us [plural] make man [singular] in our [plural] image [singular] and likeness [singular]; and let them [plural] rule..." What emerges from this interchangeability?

God is one in three persons ["Let us make"]. Man is the same: all of mankind in its essence is one man ["Let us make man"]. The nature of man, as with the nature of God, is one, common to all persons. The persons, however, are many ["let them"]. But the image of all persons is one – the Incarnate Word of God, "through Whom all things were made," Who is the image of the invisible God." "And God made man; in the image of God He made him." (1:27)

That man who was made in the image of God is *man*, the whole of mankind, and he is each of us as distinct persons. Whether we like it or not, we are all *made* in the image of God, and we are *called* to the likeness, to become like God. We are all called to *theosis*, which is given to us only by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. Even though we are all made in the image of God without our asking for it, we cannot come to the likeness except by our choice. Freely we either allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, or we close the door of our soul to Him.

We are images of God (not in our biological nature, of course), because God, the Word of God, united Himself with our nature. That union of God and man in the person of God the Word made mankind the image of God. This fact, although it was independent of our will, made all of us able to receive the Holy Spirit. It made all of us vessels capable of receiving and containing the grace and energy of the Holy Spirit. But shall we receive it? Shall we remain empty vessels or become full? It depends on our personal will and our personal freedom.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image and likeness...And God made man; in the image of God He made him." God wants man to be His image and likeness, but as we have seen, He made man only in His image. He left the likeness to our own preference. All are "in the image of God," but not all are "in the likeness," except those who desire it. We all have the ability to accept the Holy Spirit, but not all of us wish to have the Comforter dwell in us.

This is the difference between the image and likeness. The *image is given to our nature* because of the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God. The *likeness relates to our person* and is dependent on our personal freedom.

Here is another thing we need to note about the first basic unit of *Genesis*. It says, "And God made man; in the image of God He made him. Male and female He made them." (Gen. 1:27)

The distinction of male and female, of course, has nothing to do with the image of God. God is not divided into male and female. Therefore, the division into male and female is secondary and temporal, an artificial thing, like the "coats of skin" that were given after the transgression. We were made male and female in order to cope with our separation from the grace of God with a natural force of continuity in the absence of the divine energy which we had cast out by our own action.

As a consequence, man and creation today do not reflect the will of God. We are not made the way God wants us to be. But He made all of us this way, humans, animals, plants and inanimate things, to enable us to manage the effects of our separation from our Creator. This is our temporal creation that shall pass, because "In the Resurrection, they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but shall be as the angels are in heaven." And the angels of God are not differentiated into males and females as we are.

"And God saw all the things that He had made, and, behold, they were very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day." (1:31) "All that God had made" are all the things He created: the old and the new and the future, without exception. The sixth day means the completion of creation. We should not think of it as the past. It is past and present and future; it is as much future as remains for this corruptible world.

"And the heavens and the earth were finished, and the whole world of them. And God finished on the sixth day His works which He made." (2:1-2) The works of God were also the children not yet born and the animals that did not yet live, and the plants that did not yet sprout; all are included in that sixth day of creation. For if all unborn creatures were not included in the sixth day, the Holy Scripture would not have said, "The heavens and the earth were finished, and the whole world of them." Finished means completed. Could they be completed if they were not yet born? Yes, God sees beyond time; time places limits on us, but not on Him.

Included in that first unit of *Genesis*, therefore, is all of creation and all of mankind. The six days of creation are mystical time periods of creation as we know it, as God formed it so it can cope with the results of the fall. The sixth day is the crown and completion of creation in its present fallen state and corruptibility. As a time period, the sixth day has not yet ended. While the sixth day has not yet ended, however, for us who live in time the seventh day has come and gone.

13. The seventh day

"Moses the Great prefigured this present day mystically, saying, 'And God blessed the seventh day.' For this is the blessed Sabbath, this is the day of rest, on which the Only-begotten Son of God rested from all His works. Suffering death for the economy of

salvation, He kept the Sabbath in the flesh, and returning again... through the Resurrection, He has granted to us eternal life, for He alone is good and the lover of man." (*Matins of Great Saturday*)

The seventh day is the bridge that connects this corruptible world of the six-day genesis of all things to the incorruptible and eternal world of the eighth day, the day without end, the eternal day. It is the day on which God "rested from all His works" in death for the economy of salvation. It is day of the Great Sabbath, the sanctified one, on which the Lord finished all His works, those of creation and those of salvation. And having completed His union with creation, even unto death, on the Cross He uttered those last words: "It is finished," and He abode in the grave, "in the flesh, keeping the Sabbath." This is the blessed Sabbath that brought forth all of creation from corruptibility to incorruptibility and, "through the Resurrection, granted to us eternal life."

"And the heavens and the earth were finished, and the whole world of them. And God finished on the sixth day His works which He made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He ceased from all his works, which God began to do." (Gen. 2:1-3)

The End

