

NASHOTAH HOUSE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

HOLY SCRIPTURE VS. THE WORDS OF MEN: THEOLOGY AND EVOLUTIONISM IN  
THE 21ST CENTURY

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by  
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## Introduction

This thesis will be addressing two theologies, each of which purports to base itself entirely upon Scripture. The first is traditional, which refuses to move even one iota from the resolute and unbendable nature of God's Word, from the initial verses of Genesis to the end of Revelation. It enjoyed influence until recently, but now its authority is definitely in occlusion, and it even endures persecution. The second, heavily influenced by evolution, reigns supreme. These two theologies are intensely and utterly at war, deadlocked in a bitter confrontation. Everything depends on which of the two is selected, because the results affect the choices of all of humanity regarding the past, the present, and the future. I am arguing for the traditional.

Four chapters will include the following: Chapter 1 contains a discussion of a creationist, traditional perspective of both Genesis 1-11 and the New Testament, which corroborates the early portions of Genesis. Also included are several patristic and medieval writers who place themselves traditionally with Scripture. In Chapter 2, Charles Darwin will be examined, whose seminal texts upended the whole course of science and church teaching from his point onward. Chapter 3 contains the viewpoints of Alister E. McGrath, an evolutionary theologian/scientist who represents not only the modern mainstream of Anglicanism, but also the wider church, which generally follows the trend of contemporary science. Chapter 4 is a summary which includes my reflections and conclusions.

*All scripture is inspired by God . . .* (2 Tim 3:16a, NRSV, and so throughout) especially those scriptures which have absolute and historic significance for the entirety of the biblical text. These will include the early chapters of Genesis, because they are the foundation for the whole

biblical narrative. They line out the basic elements of all human history in its starkest terms: mankind's idyllic existence *in the image of God* (Gen 1:27), Adam and Eve's fall with the multiple curses that accrued from it, and the promise of redemption through one Man, whose name had not yet been revealed. I will argue that the idea of these essential texts as merely portraying principles symbolically expressed was virtually unknown to the Jews and to the Church until comparatively modern times.<sup>1</sup>

One's conclusions are based on one's presuppositions: either the Bible is the authority, or else science, whose theories are constantly in flux, is given free rein to not only interpret Scripture, but also to displace it. Both evolution and the literal accounts in the Bible ultimately have to be accepted by faith, because there is no way to prove either scientifically. However, I am thoroughly assured that the best place to be is in union with the universal Church as it has basically believed through all time in every place.

A considerable amount of analysis therefore must be made to call into question the major precepts of evolutionism, which has not only skewed the whole course of modern science, but also—of infinitely greater concern—has been instrumental in removing the Church from its simple trust and assurance in God and the Bible.

I conclude with a significant statement from Douglas F. Kelly (theology professor emeritus, Reformed Theological Seminary):

The point to be noted here is not that theistic evolutionists ever intentionally desire to weaken the lordship of God over creation; on the contrary, they believe that only by reinterpreting Genesis 1-11 through the prism of evolution can they render the biblical testimony to the Lordship of God credible for the modern culture. But the *unintended*

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<sup>1</sup> Yair Rosenberg, "Reconciling Modern Biblical Scholarship with Traditional Orthodox Belief: Who wrote the Torah? An unlikely group of Orthodox scholars has launched a website that gets to the Jewish tenets," accessed February 24, 2020, <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/144177/reconciling-biblical-criticism>.

consequence of using one sort of hermeneutical procedure to explain the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and a very different one to explain the rest of Scripture, raises very serious problems for accepting the historical and theological claims of the other parts<sup>2</sup> (emphasis his).

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<sup>2</sup> Douglas F. Kelly, *Systematic Theology, Grounded in Holy Scripture and understood in the light of the Church*, vol. 1, *The God Who is: the Holy Trinity* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor Imprint, 2014), 356. I have used him as a source because he is a contemporary, creationist theologian.

## **Chapter One**

### **The Inviolable Word of God**

During this chapter, I will focus primarily on the literal Genesis text and the difficulties associated with a strained hermeneutic due to the impediments imposed by evolution. I will also examine the New Testament, which dutifully reflects Genesis, finding its fulfillment in Christ. Lastly, I will quote from several of the patristic and medieval Fathers and Saints, whose straightforward reading of the Scriptures corroborate both of the Testaments.

A few terse sentences—the creation by God of the world in six days, its situation in the universe, the formation of all living things including man, his brief paradisiacal rulership over creation, his consequential fall, and the beginning of his slow road to redemption—form the introduction to Scripture. It is of crucial importance that these few words should be compared to modern concepts of the origination of the world. It is against these basic biblical texts that evolutionary science addresses itself, but, as previously noted, evolutionism also places itself in opposition to practically all Christian scholars and writers prior to the nineteenth century.

The first point that should be accepted is that Moses was the writer of the Torah. The “law of Moses,” emblazoned upon so many pages of Scripture (fifty-seven instances in the Old and New Testaments and Apocrypha), speaks about the authority and unique identity of its author. For the Jews and New Covenant believers, his principal authorship of the basic texts on which life ordered itself securely was never seriously in question, until recently.

In examining what Christ said about the Law of Moses (Lk 24:44) shortly before his

departure, Edersheim,<sup>3</sup> reminds us,

. . . that Christ and the Apostles, in appealing as so often they did to Moses and the Prophets, must . . . have been in such grave and fundamental error as cannot be explained on the ground of popular modes of speaking, and seems incompatible with the manner in which the New Testament would have us think of them . . . there is in plain language only one word to designate all this. That word is *fraud*. Then, also, on the supposition that, what we had regarded as the sacred source of the most sacred events, was in reality the outcome of fraud, must the Gospel narratives and the preaching of Christ lose their historical basis, and rest in large measure on deception and delusion<sup>4</sup> (emphasis his).

Intrinsic substantiation corroborates this. Christ told the two disciples: *Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures* Lk 24:27).

Edersheim also says:

For if, indeed they were words, not of Divine truth, but of delusion and deceit, when, on that Sabbath evening walk to Emmaus, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself,” then may we fold up within our hearts that pang of bitterest disappointment: “But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.” But, thank God, it is not so.<sup>5</sup>

Later Christ said to all of the apostles: “*These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.*” *Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures* (Lk

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<sup>3</sup> Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889) was a Jew converted to Christianity who eventually joined the Church of England, and was ordained as a Priest. David Mishkin (also a Jew, as am I) describes Edersheim’s *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* as “unparalleled commentary of the Gospels” in *The Wisdom of Alfred Edersheim* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), ix. Edersheim, also a University of Oxford professor, was thoroughly versed in Jewish law and rabbinical teaching, which gave him unique insight into the New and Old Covenants. Most especially, a profound love for Jesus Christ—one might call it uniquely *Jewish* in an ineffable sense—shines through all of his work.

<sup>4</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *Prophecy and History in Relation to the Messiah: The Warburton Lectures for 1880-1884* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1865; Middletown, DE: w.w.w.digitalhistorybooks.com, 2018), 118.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

24:44-45), which included certainly the “protoevangelium” of Genesis (3:15), the earliest prophecy of Christ.

Keil<sup>6</sup> presents extrinsic evidence of Mosaic authorship, here quoting Delitzsch<sup>7</sup>:

In its general form, too, the *Thorah* answers the expectation which we are warranted in entertaining of a work of Moses. In such a work we should expect to find “the unity of a magnificent plan, comparative indifference to the mere details, but a comprehensive and spirited grasp of the whole and of salient points; depth and elevation combined with the greatest simplicity.”<sup>8</sup>

and in a summary account, Longman and Dillard conclude:

In the final analysis, it is possible to affirm the substantial Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch in line with the occasional internal evidence and the strong external testimony, while allowing for earlier sources as well as later glosses and elaboration. It is in keeping with the evidence to remain open and non-dogmatic concerning the particulars of the composition . . . In any case, our concern is the final form of the text, since that is what God has given the church as canon for its edification.<sup>9</sup>

The next matter to be established is the history contained in Genesis:

The account of the creation, its commencement, progress, and completion, bears the marks, both in form and substance, of a historical document in which it is intended that we should accept as actual truth, not only the assertion that God created the heavens, and

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<sup>6</sup> “Carl Friedrich Keil (1807–1888) was a conservative German evangelical theologian and commentator. . . . [He is] most known for his Old Testament commentaries,” “About Keil and Delitzsch,” *Best Bible Commentaries*, accessed September 26, 2020, <https://www.bestbiblecommentaries.com/keil-delitzsch-old-testament-commentaries/>.

<sup>7</sup> “Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890) was a German theologian and Christian Hebraist. He taught theology . . . .He wrote numerous commentaries on Christian apologetics, books of the Bible, Jewish antiquities, and biblical psychology, . . .,” *ibid*.

<sup>8</sup> C. F. Keil, and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on The Old Testament*, vol.1, C. F. Keil, *The Pentateuch*, (Edinburgh: T. & T.Clark, 1884; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Marketing, 2011), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 51. It appears that biblical criticism involving a majority consensus may change immediately, but by and large the writers accept Moses’ authorship. For this reason, it is best to hold unwaveringly to God’s written word, which always has been the standard of Jews and Christians, prior to modernity.

the earth, and all that lives and moves in the world, but also the description of the creation itself in all its several stages.<sup>10</sup>

This seems a reasonable summation of the various details of Genesis, in contrast to modern interpretations which in essence reduce the text to myth, a primitiveness of no consequence.<sup>11</sup>

Without going into the myriad details of the text, we are reminded of certain salient facts, always reminded: *By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible* (Heb 11:3). Scripture makes it clear that God created everything in six days as enshrined in the Ten Commandments, which was an everlasting ordinance in Israel (Ex 20:8-11).

But now the advent of man is fully revealed. It is with these foundational texts that not only does the Christian religion stand or fall, but also nothing can be properly understood about mankind without them. They help man to realize his supremacy over Creation, his responsibility to his Maker, and his penchant for sin with its disastrous consequences.

Evolutionary theory, however, qualifies sin, and the necessary redemption divinely put in place to overcome it: The theory, in absurd irony, supposes a proto-human, raised up among the beasts to become a person: separated from the other creatures and given all the virtues, made in God's image, with a will which allows him to obey or disobey. The Son of God, who has incorporated into his DNA some portion of the beast's ancestry through his mother, will come

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<sup>10</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 23. Although they wrote in the late nineteenth century, because of their scholarship and love of the Scriptures, I have chosen Keil and Delitzsch, with Edersheim, for sources. And—to their great credit—they ignore evolution.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g.: *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: NRSV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1.

now to earth to redeem a beast—made into a man who disobeys. Through his precious blood shed upon the cross, he is *slain from the foundation of the world* (Rev 13:8, NKJV).

But this is a strange, tawdry redemption. How did God make a beast not merely into a man, but one *in his image and in his likeness* (Gen 1:26)? How does such a one deserve the enormous sacrifice of the Word of God—above all human telling—to restore him?

These critically pivotal words—*in our image, according to our likeness*, have significant bearing on the matter of creation vs. evolution. The theistic evolutionist must build a construct based upon a forced interpretation of these words. Genesis no longer explains the *genesis* of man, but figures as only a mere point upon his evolutionary journey. And what about God’s admonition, *in the day that you eat of it you shall die* (Gen 2:17b)? What penalty does death impose on those emerging from an evolutionary past, for whom death has been an inevitable part of life? The Fall, therefore—with all of its ramifications to man and his progeny throughout history—appears meaningless. So the redemption—with the infinite condescension of the Son of God, his tabernacling among men, his humiliation at their expense, his death, and his resurrection—means nothing: *nothing at all*. This is why Gen 1:26 is so important. Adam and Eve, prior to the arrival of *sin*, were honored above all other creatures to be *in his image and likeness*.

*So God created humankind in his image . . . God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply . . .” [T]hen the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life . . . God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. (Gen 1:27, 28; 2:7; 1:31).* The Scripture is almost laconic in these descriptions of mankind’s genesis, allowing us a great degree of latitude in venturing a look into

Paradise. Adam and Eve must have been individuals of exquisite beauty and unparalleled virtue, the paragon of all human excellence. Their native intelligence was not such as could be measured by contemporary standards, but were of an entirely different order. Their senses were clear and unclouded, their perceptions were with full use of their mental abilities,<sup>12 13 14</sup> their communications were with intuition and subtlety. All of it was tempered with a holy reverence and respect for the ever-present nearness of the Creator.

It was because of their exalted position that the sins they committed against such an extraordinary backdrop loom ever larger and more egregious. In that fateful encounter, described in Gen 3, where all the world held its breath as the Tempter used his singular advantage to gain Eve's allegiance in the apparent absence of Adam, who had no opportunity to express oversight and judgment:

By eating the fruit, man did obtain the knowledge of good and evil, and in this respect became like God (vv. 7 and 22). This was the truth which covered the falsehood "ye shall not die," and turned the whole statement into a lie, exhibiting its author as the father of lies, who abides not in the truth (John 8:44). For the knowledge of good and evil, which man obtains by going into evil, is as far removed from the true likeness of God, which he would have attained by avoiding it, as the imaginary liberty of a sinner, which leads into

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<sup>12</sup> "Before original sin, man was in no danger of choosing and loving a false good because in his primordial integrity he experienced each thing as it really was. All his faculties were sound and he was not liable to be deceived by any of them," William Johnston, trans. and ed., *The Cloud of Unknowing* (14th century; New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2014), 119.

<sup>13</sup> Consider by comparison "idiot-savants," who have exceptional talents which are considered "normal" by human standards. Darold A. Treffert, "The savant syndrome: an extraordinary condition. A synopsis: past, present, future," *Philosophical Transactions B* (National Institutes of Health, 2009), accessed October 7, 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2677584/>.

<sup>14</sup> "... Sapientia perfecta was nothing less than the knowledge that God had bestowed on the first humans as they walked sinless in the earthly Paradise, but which had been lost with *the Fall*," Amanda Power, *Roger Bacon and the Defence of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 45, accessed October 15, 2020, [https://www.google.com/books/edition/Roger\\_Bacon\\_and\\_the\\_Defence\\_of\\_Christend/\\_AxZREdd18AC?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=the%20Fall](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Roger_Bacon_and_the_Defence_of_Christend/_AxZREdd18AC?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=the%20Fall) (emphasis hers).

bondage to sin and ends in death, is from the true liberty of a life of fellowship with God.<sup>15</sup>

The couple is banished from the garden. The years of expected longevity are progressively reduced, until one finds the plaintive claim of the Psalms: *The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble* (90:10a). From this point onward until Christ appears, Paradise is lost. Sin follows sin leading finally to the Deluge. The real extent of the cataclysm in actual terms is not fully described, except to remind us, in addition to the depth of the flood, *all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened* (Gen 7:11b). It would appear that the post-diluvial world came out of this baptism-by-judgment utterly changed.

Christ came to abolish sin: *and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations* (Lk 24:47a), as were Christ's very own words. St. Paul links sin and death directly to Adam, who passed on these inevitable penalties to all of the human race (Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45-49). Christ also overcame death and intends to finally eradicate it (Heb 2:14; 1 Cor 15:25-26). Here is the entire history of mankind in a nutshell. Adam and Eve were innocent, but untried, because God wanted more: complete and voluntary love. After the Fall, they and their descendants must endure the ravages of misery, separated from that which can be seen only dimly and remotely, until such time as when He will reveal Himself in all His glory: *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end* (Rev 22:13).

Throughout the Bible, the historicity of the Genesis texts is assumed everywhere. In Gen 5:1-5, we are reminded of man's past: *This is the list of the descendants of Adam. When God*

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<sup>15</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary*, 59-60.

*created humankind, he made them in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them “Humankind” when they were created.* As described in Gen 6-9, only a remnant of humanity, and two of every kind of land animals, survived the Deluge. Later, God chose Abraham to sire a nation who, above all other nations, would glorify God, teaching and observing faithfully at all times the story of Creation and eventually the Ten Commandments (Deut 6:1-9). Prophets warned them to keep the commandments until the Messiah appeared (Mal 4:4), who would embody within himself Jews and Gentiles—a new people—without the scourge of sin brought about by the Fall (Eph 2:15; Gen 3:19).

Having reviewed what Scripture says, we next move ahead to what the patristic and medieval writers declared, first about the origin of creation and of man, and secondly, about the Fall. Quotes will be from Clement, Diognetus, Irenaeus, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas. Surveying the early Church’s veritable and respected scholars establishes for us a firm basis of understanding of their essential agreement with Scripture.

The first epistle of St. Clement (33-99) is “one of the earliest extant Christian documents outside the New Testament,” and was probably written in the last decades of the first century.<sup>16</sup>

Clement speaks of man as the paragon of God’s artistry:

Above all, as the most excellent and by far the greatest work of his intelligence, with his holy and faultless hands he formed humankind as a representation of his own image. For thus spoke God: “Let us make humankind in our image and likeness. And God created humankind; male and female he created them.” So, having finished all these things, he praised them and blessed them and said, “Increase and multiply.” (33:2-6)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Michael W. Holmes, trans. and ed., *The Apostolic Fathers in English* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1989, 2006), 36.

<sup>17</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 57.

St. Irenaeus (c.120-c.200) “as the most profound and influential theologian of the second century,”<sup>18</sup> states his view of creation:

[11] But He fashioned man with own Hands, taking the purest, the finest and the most delicate [elements] of the earth, mixing with the earth, in due measure, His own power; and because He sketched upon the handiwork His own form—in order that what would be seen should be godlike for man was placed upon the earth fashioned in the image of God—and that he might be alive, “He breathed into His face a breath of life”: so that both according to the inspiration and according to the formation, man was like God.<sup>19</sup>

St. Basil the Great (330-379), honored with his younger brother St. Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-c.395) as saints among both the East and West branches of the Church and as two of the three Cappadocian Fathers, formulated the *Hexaemeron* concerning the six days of creation.

With humility and veneration, Basil makes clear the progression from Gen 1:1 to 1:25.<sup>20</sup>

Gregory, “a thinker and theologian of originality and learning, . . . as well as an outstanding exegete, orator, and ascetical author,”<sup>21</sup> wrote an expansive treatise, “On the Making of Man,” as an addendum to his brother’s work. In the newly created world, mankind was dressed in kingly apparel, “clothed in virtue, which is in truth the most royal of all raiment, and in place of the scepter, leaning on the bliss of immortality, and instead of the royal diadem, decked with the crown of righteousness” (IV.1.)<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-47.

<sup>20</sup> St. Basil, “Homily 1,” *Hexaemeron*, accessed July 2, 2020, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/32011.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> F. L. Cross, and E. A. Livingstone, *Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 712.

<sup>22</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Making of Man,” in St. Basil, *Hexaemeron*, accessed July 2, 2020, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2914.htm>.

In the masterly work and sum of his theology, *The City of God*, St. Augustine

(354-430) discusses Adam and Eve:

God, then, made man in His own image. For He created for him a soul endowed with reason and intelligence, so that he might excel all the creatures of the earth, air, and sea, which were not so gifted. . . He made also a wife for him, to aid him in the work of generating his kind, and He formed of a bone taken out of the man's side, working in a divine manner. . . God's hand is God's power; and He, working invisibly, effects visible results.<sup>23</sup>

Augustine states the following concerning Adam and Eve's favored estate prior to the

Fall:

And what could those persons fear or suffer in such affluence of blessings, where neither death nor ill-health was feared, and where nothing was wanting which a good will could desire, and nothing present which could interrupt man's mental and bodily enjoyment? Their love to God was unclouded, and their mutual affection was that faithful and sincere marriage; and from this love flowed a wonderful delight, because they always enjoyed what was loved. Their avoidance of sin was tranquil; and, so long as it was maintained, no other ill at all could invade them and bring sorrow.<sup>24</sup>

St. Anselm (1033-1109), a "wandering scholar" and monk, who eventually became the Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote in *De Concordia*, his last major work, the story of Adam and Eve preceding the fall:

As we know, it was God's intention to create his rational creature just and happy so that it might enjoy him . . . Moreover, God did not create human beings (creatures he created to know and love him) unhappy antecedent to their sin. So he created them happy with no deprivation. For this reason his rational human creatures received all at once the will to

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<sup>23</sup> "Of the nature of the human soul created in the image of God," St. Augustine, *The City of God* (417-18), trans. Marcus Dods, D. D. (New York: Random House, 1950), 12, 23, 407.

<sup>24</sup> "Whether it is believed that our first parents in Paradise, before they sinned, were free from all perturbation," *ibid.*, 14, 10, 456.

be happy, happiness itself, and the will to be just (the uprightness which is the very state of justice) and freedom of will as well, without which they could not preserve that state.<sup>25</sup>

This once again focuses on the full nature of their sin, since they had possession of all the faculties necessary to happiness: rationality, justice, and freedom of will.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) treated the origin of the first man's body:

The first formation of the human body could not be by the instrumentality of any created power, but was immediately from God. . . . Now God, . . . can alone by His own power produce matter by creation: . . . Therefore as no pre-existing body has been formed whereby another body of the same species could be generated, the first human body was of necessity made immediately by God,<sup>26</sup>

as a sign of his power and authority (obviating completely the use of the “material forms” found in evolution).

Before the fall, man was in a state of total innocence, without drudgery or care:

. . . man might dress and keep paradise, which dressing would not have involved labor, as it did after sin; but would have been pleasant on account of man's practical knowledge of the powers of nature. Nor would man have kept paradise against a trespasser; but he would have striven to keep paradise for himself lest he should lose it by sin. All of which was for man's good; wherefore paradise was ordered to man's benefit, and not conversely.<sup>27</sup>

Thus we have seen what the saints set down regarding creation and man's blissful state. In continuing, we will be assured by their writing concerning the fall of man that they would never have diluted the doctrine in order to fit it successfully into the constraints associated with manmade constructs such as evolution.

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<sup>25</sup> St. Anselm, “De Concordia,” in Brian Davies & G. R. Evans, eds., *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works, including “Monologion,” “Proslogion,” and “Why God Became Man”* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 471-472.

<sup>26</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Prima Pars, Man*, Q. I. 91. 1-2, accessed April 3, 2020, <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/1091.htm#article2>.

<sup>27</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, Q. I. 102. 3

Regarding the fall, we turn first to *The Epistle to Diognetus*. The work of an anonymous author, it is of uncertain date, but is probably of the late second century. J. B. Lightfoot called it “the noblest of early Christian writings.”<sup>28</sup> The author explains to Diognetus why the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were planted near each other:

3. For it is not without significance that the scriptures record that God in the beginning planted a tree of knowledge and a tree of life in the midst of Paradise, thereby revealing that life is through knowledge. Because our first parents did not use it purely, they were left naked by the deceit of the serpent. 4. For there is neither life without knowledge nor sound knowledge without true life; therefore each tree stands planted near the other . . . 6. For anyone who claims to know anything without the true knowledge that is confirmed knows nothing; not loving life, that person is deceived by the serpent (12, 3, 4, 6a, 300-301).<sup>29</sup>

The author sees knowledge and life as vital to the human condition, but “disobedience [to God’s law] kills” (12, 2, 300).

St. Irenaeus treats the law as an apt governor on the aspirations of man, set in place by God on his behalf:

[15] But, in order that the man should not entertain thoughts of grandeur nor be exalted, as if he had no Lord, and because of the authority given to him and the boldness toward God his Creator, sin, passing beyond his own measure, and adopt an attitude of self-conceited arrogance against God, a law was given to him from God, that he might know that he had as lord the Lord of all. And He placed certain limits upon him, so that, if he should keep the commandment of God, he would remain always as he was, that is, immortal; if, however, he should not keep [it], he would become mortal, dissolving into the earth whence his frame was taken.<sup>30</sup>

We will turn to St. Augustine’s discussion about the Fall:

25 . . . God had threatened him with the punishment of death if he sinned, bestowing free will on him while still ruling him by his authority and terrifying him with the thought of

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<sup>28</sup> Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 288-290.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 300-301.

<sup>30</sup> St. Irenaeus, *Apostolic Preaching*, 49.

death, and placing him in the bliss of paradise as if in the shadow of life, from which he was to rise to better things if he preserved his state of justice.

26. After his sin he became an exile from this place and bound also his progeny, which by his sin had damaged within himself as though at its root, by the penalty of death and condemnation. As a result, any offspring born of him and the wife through whom he had sinned, who had been condemned together with him, born through the concupiscence of the flesh which was their punishment, carrying within it a disobedience similar to that which they had showed, would contract original sin, which would drag it through various errors and pains to the final punishment with the deserter angels, his corruptors, masters, and accomplices.<sup>31</sup>

This is a dismal but wholly correct analysis. If God's law is not obeyed, Paradise is lost. The consequence of sin, with all of its associated miseries, will pass down invariably to his children.

St. Anselm carries us past the ideal state of the Garden to the full measure of sin's end result:

[Adam] lost the grace which he was in a position to keep for those begotten from him, so that everyone generated through the nature given to him are born bound by his debt. Through this needless sin, from which it could not redeem itself, human nature, which was entire in Adam so that nothing of it existed beyond him, dishonored God. It lost the grace given to it which it was always able to keep for those to be propagated from it, and it brings on the sin with the accompanying penalty for sin whenever it is propagated by the property of generation given to it.<sup>32</sup>

Anselm lists some results of Adam's sin, emphasizing a matter of paramount importance to him:

God's *dishonor*:

Last of all are some statements by St. Thomas Aquinas: "According to the Catholic Faith we are bound to hold that the first sin of the man is transmitted to his

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<sup>31</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *The Augustine Catechism*, vol. 1, *The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Charity*, trans. and notes by Bruce Harbert (New York: Augustinian Heritage Institute, 1999), 58-59.

<sup>32</sup> Davies and Evans, "Virgin Conception and Original Sin," *Anselm*, 370.

descendants, by way of origin.” He also said, “. . . we must firmly believe that, Christ alone excepted, all men descended from Adam contract original sin from him . . .”<sup>33</sup>

So we see that both the Scripture and the Fathers spell out a downhill progression from the idylls of Paradise, a wholesale departure from God’s original intention. Nothing can be compared with the place of the first man and woman upon whom God’s incomparable blessing of *very good* had been conferred.

But what has transpired with the idea of the inviolable Word of God over the centuries since St. Thomas? As a result of the Enlightenment, human reason has enthroned itself as the ultimate source of authority.<sup>34</sup> This has given rise to the idea of progress, which gives a certain pride of place to the present over the past. So it is with biblical higher criticism, which, according to the whim and fancy of the scholar, dismisses any biblical texts they consider open to question. Steiner and Edersheim both describe the development of various kinds of such criticism.<sup>35</sup>

As we shall see, this has had immense consequences, not only for Christians, but for scientists. We now move onward to the works of Charles Darwin, which provide a stark antithesis to the accounts associated with the Scripture. They involve a joyless eradication of the concepts of creation, fall, and redemption.

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<sup>33</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*: Q.1.81.1. and 3.

<sup>34</sup> V. J. Steiner, *The Authorship of the Pentateuch: An Old Critical Issue That Refuses to Expire*, The Emmaus Institute, Lincoln, NE, rev. August, 2019, accessed July 6, 2020, [https://www.emmausinstitute.net/\\_media/documents/Critical\\_Study\\_of\\_Pent.pdf](https://www.emmausinstitute.net/_media/documents/Critical_Study_of_Pent.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> Steiner, *Authorship*; Edersheim, *Prophecy*, 106-122.

## Chapter Two

### The Introduction of a Theory With Enormous Consequences

In spite of revivals and renewals during the nineteenth century, few were prepared for the onslaught of Charles Darwin's novel theories, which have been allowed a commanding voice throughout all of Christendom. In this chapter, I will compare his pioneering texts and conclusions with Scripture, and examine their influence on both science and the Church.

Darwin's books *On the Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* will be reviewed, along with the reactions of two opposing men, the Anglican Bishop Samuel Wilberforce and Louis Agassiz, who were among the few taking issue with Darwin, while the majority aligned itself with him. Also included will be insights on Darwin from the philosopher Etienne Gilson.

As described at the end of chapter one, the stage was set for the general apostasy which has increasingly characterized the times, from the Enlightenment forward. Moorman notes, regarding the Anglican church at that time:

Few churchmen, if any, doubted the inerrancy of the Bible. The Scriptures were the 'Word of God', and could not therefore contain statements which were not true. All religious people accepted as true the accounts of Creation, or the story of the Flood, or the ages of the patriarchs. . . . On this all schools of thoughts agreed—High, Low and Broad. But already events were beginning to take place which would shake this

confidence in the infallibility of the Scriptures and lead to a very different approach to the Bible.<sup>36</sup>

However, a spirit of malaise had hovered over all the Church as the Enlightenment gained in considerable force. As Kelly states:

Less than two hundred years after Thomas [Aquinas], yet another religion began to emerge with the Italian Renaissance, and became fully developed in the European Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This religion was perhaps all the more powerful for parading as non-religion, anti-superstition, as an objective approach to truth. But religion it was; it was a powerful and aggressive alternative to historic Christianity, which it was determined to replace. It was religion in the sense of being based on improvable faith axioms, on inuring these basic axioms from criticism, on requiring total commitment, and on establishing a foundational set of ultimate values that caused it to oppose all other religions (especially Christianity).

It is with this background that we must confront Charles Darwin, and his first book *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin explains himself in no uncertain terms, throwing down the gauntlet to all his readers:

Although much remains obscure, and will long remain obscure, I can entertain no doubt, after the most deliberate study and dispassionate judgment of which I am capable, that the view which most naturalists entertain and which I formerly entertained—namely, *that each species has been independently created*—is erroneous. I am fully convinced *that species are not immutable*; but that those belonging to what are called the same genera *are lineal descendants of some other and generally extinct species*, in the same manner as the acknowledged varieties of any one species are the descendants of that species. Furthermore, I am convinced *that Natural Selection has been the main but not exclusive means of modification*<sup>37</sup> (emphases mine).

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<sup>36</sup> J. R. H. Moorman, *A History of the Church in England*, 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1980), 373.

<sup>37</sup> Kelly, *Systematic Theology*, 224.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, (London: John Murray, 1859; Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1964), 6.

This will be his theory, obliging church scholars to grapple with the sacred texts and a bizarre hermeneutic view of Scripture from that point onward, adjusting themselves accordingly to the impersonal processes of Nature, shorn of the loving hand of God. As one delves into the book, however, one sees that there are some immensely important particulars that should be of especial significance for theologians, who must understand both the nature of his ideas and the basis of his spirituality, since they tell something very pointed about its author.

It is incumbent on us to remember that Darwin's theory is based solely and consistently upon *conjectures*;<sup>38</sup> he cannot make definite statements about what happened in the past, since he wasn't there to observe it. This is the premise on which all of science will construct itself until the present day.<sup>39</sup> *This method will provide an exclusive basis for those placing their Christian faith and their understanding of the origin of man only on a means established by science.* The extremely important concept (with emendations during the twentieth century) of "descent by natural selection with modification in the struggle for life, for an extended or virtually infinite amount of time"—now more generally called "evolution"—is his basis for the existence of all species, *period*. Darwin never ventures a guess as to where or how or why such a notion was conceived, or why it chanced to be the mode which Nature "decided" to make consummate use

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<sup>38</sup> A few examples: ". . . *I am convinced* that Natural Selection has been the main but not exclusive means of modification." (p.6); ". . . not to any one time, but to all time, *if my theory be true*, numberless intermediate varieties, linking most closely all the species of the same group together, *must assuredly have existed.*" (179); ". . . *I can see no very great difficulty* (not more than in the case of many other structures) *in believing . . .*" (188); ". . . *there is no logical impossibility* in the acquirement of any conceivable degree of perfection through natural selection. . . . a swim-bladder *has apparently* been converted into an air-breathing lung." (204); "Grave as these several difficulties are, *in my judgement*, they do not overthrow the theory of descent with modification" (466, italics mine).

<sup>39</sup> "Nearly all (around 97%) of the scientific community accepts evolution as the dominant scientific theory of biological diversity," *Level of support for evolution*, accessed November 17, 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Level\\_of\\_support\\_for\\_evolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Level_of_support_for_evolution); David Masci, "Among scientists connected to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 98% say they believe humans evolved over time," *For Darwin Day, 6 facts about the evolution debate*, accessed November 17, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/02/11/darwin-day/>.

of: it just *happened*. He sees dispassionate, inanimate forces, through the entire evolutionary process, as mimicking the actions, nature, and character of man.<sup>40</sup> Only theologians who accept this idea contrive to give God some share in the process, as we will see in chapter three. For Darwin (and an ever larger and growing group of atheists), the forces of an impersonal Nature were completely responsible; that is: time, chance, and mutation.

He begins his theory by attempting to prove that natural selection “is as immeasurably superior to man’s feeble efforts, as the works of Nature are to those of Art” (61). Nature with a phenomenal anthropomorphism and through eons has tirelessly achieved its ends:

It may be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinizing, throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life.<sup>41</sup>

A number of factors has contributed successfully to the process of evolution, which the rest of the volume will demonstrate. He speaks of a “struggle for existence” where every generation of organisms is eager to take its place over competitors, a striving for perfection through which all are achieving a certain end. This progression, started from an indeterminate point in the past, has over a long period produced not merely varieties, but also species, families, genera etc., like the great branches of an extensive tree (see chart, 116-117). He is convinced that the fossil deposits will ultimately prove his theory, and believes that geological evidence will give additional proof. He admits that there is a sense of inevitable determinism in these natural

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<sup>40</sup> “Do we really understand what we are claiming when we accept the view that a mindless universe gave rise to mind?” scientist, medical doctor and philosopher Leon Kass, quoted by Christoph Cardinal Schonborn in Foreword to Etienne Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again: A Journey in Final Causality, Species, and Evolution*, trans. John Lyon (Original French edition, Paris: Librairie Philosophique J Vrin, 1971; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), xv.

<sup>41</sup> Darwin, *Origin*, 84.

changes that can't be altered in the rigid laws he must describe, but for him, it really doesn't matter: "When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief, that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply" (79).

Midway in the book Darwin devotes a chapter to "difficulties on theory." Making considerable use wherever necessary of broad expanses of time to prove his point, in order to introduce the novel idea of species, he offers speculations. For example, the unlimited reaches of time suffices for the evolution of the mammalian eye:

In living bodies, variation will cause the slight alterations, generation will multiply them also infinitely and natural selection will pick out with unerring skill each improvement. Let this process go on for millions on millions of years; and during each year on millions of individuals of many kinds; and may we not believe that a living optical instrument thus be formed as superior to one of glass, as the works of the Creator are to those of man?

If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down. But I can find out no such case.<sup>42</sup>

But how have such complexities as a mammalian organ, as an eye, formed itself through the bare materialistic workings of the miracles of "Nature"?<sup>43</sup>

There is nothing—or no one—in actuality, to provide a basis to back up his arguments, except examples provided by his careful observations *only* of the present, or of doubtful circumstantial proof. In reality, such reasoning is not the stuff of true science. But if an agreed-

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<sup>42</sup> Darwin, *Origin*, 189.

<sup>43</sup> Molecular biologist Michael Denton notes: "To have estimated the probability that a purely random search would have discovered the route (or routes) to the eye, for example, [Darwin] would have needed to have mapped out all possible routes that evolution might conceivably have taken from the original light sensitive spot over the past three thousand million years and then to have determined the fraction of routes which lead to 'camera type' eyes and the fraction which lead to all other less sophisticated organs of sight. Only then would he have been able to counter his critics with quantitative evidence that such seemingly improbable ends could have been hit on by chance." *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler Publishers, 1986), 61-62.

upon hypothesis assumes significant importance, in spite of the opposition, it moves easily from theory to fact, affording itself an air of irrefutability.

Darwin finds it incomprehensible that scientists would cling to creationism as a sufficient explanation, and is flummoxed by an antiquated system that is really for him a religious sentiment. But he is sure he will be vindicated. Out of the endless “wars of nature,” the ruthless suppression and extinction of one generation by another, the untold ages spent in the slow and unvarying processes of natural selection, acting at its own pace and in its own time, will be “the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals . . . ”<sup>44</sup> Out from the black abyss of prehistory will step forth resplendent Man. Darwin’s sequel discussed below will be devoted almost exclusively to the development of man, who is an apt *telos* for the course of natural descent, which will reach its ultimate goal *minus supernaturalism*.

In 1874, fifteen years after *On the Origin of Species*, came the second edition of *The Descent of Man*. It appears to be the continuation of *Origin*, with the added endorsement of many scientists. He sets man within the scheme of evolution, subject to the various dynamics associated with the lower animals, especially those who perhaps were his direct precursors. But because he positively refuses to have even a hint of “separate creation” in a theory which is purely deterministic and materialistic, he looks for other means to account for man’s mental attributes. “High mental powers,” “self-consciousness,” and the “ennobling belief in God . . . “

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<sup>44</sup> Darwin, *Origin*, 490.

are “social instincts—the prime principle of man’s moral constitution,”<sup>45</sup> and these he believes also evolved for the greater good of the community.<sup>46</sup>

In the book’s conclusion, Darwin turns to what for us is a premonitory subject—eugenics, the term coined by his cousin Sir Francis Galton in 1883 (a few short years after *Descent*) to name his new science. Darwin had noted that man carefully controls his breeds to insure that the best will be selected and maintained. To this end, man should also govern his marriages so that “the most able should not be prevented by laws or customs from succeeding best and rearing the largest number of offspring”<sup>47</sup> until society becomes thoroughly enlightened.

Galton carried the matter onward to further levels, and in short order, such a “society” through the aegis of science rapidly assumed command, beyond and above anything that Darwin could have ever imagined. It issued regulations and dispensed orders, until held in check (at least temporarily) by a collective conscience reeling in horror from the real effects of belief in eugenics.<sup>48</sup>

We close with his ideas about God, who he believed was invented by man to assist him in understanding a myriad of complex, baffling, problematic mysteries which beset him; to hold in check a mixture of shame, irresolution, and a need for constancy to give him assurance; and to

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<sup>45</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man: and Selection in Relation to Sex* (London: John Murray, 1871; Lawrence, KS: Digireads.com Publishing, 2019), 118-119.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>47</sup> Darwin, *Descent*, 582.

<sup>48</sup> In the twentieth century, prospective pseudo-scientists took on an incredible god-like status in the affairs of the destinies of countless millions of lives. See “Origins of Eugenics: From Sir Francis Galton to Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act of 1924,” and associated links, accessed February 29, 2020, <http://exhibits.hsl.virginia.edu/eugenics/2-origins/>. Anti-Semitism (including the Holocaust); Hitler’s efforts to eliminate all “inferior types” of people; various other “ethnic cleansing”; Marxism; racism: all result from evolution and eugenics.

keep the tribe in good working order (eg. 107, 577). He sees no need for the idea of a personal God to “account for [even] the soul-shaking feeling of remorse,” since remorse, repentance, and reverential fear must be inherited traits (107). His concept of God mirrors first the disenchant-ment, then the unbelief, of the whole course of a culture which is rejecting the Bible and sees little or no use for the Church.

However, there was also a sea change of enormous significance at work in the Church itself, which placed science squarely in the forefront, especially Darwinism and the intense destabilization resulting from it. The obdurate unbelief of its founder along with his willing disciples led the charge into the 20th and 21st centuries. During the decades following Darwin, few and far between were those in this gathering wilderness of unbelief who held unerringly to all the points of Scripture from Genesis to the Revelation. The Bible had come under the scrutiny of higher criticism which left all texts very much in question.<sup>49</sup> Like a klieg-illuminated surgical theater where nothing is exempted from constant meticulous examination, Scripture lay open to skepticism and review. Moorman exclaims with more than a note of pride: “By 1900 all serious scholars had accepted without hesitation the main conclusions of biblical criticism.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Consider the following contemporary examples: Anglican scientist/theologian, Fr. Arthur Peacocke, who employed science to deny the virgin birth in *The Disguised Friend of Faith?: Selected Essays* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2009, ProQuest EBook Central), 227, accessed January 30, 2020, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/nashotah-ebook/detail.action?docID=3037669>, and Catholic theologian Fr. Raymond E. Brown, who placed the virgin birth as one of those “doctrines for which there is slender basis in Scripture,” Henry V. King, review of *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine*, by Fr. Raymond E. Brown (New York: Paulist Press, 1985, *Catholic Culture*, September 1998, accessed Oct. 16, 2020, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=525>.

<sup>50</sup> Moorman, *A History of the Church in England*, 398.

In the midst of this, two unusual men appeared, who were at odds with the near unanimity of the times: Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, and the distinguished American scientist, Louis Agassiz.

The former, the third son of William Wilberforce (the acclaimed abolitionist and Member of Parliament) with a zeal like his father, devoted himself tirelessly against liberal incursions against the Church (he was in the midst of two other strenuous battles regarding biblical criticism which embroiled the Church of England),<sup>51</sup> including refuting *Origin*. In June of 1860 an infamous heated debate ensued between Bp. Wilberforce and the considerably younger, pugnacious T. H. Huxley (the patriarch of the Huxley family) to whom had been given the nickname “Darwin’s bulldog,” and who threatened to “sharp[en] his ‘claws’” on Darwin’s detractors.<sup>52</sup> In this brief and vehement encounter between the opposing forces: those of the Church (Wilberforce, as “the very embodiment of Victorian orthodoxy”<sup>53</sup>), and of Darwinism (Huxley, with additional “X Club” supporters Joseph Hooker and John Lubbock) as an ever larger establishment “of rational science against dogmatic religion,”<sup>54</sup> lines in the sand were inevitably drawn. It was clear, however, within just a very few years, which way the extensive warfare would turn out between the much larger progressive and assertive forces of science,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 375-77; Ruth Barton, *The X Club: Power and Authority in Victorian Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 185-190.

<sup>52</sup> Barton, *The X Club*, 173-176; J. R. Lucas, *Wilberforce and Huxley: A Legendary Encounter*, accessed February 7, 2020, <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~jrlucas/legend.html#r-23>.

<sup>53</sup> Josephine M. Guy, ed., *The Victorian Age: An anthology of sources and documents*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 272.

<sup>54</sup> Barton, *The X Club*, 173.

which had the hearts and minds of the Church largely in tow, and the determined efforts of a remnant to preserve and defend the Scripture intact.

Bishop Wilberforce offered his thoughts in a political and literary periodical.<sup>55</sup> He used Christian magnanimity, but with no small amount of the technical skill necessary to press his point to Darwin and others imbibing *Origin*. Darwin, having read the article, wrote to Hooker: “It is uncommonly clever; it picks out with skill all the most conjectural parts, and bring forward well all the difficulties. . . By the way, the Bishop makes a very telling case against me, by accumulating several instances where I speak doubtfully . . .”<sup>56</sup>

Having read *Origin* extensively and carefully, Wilberforce was determined to argue with science on the *grounds* of science: While Darwin had attempted to prove that living forms through a series of processes arrived at what they are today, Wilberforce noted—not through conjecture but through observation—that neither hybridism, nor mutation, nor time through recorded history had ever produced a new species. Species remained placidly secure within their framework, and no “transformations” presented themselves. No fossil record nor geological evidence gave sufficient data to establish proof.<sup>57</sup>

With ironic humor, he pictured mankind as Darwin would see it, “the Prince and Head of creation,” passing through the lower creatures who birthed him, leaving them behind as he reached forward toward perfection (259). Darwin’s “soaring imagination” allowed him to project

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<sup>55</sup> Guy, *The Victorian Age*, 272-277; Samuel Wilberforce, review of *On the Origin of Species, by means of Natural Selection; or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, by Charles Darwin, M. A., F.R.S., *Quarterly Review*, 1860, 225-264, accessed March 4, 2020, [http://www.victorianweb.org/science/science\\_texts/wilberforce.htm](http://www.victorianweb.org/science/science_texts/wilberforce.htm).

<sup>56</sup> Lucas, *Wilberforce and Huxley*, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Wilberforce, in *Quarterly Review*, 233-234.

ahead a new species to replace man, giving us “some confidence to a secure future of equally inappreciable length” (262, quoting *Origin*, 489).

Wilberforce assumes the role of an apologist for the orthodox faith, and offers an earnest opposition to what was really a concerted revolt against all the basic underpinnings of Christianity, stating that Darwin’s reasoning was dishonoring to both man and to the One who created and restored him:

“[S]uch a notice is absolutely incompatible . . . with the whole representation of that moral and spiritual condition of man which is its proper subject matter. Man’s derived supremacy over the earth; man’s power of articulate speech; man’s gift of reason; man’s free-will and responsibility; man’s fall and man’s redemption; the incarnation of the Eternal Son; the indwelling of the Eternal Spirit,—all are equally and utterly irreconcilable with the degrading notion of the brute origin of him who was created in the image of God, and redeemed by the Eternal Son assuming to himself his nature.”<sup>58</sup>

Darwin finds “the presence of death and famine . . . inconceivable on the ordinary idea of creation; . . .” (260). But Wilberforce places *the Fall* as the originator of an order totally at odds with the perfect state it had once known: “We can give [Darwin] a simpler solution still for the presence of these strange forms of imperfection and suffering amongst the works of God. We can tell him of the strong shudder which ran through all this world when its head and ruler fell” (260).

In his conclusion, he reminds the reader of his concerns, which have led him to write in such detail for the defense of “the scientific mind of England” (263). From the “God of Truth [who] is at once the God of Nature and the God of Revelation” all things will agree, as did the Old and New Covenants in Him, resting the “mind in perfect quietness and assurance” (260).

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 258.

But within a short amount of time, science, which in the past had always sought correction and protective covering from the higher disciplines of theology and philosophy, would burst permanently from its confines. And the Church, the Mother and Protector of all, whose allegiance and accountability were only to God and to keeping His Holy Word sacrosanct, would accede to science, *without even a word of protest*, its license of moral authority and prophetic calling.

We move onward now to the scientist Louis Agassiz (1807-1873), a Swiss emigre to America. A great naturalist and founder of the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, he was one of the last noted scientists of the time to take a decided stance against Darwinism. In an introduction to work on natural history, he delivered an unusual encomium:

The combination in time and space of all these thoughtful conceptions [of nature] exhibits not only thought, shows also premeditation, power, wisdom, greatness, prescience, omniscience, providence. In one word, all these facts, in their natural connection, proclaim aloud the One God, whom man may know, adore, and love and Natural History must, in good time, become the analysis of the thoughts of the Creator of the Universe, as manifested in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, as well as in the inorganic world.<sup>59</sup>

His ideas are similar to those of Wilberforce in that he could in no circumstances permit the idea of living things being changed from their original creation. As a group, although they have “no material existence, they yet exist as categories of thought”<sup>60</sup> —the products of a Divine Mind—which never will change in any way; they are always and utterly true to form,

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<sup>59</sup> Louis Agassiz, *An Essay On Classification* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, and Trubner & Co., 1859), 205, accessed July 24, 2020, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015015737953&view=1up&seq=9>.

<sup>60</sup> Louis Agassiz, *Contributions to the Natural History of the United States of America* (Boston: Brown and Company, 1860), 3:88, accessed July 22, 2020, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012360765>.

“unaccountable on any other basis than that they owe their existence to the working of intelligence.”<sup>61</sup> But Darwin saw creatures as only subject to the vagaries of chance, stemming from a common descent. From such a scenario the concept of God is excluded. As one of Agassiz’ biographers described their disparity: “Agassiz believed that Darwin shunned this joyful embrace of the intellectual and material worlds. Natural selection is not a creative power. Rather, it is an abstract agency that prevents us from viewing the whole nature as a work of art whose individual components refer to and cite each other and yet remain defiantly individual.”<sup>62</sup>

While Agassiz was enjoying his growing fame and prospects in America, seeds for Darwinism were taking root rapidly there, especially in the highest levels of science. Asa Gray, a botanist, who had once sided with Agassiz but then went against him wholeheartedly, collaborated with Darwin via letters to bring Agassiz down. Gray’s words show no small amount of contempt for his contemporary, calling him a “foolish man” (141), going to “absurd lengths” against Darwin’s theory, his research “incapable of demonstration,” saying of Agassiz’s ideals of “prophetic types”(140): “If these are true prophecies, we need not wonder that some who read them in Agassiz’s book will read their fulfillment in Darwin” (141). Gray became “Darwin’s, and Darwinism’s, most effective spokesman in America” (138).

But Agassiz could not have realized that the theologians and scientists, even in America, would soon give themselves thoroughly and completely to Darwin. Eleven years before his death, Darwin felt that he had accomplished his goal: “I have at least as I hope done good service

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>62</sup> Christoph Irmscher, *Louis Agassiz: Creator of American Science* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt 2013), 150.

in aiding to overthrow the dogma of separate creations.”<sup>63</sup> Many agreed. A. R. Wallace (a contemporary naturalist of Darwin’s, who independently proposed a similar theory of evolution) gushed, “Mr. Darwin has given the world a new science, and his name should, in my opinion, stand above that of every philosopher of ancient or modern times.”<sup>64</sup> And for active promoters, such as The X Club, “. . . the *Origin* mattered because it was a weapon in a larger war. . . . [I]t had eliminated any need to appeal to creative power to explain the variety of living forms and hence removed what had been one of the strong arguments for a Creator.”<sup>65</sup>

Before leaving this discussion on Darwin, we will consider the thoughts of Etienne Gilson, the Catholic philosopher of a century later, who provides an invaluable analysis of Darwin and his work.

Fixity of species was the mark of creationism which found its order, origin, and end in God, but “transformism”<sup>66</sup> was developed by Darwin’s precursors, and was firmly established by him in *Origin*. Gilson describes the dilemma of one believing in “teleology without final causes” : While the transformist admires the beauty of adaptations in nature, which come from being the means to an end, he doesn’t “[conceive] of natural finality as the result of an intention first present in the thought of God and capable, consequently, if one discerns it, of explaining the structure of the work. This theological finality is that of which Charles Darwin is the sworn

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<sup>63</sup> Darwin, *Descent*, 60.

<sup>64</sup> Richard Conniff, “On the Origin of a Theory,” *Smithsonian*, June 2008, 86-93.

<sup>65</sup> Barton, *The X Club*, 176.

<sup>66</sup> “Transformism perhaps is better defined, in a negative fashion, as the negation of ‘fixism’, namely, as stating that it is not true that species are today that which they were at their origin, no matter how one might conceive that origin,” Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin*, 49.

enemy.” He also won’t “conceive of living beings as the result of any sort of fabrication.” However, Darwin “desires a nature wherein all comes about as if there had been a choice, even though no one and nothing were there to choose. One comes then to the notion of a teleology without final causes,” in which species are transformed into new ones “without it being necessary to recur to the hypothesis of a causality of a particular type charged with directing the operation.”<sup>67</sup>

Thus a transformist must be prepared to propound a solution that secures all the bases: disallowing any place for a superintending presence; only an impersonal agency personified by Nature directs in essence a process which has no endpoint and no beginning, from which everything derives its substance.

Gilson praises Darwin as a keen observer, but “when Darwin takes leave of the observation and immediate interpretation of facts, wherein he is the master, he displays an intellectual nonchalance and an imprecision in ideas which does not appear in any way tolerable.”<sup>68</sup> As an example of incredible imprecision, Gilson states that Darwin never “[undertook] to clarify the issue of the origin of species in the book, in the sense of the origin of the existence of species” (168).

Another example is Darwin’s ambiguity concerning “species” and “varieties” :  
“. . . [Darwin] tries his best to pulverize the notions of species in an indiscriminable multitude of varieties, because *if there are no species, it is not possible that there have been separate creations of them*” (171-172) (emphasis Gilson’s).

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 98-99.

<sup>68</sup> Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin*, 167.

Reaching his conclusion, Gilson reflects on Darwin's grand hypothesis as "somber and even tragic" (176). Regarding a scientist whose principles will never allow any created species, even "with active detestation, without even asking himself on what so-called revealed authority it is founded," Gilson sums up Darwin's *summum bonum* of a "system of nature" :

The totality of universal history is beheld here under a single and simple human glance. One can imagine that Darwin had been enraptured by it, but this is simply to replace one theology by another, and both together are equally indemonstrable. It is possible, moreover, to suspect it. A sober scientific truth is capable of arousing admiration, perhaps even enthusiasm, but of an intellectual variety rather than that sort of popular cult of which, under the name of Evolutionism (which is a stranger to it), Natural Selection has become the object.<sup>69</sup>

Gilson makes a very good point: ". . . [W]hereas one understood an evolution in which the less issued from the greater wherein it was contained, that form of evolution in which the greater continually springs from the less is incomprehensible. It at least deserves no more to be entitled e-volution" (103).

Their "e-volution" will only be through adaptation to their surroundings, including cataclysmic disasters, or through selective artificial inbreeding. No information is added to the mix, either through the means of "natural selection" nor from God Himself.

Gilson goes on:

. . . Words have their importance. *Evolution* has above all served the purpose of hiding the absence of an idea. . . . In whatever manner biologists understand evolution, they are accounting for the mechanism of something the notion of which they are incapable of defining. . . . It is not so surprising that this should come about when one realizes that this last word of nineteenth positive science is the offspring of the crossing of political economy, a doubtful science, and the philosophy of [Herbert] Spencer, . . .<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>70</sup> Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin*, 103-104.

Gilson concludes, “Evolution has become so unquestionable that it henceforth takes the place of demonstration. Transformism presently occupies an impregnable position” (105). He continues, “The more one reads the scientists on this point, the more one is tempted to think that, like the notion of species, that of evolution is a philosophical notion which is introduced from outside of science, wherein it appears destined always to stand out as a foreign body” (106).

In this chapter, we have given special regard to Darwin, who through his theory produced the disconnect between the progress of biological science and the acceptance of Scripture. Efforts by Wilberforce and Agassiz, who stood in the gap to work against it were in vain, even though these men demonstrated that the science involved in his theory was questionable (as Gilson has also shown). The next chapter will describe a theology basically unvarying today from its institution a century and a half ago, influenced by Darwin. In spite of the efforts to update the latest science according to the exponential increase of knowledge, a dogged and persistent inflexibility remains even until now. Why? It is absolutely impossible to alter the base that was firmly established by Darwin, which continues to be the only secure alternative to Holy Scripture, and which is approved by scientists, by the world, and especially and finally, by the Church, which will lead ultimately to its enduring shame and embarrassment. The Bible contains nothing but absurd premises that are abhorrent to a generation which prides itself on its modernity and refuses to consider reasonable scientific alternatives which might allow wholehearted embracing of the truths that were once loved and accepted. Thus a confluence in the mid-nineteenth century between a skepticism of Scripture and an unquestioned reliance on science has caused the Church to bow to its determined assault.



### **Alister E. McGrath: Modern Theologian/Scientist**

“[T]here can be no doubt that after a century of intensive effort biologists have failed to validate [evolution] in any significant sense. The fact remains that nature has not been reduced to the continuum that the Darwinian model demands, nor has the credibility of chance as the creative agency of life been secured.”<sup>71</sup>

In spite of objections by Denton and by many other scientists, all the loyal evolutionists are absolutely certain that their cause is won. Science has proven the matter to its satisfaction. No other competing theories—for instance, creationism or intelligent design—can be given any credence. But the theologian has a much more difficult task, for he must find a way to conjoin two incompatible belief systems: God’s Holy Word and an evolutionary paradigm having its own set of rules, unrelated to Scripture.

In this chapter I will discuss Alister E. McGrath, who is one of these committed theistic evolutionists. I will consider, among others, his views on natural theology, including his treatment of William Paley; his use of Augustine’s “seminal reasons;” and his discussion of Christopher Southgate’s theology on suffering.

As has been dealt with, Darwin was the universal watershed for everything that has succeeded him, including science, culture, theology, politics, and every form of human institution. But since his “theory” was promulgated, men have found themselves a tiny iota in the cold, aloof vastness of time and space, lost in a spiritual void. This explains the existentialism which characterizes modern man. He tries to create for himself his own teleology which is hopeless, erecting instead an insuperable barrier between God and his creation.

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<sup>71</sup> Denton, *Evolution*, 357. Although Denton wrote this in 1985, his 2016 book “*Evolution: Still a Theory in Crisis*” shows that he has not changed his mind.

In the Scriptures, God expressed himself emotionally and immanently within the cosmos which he had birthed and brought into being. He nurtured and redeemed it with compassion and through prophetic warnings of divine judgment. But over and against it mankind has created an ersatz, mechanistic, depersonalized, and atheistic universe devoid of any semblance of divinity. As we shall see, theologians like McGrath attempt constantly, through innumerable failing means, to bandage the hopeless wound that has resulted.

McGrath is a contemporary theologian/scientist within the Anglican tradition, and is also typical of many modern Christian theologians. Although professing to be faithful to Scripture, they are also convinced that evolution is inherently logical and universally confirmed.<sup>72</sup>

In *Darwinism*, McGrath defines natural theology as “the ‘proof’ of God’s existence from the natural world, or the exploration of the degree of intellectual resonance between the Christian vision of reality and what is actually observed in nature.”<sup>73</sup> He must align it with “evolutionary biology” (31), since the classical sense of Darwinism is outmoded, giving way to a “new synthesis” (30-31) as the sound basis of all science. Although he is against “metaphysically inflated approaches” (32), he expresses his central idea that “natural theology is indeed capable of engaging with a Darwinian view of reality” (267-68). And while he admits that Darwinism as

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<sup>72</sup> Some examples: Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin’s God: A Scientist’s Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1999); Arthur Peacocke, *Evolution: The Disguised Friend of Faith?: Selected Essays* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2009); ProQuest EBook Central, accessed January 30, 2020, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/nashotah-ebook/detail.action?docID=3037669>; John Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998; and Nicanor Austriaco, O.P., *Defending Adam after Darwin*, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary Philosophy Lecture, November 2017, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MsJ67qtHYY>; and “A Theological Fittingness Argument for the Evolution of *Homo Sapiens*,” *Theology and Science* 17, no. 4 (2019): 539-550, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2019.1670967>.

<sup>73</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Darwinism and the Divine: Evolutionary Thought and Natural Theology*, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 2.

a theory is a “development of questionable credibility” and is a “creedal statement, not a scientific viewpoint” (33)—one which Richard Dawkins considers “*the* defining account of reality” (34, emphasis his)—McGrath still assumes it to be the entire grounds of his own argument.

Reviewing the history of English science from the Protestant Reformation of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, McGrath tends to view the natural history of those earlier scientists to be very restricted due to the limitations of their times. Even though the great Isaac Newton (1643-1727) was held in such “religious and scientific esteem . . . that some pressed for him to be treated as a saint” (54), McGrath is dismissive of him: Newton’s “amalgam of natural philosophy and . . . Anglican theology . . . was an unstable amalgam—more of a convenient, temporary convergence of vested intellectual and social interests, rather than a resilient, integrated, conceptual fusion”<sup>74</sup> (56). While McGrath admires the early English scientists’ romanticization, centered in their belief in God, in their idea of “contrivance”<sup>75</sup> as a proof of God’s existence, and in the “fixed or static notion of the natural world” (74), he believes that this romanticization led to an ultimate *cul-de-sac* of “the ‘desacralization’ or ‘disenchantment’ of nature,” denying mystery and miracles (57-60). So Charles Darwin’s theory proved ultimately to be a “savior,”<sup>76</sup> offering a

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<sup>74</sup> However, Paul Gosselin, a social anthropologist, explained regarding Newton’s post-humous publication, *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, that the book “was based directly on the Genesis account and challenged chronologies of the Ancient World proposed by Greek historians,” *Flight From the Absolute: Cynical Observations on the Postmodern West*, vol. 2 (Quebec, QC: Samizdat, 2013), 128.

<sup>75</sup> “. . . ‘contrivance,’ . . . is held to indicate both being designed for a specific purpose, and being executed in a manner conducive toward this end,” McGrath, *Darwinism*, 63-64.

<sup>76</sup> “We recognize the great service rendered by Darwin to natural science by restoring teleology to it, so that instead of having morphology against teleology, we shall have henceforth morphology married to teleology,” Asa Gray, “Scientific Worthies,” *Nature* 10 no. 240 (June 1874): 81, accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.nature.com/articles/010079a0>.

valid, substantial science, and laying the groundwork for a theological and teleological perspective from that point onward.

McGrath appears to have a real problem with one of those eighteenth-century natural historians, William Paley (1743-1805), and devotes many pages to him. Paley, according to Moorman, was “busy in the northern parishes writing first his *Horae Paulinae [or the truth of the Scripture History of St Paul]* (1790) and then his *View of the Evidences of Christianity* (1794) which was an attempt to defend the Christian faith against critics like Hume and Gibbon.”<sup>77</sup>

In the introduction to *Evidences*, opposing David Hume’s skepticism, Paley discussed the need mankind had for a “revelation,” which he asserted could be made only by miracles. Part I concerns “the direct historical evidence of Christianity, and wherein it is distinguished from the evidence alleged for other miracles.” This includes the manifest sufferings of the “propagators of Christianity” attesting to its veracity. Its authenticity is also adduced by Church Fathers including Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, and others. Part II includes “auxiliary evidences of Christianity” such as prophecies found in the Old Testament, “the Savior’s character,” and the “historicity of the resurrection.” Part III contains a discussion of the “erroneous opinions imputed to the apostles,” and the apparent discrepancies between the Gospels. At the end of the treatise, Paley makes the astounding statement:

An overwhelming preponderance of evidences are given by methods secret to us (as all the great processes of nature are), for conducting the objects of God’s moral government, through the necessary changes of their frame, *to those final distinctions of happiness and misery which he hath declared to be reserved for obedience and transgression, for virtue and vice, for the use and the neglect, the right and the wrong employment of the faculties*

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<sup>77</sup> Moorman, *A History of the Church in England*, 313.

*and opportunities with which he hath been pleased, severally, to intrust and to try us*<sup>78</sup> (emphasis mine).

According to M. D. Eddy (history professor at Durham University), in Paley's book *Natural Theology*<sup>79</sup> "Paley specifically intended to shame atheists and to praise the attributes of God."<sup>80</sup> Eddy also states, "Regarding arrangement [of the book], the book review of *Natural Theology* in the *Edinburgh Review* asserts: " 'His great merit lies in the clear perception of the strong or the difficult parts of a question, and in the judicious selection and perspicuous arrangement of his arguments' " (6).

Paley's *Natural Theology* allowed him to demonstrate in full flower, through copious illustrations, his idea of contrivance. While admitting that the book "has every right to be a classic work" (86), McGrath pokes holes in it. He explains, "The inference of design [e. g., 'the watch-maker analogy' (92)] was culturally conditioned, shaped by prevailing societal beliefs and norms. As time passed, and these became displaced by alternative beliefs [such as evolutionism], it became clear that this inference was not as 'natural' or 'rational' as some had naively assumed" (110). He especially notices that those intellectuals following Paley criticized him "on account of his truncated and impoverished view of nature. Why not extend his approach to consider the human mind?" (112). ". . . Paley's approach to nature is optimistic, positive, and, to its critics,

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<sup>78</sup> William Paley, *Evidence of Christianity* (Middletown, DE: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2020; reprint William Paley, M. A., *A View of the Evidences of Christianity. In Three Parts.*, 2 vols., 2nd. ed. (London: R. Faulder, 1794).

<sup>79</sup> William Paley, *Natural Theology: Or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity Collected from the Appearances of Nature* (London: R. Faulder, 1802).

<sup>80</sup> M. D. Eddy, "The Rhetoric and Science of William Paley's *Natural Theology*," *Literature and Theology*, vol. 18 no. 1, March 2004 (Dibner Institute, Massachusetts Institute of Technology), accessed September 24, 2020, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249239477\\_The\\_Rhetoric\\_and\\_Science\\_of\\_William\\_Paley%27s\\_Natural\\_Theology](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249239477_The_Rhetoric_and_Science_of_William_Paley%27s_Natural_Theology), 1.

uncritically simplistic. . . [His] blithe and Panglossian reflections on nature overlook more than be permitted” (166). McGrath then states the heart of evolutionary theology: “Paley does not consider that biological contrivance might *emerge* [his emphasis] under God’s providential guidance, leaving the field clear for another possibility of its explanation—namely, that contrivance is to be seen as the *outcome of prolonged evolutionary selection and symbiosis with its surroundings*” (99, emphasis mine).

McGrath continues to disparage Paley: “Paley’s approach was systematically deconstructed by Christian theologians . . . Darwin may have administered the *coup de grace* to a mortally wounded form of natural theology; the fatal wounds, however, were administered much earlier” (103) by theologians and scientists just after Paley’s demise. “. . . [T]he rise of evolutionary thought was the final of many nails in the coffin of William Paley’s specific approach to natural theology . . . Darwin’s naturalistic explanation of contrivance fatally wounded such approaches” (279-80). Natural theology “has been given a new lease on life through the rise of evolutionary thought, partly by being liberated from the intellectual and spiritual straitjacket within which Paley’s approach had unhelpfully confined it” (280). It should be abundantly clear, then, that McGrath finds Paley to be a stumbling-block to both the idea of the progress of evolution and to what McGrath considers is the advancement of science.

McGrath rightly concludes that “disenchantment” (133) was the consequence in the Anglican Church: sentimentalization with the past; inability to adequately equip itself with the exigencies of modernity; and the use of outmoded apologetics. But he is certain that Darwinism and everything that springs from it will inevitably prove itself worthy of the cause, and that Paley will be left to the dust-laden shelves of the distant past.

Beyond Paley, McGrath outlines a series of what he considers break-throughs in natural theology which will ultimately lead invariably to Darwin. The nineteenth century involved massive adjustments which would in the end give way to the shaping of the twentieth century, especially theology. By and large the English public, and even that of the scientific establishment, stubbornly clung to basic evidence of Scripture. But this belief was rapidly fraying and heading for extinction, through the impetus of the so-called Enlightenment and the suspicions and disregard of the Bible. All must be now properly and logically scrutinized through the “detachment and objectivity” of science—the final arbiter of the truth— before it can be given admission to academia.

Having dispensed with Paley, McGrath attempts to build a house of cards on the topsy-turvy foundation of Darwinism. Since it fundamentally opposes the Scripture, much of the enormous and ever-increasing knowledge being built on it since Darwin’s time raises itself up against both the Church and *against the knowledge of God* (2 Cor 10:5).

An example is McGrath’s treatment of the paramount Christian doctrine of creation. In both of his two books, *Darwinism* and his *Theology*,<sup>81</sup> McGrath chronicles the idea of creation as believed from antiquity. However, the current ideas that he discusses are all based on some form of evolution.

“Neo-Darwinism,” “evolutionary synthesis,” (*Darwinism*, 30) or “new synthesis” (31) are newer, dressier versions of the guesswork associated with “natural selection” and the glorified theories promulgated by Darwin 150 years ago. But in McGrath’s efforts to actually define the process of “evolution” there is continual uncertainty, mirroring all the work since that point. Will

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<sup>81</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (West Sussex, U. K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), e.g. 327-352.

it be as “dynamic stabilization” playing a “significant role in the evolutionary process,” or “autopoiesis, self-organization, epigenetic mechanisms, and symbiosis” (31)? Through “chance,” “randomization,” “stochastic processes or chaos theory” (192)? Will “emergent approaches to creation” (230) be realized “[w]hen ensembles or aggregates of material particles attain an appropriate level of organization complexity, [and] genuinely novel properties begin to emerge” (231)? Will new forms continue to appear through “[t]he spontaneous self-organization of cosmological structures” (232-33), or through “quantum [mechanics]” (234)? Although it all pretends to be “‘seeing’ nature from the perspective of a Trinitarian ontology” (201), it is in essence little more than *atheism* (as we will see shortly), since the evidences of Gods’s Word are categorically denied.

All of these speculations are a far cry from the simple narrative of creation contained in the first two chapters of Genesis. Nevertheless, McGrath spends a substantial amount of time justifying his assumption that God created through evolution by discussing St. Augustine and his *rationes seminales* (“seminal reasons”) or “seeds” (222-233). For evolutionist-theologians, this is a significant apologetic source. Augustine’s “notion . . . is of critical importance, and needs careful consideration” (223). Although Augustine wrote *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*<sup>82</sup> in pre-scientific terms, his “seminal reasons,” says McGrath, “[appear to be] dormant ‘virtual’ entities enabling the natural world to emerge in its own way and in its own time . . . [implying] that the original creation contained within it *the potentialities of all the living kinds* that would

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<sup>82</sup> Johannes Quasten, Walter J. Burghardt, and Thomas Comerford Lawler, eds., *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, no. 42, St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 2 vols., trans. and ann. John Hammond Taylor, S. J. (New York: Newman Press, 1982).

subsequently emerge” (224, emphasis mine). However, consider what Augustine said in the following:

But if we should suppose that God now makes a creature without having implanted its kind [*genus*] in His original creation, we should flatly contradict Sacred Scripture, which says that on the sixth day did finish all His works. For it is obvious that accordance with those kinds of creatures which He first made, God makes many new things which He did not make then. But we cannot believe that He establishes a new kind, since He finished all His works on the sixth day (*The Literal Meaning*, 5, 20, 41, 171, Vol. I).

Evolution can never produce by “natural selection” a prodigious expansion of species, from microbes—through progressive changes—to man, “for it is blasphemy to believe or to say (even before it can be understood) that any other than God is creator of any nature, be it ever so small and mortal.”<sup>83</sup>

“Let us, then, consider the beauty of any tree in its trunk, branches, leaves, and fruit . . . (T)he germ was from a seed, and therefore in the seed all those parts existed primordially, not in the dimensions of bodily mass but as a force and causal power . . . *Literal Meaning*, 5, 23, 44, 174).

Let us, then, omit the conjectures of men who know not what they say, when they speak of the nature and origin of the human race. For some hold the same opinion regarding men that they hold regarding the world itself, that they have always been... They are deceived, too, by those highly mendacious documents which profess to give the history of many thousand years, though, reckoning by the sacred writings, we find that not 6000 years have yet passed.<sup>84</sup>

These quotes may assist us in understanding “seminal reasons.” It seems reasonable to suggest that a “potentially multileveled reality, whose properties *emerge* under certain conditions that either did not exist, or were not considered appropriate for development, at the origins of the universe” (226, emphasis McGrath’s), was very far from anything that Augustine would have

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<sup>83</sup> “Whether the Angels Can Be Said to Be the Creators of Any, Even the Least Creature,” St. Augustine, *The City of God*, 12, 24, 408.

<sup>84</sup> “Of the falseness of the history which allots many thousand years to the world’s past,” *ibid.*, 12, 10, 390.

envisioned. Augustine’s “seeds” would allow for an acorn to develop into an oak tree, but not to develop into a whale, no matter how much time elapsed.

It is necessary here to explain briefly why Augustine even introduced the “seminal reasons,” since he is the only Church Father to have done so. In the Bible he was using—the *Vetus Latina Bible*—Sirach 18:1 stated, “Who lives eternally, created everything simultaneously,” which is a mistranslation. The NRSV, for example, reads, *He who lives forever created the whole universe*. The word translated “simultaneously” actually means “completely,” or “in entirety.”<sup>85</sup> Believing that the Scripture taught a simultaneous creation, he used the “reasons” to attempt to explain how all of creation could live simultaneously, by existing in potentiality.

One is reminded of Augustine’s words in the Prologue to his very late *Retractationes* [426] to those reading his many earlier works, without proper discernment: “For whoever reads my works in the order in which they were written will probably discover how I did make progress as I wrote;”<sup>86</sup> also, “. . . [two French commentators] point out that the same aporetic character marks Augustine’s larger commentary on Genesis. In [*Retractationes*] 2. 24. 1, Augustine says of it, “In that work there are more questions than discoveries, and of the

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<sup>85</sup> Joseph Gedney, *St. Augustine Rediscovered: A Defense of the Literal Interpretation of St. Augustine’s Writings on the Sacred History of Genesis*, December 14, 2018, The Kolbe Center, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://kolbecenter.org/st-augustine-rediscovered-a-defense-of-the-literal-interpretation-of-st-augustines-writings-on-the-sacred-history-of-genesis/>.

<sup>86</sup> St. Augustine, *The Retractationes of Saint Augustine*, trans. Meredith Freeman Eller (Boston University, 1946), accessed October 7, 2020, [https://archive.org/stream/retractationesof00elle/retractationesof00elle\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/retractationesof00elle/retractationesof00elle_djvu.txt).

discoveries fewer still are solidly grounded; the rest are set down as matters needing further investigation.”<sup>87</sup>

With respect to that other fundamental Christian doctrine, the Fall, McGrath, like all evolutionists (but in contrast to the Christians theologians discussed in chapter 1, who welcomed it as a cardinal point of doctrine), steers away from it, treating it in vague terms.<sup>88</sup> As he did with the topic of creation, in both *Darwinism* and *Theology*, he details the various explanations of evil, suffering and death from earliest times. But his own ideas seem to be based on the theology of Christopher Southgate, which he examines approvingly. Southgate believes the following: 1) “Pain, suffering, death, and extinction” are an “inevitable outcome” of evolution. 2) He presumptuously declares, “An evolving creation is *the only means* by which God could give rise to all the beauty, diversity, sentience, and sophistication” in the biosphere (emphasis mine). 3) “God suffers along with every sentient being in creation. The cross of Christ is interpreted as a historic moment of manifestation and embodiment of divine compassion, in which God assumes ultimate responsibility for the suffering and pain of the ‘groaning’-created order.”

Here, then, is Southgate’s divine design, “specifically excluding the notion of a historic Fall, as traditionally interpreted” (205-207): in so many words, the cross—with Christ dying upon it—is the panacea for untold millions of years of misery, with hosts of generations of creatures becoming extinct in order that man will emerge triumphant from the fray. . . *This* is

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<sup>87</sup> Teske, Roland J., S.J., trans., *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 84, *St. Augustine on Genesis: On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: an Unfinished Book* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 145, n. 1. accessed March 12, 2020, [https://isidore.co/calibre/#book\\_id=5059&library\\_id=CalibreLibrary&panel=book\\_details](https://isidore.co/calibre/#book_id=5059&library_id=CalibreLibrary&panel=book_details).

<sup>88</sup> In *Explaining your Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), his depiction of creation (88) and the fall (94) in the Genesis texts is also cursory.

indeed God the Father's invention, with the Son's full assent! Or, to put it simply: *Why must Christ heal a universe filled with the pain, disease, and death produced by God Himself?*

Southgate's words are a travesty of the word of God.

McGrath then considers "Universal Darwinism," a term used for evolution stripped of its theological trappings, allowing only atheism to hold sway (247-276). It has been growing in power and influence, especially through the work of Richard Dawkins, S. J. Gould, and Daniel Dennett, who categorically deny any religious implications associated with what they deem to be a system composed of only material causes. Perhaps they see the contradiction and confusion arising from putting God somewhere in the evolutionary mix, and from the absolute inability to align evolution with the due reverence and deference given to God in Scripture. Frankly, their cause is just! So McGrath descends again into disparagement.

For example, McGrath maligns "God-Memes"<sup>89</sup> (254-262), an attempt to "uninvite" God from the materialistic universe which really doesn't need or want him in a self-created, self-contained, self-sustaining system which is essentially doing its best without him. But McGrath tries to explode the argument:

"Faith in God is regularly attributed to memetic processes within the canonical writings of the 'New Atheism,' often being compared with infection with a virus. The naive reader might gain the impression that she [sic] is being presented with a synopsis of cutting-edge scientific research, when she is really being offered a distillation of speculative moon shine" (261).

". . . Dawkins sets out the idea of memes as if it were established scientific orthodoxy, making no mention of the inconvenient fact that the mainstream scientific community views it as a decidedly flaky idea, best relegated to the margins. The 'meme' is presented

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<sup>89</sup> The "God-Meme" is used by Dawkins to show that belief in God "propagates itself within a population by a process of thought contagion," McGrath, *Darwinism*, 255.

as if it were an actually existing entity, with huge potential to explain the origins of religion” (ibid.).

“The idea of a human mind that somehow transcends both its genetic and memetic creators is nothing more than an outmoded myth” (ibid.).

But what do the theologian/scientists, including McGrath, have to offer any more than the materialist/atheists? The self-styled “scientific orthodoxy” which stands behind evolution has only the following: doubtful hypotheses that have been morphed into facts, based upon self-referential statements<sup>90</sup> that are alleged to be true, and the agreed-upon allegiance sustained by its promoters; and the ever growing and deafening silence confronting those who scan the depths of the macro- and microspheres, who should admit in all honesty that every single finding leads to an array of new and bigger unanswerable questions . . . Upon such an edifice sits a supposed “Christian faith” that has forsaken its own sources, which no one—including the multitudes exiting into atheism—wants anything to do with. With such a story, the end of *Darwinism* is merely an anticlimax.

In the final analysis, for McGrath, “evolutionary thought” holds supremacy over natural theology (32). It gives us “occasion for informed reflection on the nature and scope of natural theology,” and enables us to grapple with the “complex understanding of nature that an evolutionary account of natural history suggests,” but since “belief in God, . . . music, [or] the theory of evolution” [!] cannot be excluded as “unintended by-products of evolution” (267), why think twice about them, then, at all? Let us go into the godless void of limitless possibilities to find the answers we are seeking.

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<sup>90</sup> See for example pp. 188, 195 ff., describing the “big bang” and the evolution of the universe.

All that is left, then, for the Church is to be a “community of discernment” (285), one of the many purveyors of knowledge along with the rest in this postmodern smorgasbord of what-you-will. In fact, it must stand way back in line behind the others, who parade their proud wares in exhibition for all to see, unconcerned about religion. The church will never be invited to “a legitimate place at the round table of ethics and social debate” (34), even if it signs the dotted line giving due obeisance to the “indisputable” dogmas of evolution.

McGrath’s garnishing the end of the book with trinitarian theological truisms (288-289) cannot mend the unbridgeable gaps for thinking people. They see the disparity between the sure, imperative, and unbendable tenets of Scripture and a recast, revamped theology dressed in evolutionary clothes, abandoning tradition for a comfortable faith which has no answers for the manifold questions filling the hearts and minds of those in these desperate times seeking someone, somewhere, *who knows something.*

## Chapter Four

### Conclusion

There still remains only God to protect man against man. Either we will serve Him in spirit and in truth, or we shall enslave ourselves ceaselessly, more and more, to the monstrous idol which we have made with our own hands to our own image and likeness. The cause of so many miseries is indeed the ignorance which men have of an important message: they no longer know that a Saviour is born to us.<sup>91</sup>

This paper has compared evolutionary science, through Darwin and Alister McGrath, a representative theologian of the twenty-first century, with Scripture backed by the witness of the patristic and medieval scholars. The two are in explicit contradistinction; there is no reconciliation. Making a ragbag amalgamation of the two produces the confusion that in turn yields the religious atheism of today.

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<sup>91</sup> Gilson, *The Terrors of the Year Two Thousand* (Toronto: University of St. Michael's College, 1949, 1984), 18, accessed March 3, 2020, <https://archive.org/details/terrorsofyeartwo00gils>.

Alister McGrath's ideas represent a prime example of Darwinism modernized for our times. Today, there is an incredible amount of *knowledge*. Darwin's basic themes seem almost inconceivably simplistic in view of the unbelievable array of information. But Darwin has become for all of science the entire mainstay, the sacred "holy grail" which absolutely must be obeyed, *no questions asked, period*. This is the real, actual imperium of modern science.

McGrath represents the majority of church scholars, and of other scientist/theologians, since Darwin's debut. With few exceptions, all churches have aligned themselves with the paradigm of evolution. Only a growing remnant,<sup>92</sup> ranging itself against Darwinism, is making itself known, to the consternation and desperation of the powers that are in control. Their tendency has been to resort to persecution to repress the growing dissent.<sup>93</sup>

Consider the following thoughts:

*Deception*: 2 Thess 2 gives warning concerning the end times (see also Mt 24:4-5; Col 2:4; 2 Tim 3:1-9; 2 Pet 2:1-3; Jude; Rev 13:11-14; and Dan 7:25-27). The fact of its being part of St. Paul's earliest work gives it an air of great and unusual importance, especially because of the copious eschatology involved. It seems incredible that the apostle addressed so much of a revelatory nature to 'primitive' Christians. Quoting a portion of the chapter (but recommending

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<sup>92</sup> A number of excellent research scientists and other writers who are creationists or ID believers are refused peer-reviewed status by evolutionists, and must resort to other journals and publishers.

<sup>93</sup> See movie: *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*, directed by Nathan Frankowski, Premise Media, 2008, accessed April 2, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5EPymcWp-g>; David Klinghoffer, "The Branding of a Heretic: Are religious scientists unwelcome at the Smithsonian?", accessed April 19, 2020, <http://www.rosarychurch.net/answers/qa032005c.html>; lastly, see Christopher Kemp, "University sued by creationist: Microscopist's wrongful-dismissal case faces long odds." In May, 2012, scientist Mark Armitage found a triceratops horn with soft-tissue, and was fired by the California State University, Northridge, for describing his findings in a peer-reviewed journal, *Nature*, 6 November, 2014, accessed April 19, 2020, <https://www.nature.com/articles/515020b.pdf?origin=ppub>; and the works of Gosselin (p. 37, n. 75).

that verses 1-12 should be read): *For this reason God sends them a powerful<sup>94</sup> delusion, leading them to believe what is false, so that all who have not believed the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned* (11-12). This significant text has very important implications. It is certainly true that the Apostle seems to believe that the revelations he was shown would have their fulfillment very soon, although the passage doesn't indicate the particular time span as to when events will be taking place, nor their actual order of occurrence. But the focus of this thesis may easily certainly lead to conclusions similar to those spoken about in 2 Thess 2.<sup>95</sup>

*Pride*: Although producing many advancements, a science which has spurned the God-given wisdom found in Scripture and been given a consummate place in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, has laid itself open to the deadliest of the seven capital sins—that of *pride*. But there have been terrible consequences from it, and would that the bitter, awful experiences of the recent past could tell us something about what Darwinism would really produce. The Church by and large has bought into the doctrine which allows the sacrificing of Scripture, leaving the unsaved nowhere to turn.

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<sup>94</sup> Jay P. Green, Sr.: Joseph Henry Thayer, D. D., *The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (1889; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1981), 215: “. . . in the NT, used only of superhuman power, whether of God or the devil” (the Greek *energeia* is the source of the modern *energy*).

<sup>95</sup> Hagner's descriptions are telling: “Although these letters are best known for eschatological issues, they are of relatively minor importance. . . . The eschatological teaching portions in these letters therefore have only a relative, not absolute, importance . . . . But it is especially the interesting nature of the teaching offered . . . together with understandable human curiosity about the end times, that have made these passages the focal points,” Donald A. Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 457, 468-469. Regarding the *Apocalypse*, he says, “Here I want to argue that the purpose of the book is not to convey information per se about the future. Although this book *is* about the future, it presents not a detailed prediction of future events but a more basic and significant message concerning the sovereignty of God and the consummation of God's plan of salvation,” *ibid.*, 745-746.

*The foreshortening of history:* Think of the story of Creation. It is exceedingly simple and unencumbered with all of the drudgery and misery associated with the false narrative of Darwinism.<sup>96</sup> Although there is great drama and hardship, there is ultimate redemption. Our beginning was in a Garden. We can view our first parents through the haze of the distant past, colored by sin. Our hearts long for Paradise to be reborn in the dregs of this sin-laden world, which must endure *the day of the Lord . . . , [when] the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed* (2 Pe 3:10). There is a perception in all of us that the entire history of mankind, in spite of the ravages of sin, is working its way toward its final consummation.

The essence of our history, as derived from Scripture, is that it involves an incredibly foreshortened period of time: a mere few thousand years. The beginning and the ending are inextricably linked. Through Adam and Eve we were face to face with the Creator in the Garden. We will also soon stand before Him, beholding our God either with awe, with reverence, and with joy, at our redemption, or else with abject fear, with denial, and with even an overwhelming desire to escape.<sup>97</sup>

*The miracle of redemption:* Is it possible that God actually *created the heavens and the earth* in six days (Gen 1:1)? And how is it that Jesus Christ, *in a mere moment* hanging upon the

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<sup>96</sup> While there are many things creationists are investigating but haven't yet solved, such as how light from stars many light-years away can reach the earth in only 6000 years, the creation story itself is elementary: within six twenty-four days, everything—except the eternal God Himself—came into being.

<sup>97</sup> Kelly noted: "Francis Schaeffer, in an interview toward the end of his life . . . stated the crucial evangelistic importance of a sound space/time doctrine of creation. The author heard him remark in a discussion group at L'Abri in December of 1968 that if he had an hour with a person on a plane who did not know the Lord, he would spend the first fifty-five minutes talking about creation in the image of God and where that man came from, and the last five minutes on the presentation of the gospel of salvation." *Creation and Change* (Scotland: Mentor Imprint, 2015), 23-24.

cross, could take upon Himself *our sins, and not . . . ours only but also . . . the sins of the whole world* (1 Jn 2:2), through all of time, from the beginning until the end? How did He in an instant eliminate the insuperable barriers between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:14)? How did He seal the doom of the minions of Satan: *[h]e disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it* (Col 2:15)? The latter is an epitome of the miraculous, far beyond that comprehended by His putting creation in place . . . *Only a split second provides eternal life* (John 3:15) *for the uncountable elect.*

*The inability of evolution to give hope: No one has . . . power over the day of death* (Eccl 8:8a.) It is that strange, dark shade which will exact its inevitable toll on all humanity, bar none. No sanguine sentiments by a scientist, filled with meaningless assurance, can ever dispel the grief we feel at losing a loved one. No “gospel of evolution” has anything to offer there. But *[t]he last enemy to be destroyed is death* (1 Cor 15:26). *Death* was never meant to be. Christ is revealed . . . , *who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel* . . . (2 Tim 1:10). This is why such a sea of obfuscation shackles both science and theology.

*Warnings to the Church:* C. S. Lewis, in offering an introduction to a treatise by St. Athanasius, affords us sound advice when turning to the ancient sources. His words show our tendency towards “chronological snobbery,”<sup>98</sup> as he calls it:

[Athanasius] in fact, is not talking about unbelievers, but about deserters, not about those who have never heard of Christ, nor even those who have misunderstood and refused to accept Him, but of those who having really understood and really believed, then allow themselves, under the sway of sloth or of fashion or any other invited confusion to be drawn away into sub-Christian modes of thought. They are a warning against the curious

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<sup>98</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Hachette, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1966), 207-8.

modern assumption that all changes of belief, however brought about, are necessarily exempt from blame.<sup>99</sup>

Fr. Jean-Pierre de Caussade (1675-1751), advises us about the careless use of Scripture:

“In the name of progress, reform and betterment, [man] takes the liberty of committing excesses, the least of which would be an abomination if it concerned one comma of the Holy Scriptures.”<sup>100</sup>

Consider only a few of the warnings which are extant for a church and its theologians who refuse to heed God’s Word:

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse . . . (Ro 1:18-20).*

*They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless (2 Pe 3:5-7).*

*He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they might not look with their eyes, and understand with their heart and turn—and I would heal them (John 12:4).*

What is the mission of the Church in such circumstances? There is an enormous amount of baggage that must be jettisoned before it can fulfill the Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20).

Scientists and theologians, as the leaders who have the allegiance of the entire Church, must repent and accept the simple Gospel of Creation, because out of it comes the clear and unalloyed explanation of the inherent truths that will give others a vision for the future. The consequence

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<sup>99</sup> C. S. Lewis, in St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation: The Treatise De Incarnations Verbi Dei*. Rev. ed. Translated by a religious of C. S. M. V. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1953.

<sup>100</sup> Fr. Jean-Pierre de Caussade, *The Sacrament of the Present Moment*, trans. Kitty Muggeridge (Original French edition: Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966; New York: HarperCollins, 1989), 66-67.

will be the saving of the lost, and relieving itself forever of the consequence associated with those *all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness*. (2 Thess 2:12). Out of such repentance should come a permanent truce between the two disparate theologies in question here (p. 1), and also be the organic unity of the sort that Jesus prayed for fervently to His Father (Jn 17:20-23). And theology would reclaim the precious and privileged honor —through submission, humility, and fearless courage— of its position as the Queen of the Sciences.

Awakening the Christian masses is almost like converting them. They have been drawn away by the stupor, along with the exhilaration and the sheer enchantment, associated with this pandemic spiritual disease. Their church leaders have led the charge, paving for others a road that brings them inevitably to the annihilation of the witness of the church.

Time is short. There is no time to waste.

*So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word (2 Thess 2:15-17).*

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