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## Fitting Evolution into Christian Belief: An Eastern Orthodox Approach

### Abstract

Theistic evolution (TE) is often considered to be the only way of reconciling Christianity with modern science. However, there is an alternative approach to the Christian understanding of evolution based on Eastern Orthodox theology. According to it, evolution with all its suffering happens in the fallen world which is different from the primordial “very good” (טוב מאד, Gen. 1:31) creation. This approach is more consistent with traditional Christian teaching on the Fall and Redemption than TE and seems to offer a better solution for the problem of natural evil. In the twentieth century, the major exponents of this Orthodox-centered view of evolution were an Anglican priest, Peter Green, Russian philosopher,



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### Keywords

Theistic Evolution, Redemption, natural evil, theodicy, Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa

## 1 Introduction

The twentieth century witnessed a surge of interest in the patristic legacy of the East. After 1917, Russian emigrants such as Vladimir Lossky and Georges Florovsky<sup>1</sup> did much to acquaint the West with Orthodox Theology. Due to the efforts of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Henri de Lubac, the intellectual scope of Catholic thought was widened to include some Greek Church Fathers, like Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, who had long remained in a shadow of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Western scholastic tradition.

Since World War II patristic studies have been on the rise; many critical editions of Greek and Oriental patristic sources have been published, as well as their translations into European languages. “Sources Chrétiennes”, the collection of patristic texts, mostly Greek, founded by de Lubac in 1942, has reached nearly six hundred volumes!

So today it cannot be said that there is a certain lack of knowledge about Eastern patristic tradition in the West. Instead, the legacy of the Greek fathers is applied actively by Western Christian intellectuals in addressing some of the actual issues like environmental ethics or liturgical practice.

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<sup>1</sup> See Dimitrios G. Avdelas, “Fr. Georges Florovsky’s Ecumenical Task: From Dostoevsky to Neopatristic Synthesis”, *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 7 (2016), pp. 123-153.

Nevertheless, one major issue has remained almost untouched by the influence of the Orthodox Theology. I mean the relationship between Christian faith and evolutionary theory. Almost with no exception, those who strive to reconcile one with the other resort to *theistic evolution* (TE), the idea that God employed an evolutionary process to create the Universe and living things. As I will show, TE is based exclusively on premises derived from the Western Theology going back to the writings of the late Augustine. The use of Eastern patristics in the discussion about religion and evolution is mostly limited to ritualistic invoking of St. Irenaeus, who was made a kind of saint patron of TE at the suggestion of John Hick<sup>2</sup>.

However, if we look at the problem from the point of view of the Greek patristic thought, we will see a very different way of fitting evolution into Christian belief, one that has been overlooked by Catholic and Protestant thinkers because of their Augustinian theological background. In the present paper, first, I will consider two different types of protology (the teaching about the original condition of humans): Latin protology, which forms the basis for TE, and Greek protology, which could be used as a starting point for an alternative approach to interpreting evolutionary science within the bounds of a Christian framework. Second, I will briefly present this Orthodox-centered view of evolution. Third, I will discuss some possible advantages of the Eastern-based solution over the conventional creation-through-evolution wisdom. Finally, I will consider some of the few twentieth-century theologians and philosophers who took the Eastern Christian perspective on

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, Hick's approach, as well as TE as such, has little in common with real Irenaeus theology. See Mark S. M. Scott, "Suffering and Soul-Making: Rethinking John Hick's Theodicy", *The Journal of Religion* 90 (2010), pp. 313-334. However, contrary to Scott, Origen relates to "Irenaeus" (or rather Hickean) theodicy even less.

evolution in contrast to those many who joined the camp of theistic evolutionists.

## **2 Two types of protology: alterism and perseverance**

There is plenty of literature on how patristic understandings of creation fit with the modern evolutionary worldview. Most authors concentrate on how this or that given Church Father thought of the divine mode of activity: whether God created everything in one moment or six 24-hour days; whether God acted directly or worked through secondary causes; and so on. In reality, what matters most is not the *process* of creation, but how Church Fathers understood its *result*. What was the world, fresh from the hand of God? Did humans, for whom the world was created, differ much in its original and sinless condition from what we are today? Unless these questions are answered, theistic evolutionists have no warrant to equate the earliest members of *Homo sapiens* originated in Africa some time ago with those humans who were created by God on the sixth day for life in paradise.

The Scriptural testimony on the original state of man and the whole creation in Gen. 1-3 is rather brief and vague and like all other mythological narratives is open to various interpretations. By contrast, the Bible's teaching concerning the "last things" seems to be much more definitive. The Lord says in the Gospel: "At the resurrection, people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven" (Matt. 22:30). The Apostle Paul is also clear in saying that our flesh is going to be changed into a spiritual body when people are raised from the dead (1 Cor. 15:44). Since the present material world with its planets, cars and barbecue sausages does not appear to be very suitable for the resurrected angel-like humans, it also will be subject to great transformation: "the heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will

be laid bare” (2 Pet. 3:10). So resurrected saints will not dwell in the Universe which we are familiar with, but on “a new heaven and a new earth” (1 Pet. 3:13, Rev. 21:1).

In this light, there are two different ways of understanding the primeval creation. The first one is to anchor protology in eschatology. Indeed, it is reasonable enough to suppose that in the future, when all evil is overcome, the created things will return to the original state in which they were “very good” (אֲדָמָה טוֹבָה, Gen. 1:31). If not, it would entail that in the course of world history God would somehow change His opinion on how “very good” creation should look. One of the first theologians who stated that “the end is always like the beginning” was Origen<sup>3</sup>. He was followed by many Eastern theologians. For example, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa “resurrection is no other thing than the re-constitution of our nature in its original form”<sup>4</sup>. St. Cyril of Alexandria argued in “On Worship in Spirit and Truth” that human beings are to “return to the beatitude of their primitive state”<sup>5</sup>. St. Maximus Confessor stressed that God restored in Christ “what feeble man, in his negligence, had destroyed,” and as a result “the laws of the first and truly divine creation was renewed”<sup>6</sup>. We are promised to “return to the first condition of Adam”<sup>7</sup>, as St. Gregory the Theologian puts it.

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<sup>3</sup> Origen, *On first principles*, trans. G. W. Butterworth (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dogmatic treatises etc.*, trans. W. Moore and H. A. Wilson (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892), p. 467.

<sup>5</sup> Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers, The Ambigua. Vol. II*, trans. N. Constas (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> St. Gregory of Nazianzus. ‘Oration 38: On the Birthday or Theophany of Christ’, in *Prepare O Bethlehem: Reflections on the Scripture Readings for the Christmas-Epiphany Season*, ed. W.C. Mills (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2005), pp. 79-83.

It is clear that if the eschatological consummation is in a sense restoration of our pristine condition, human beings in Paradise resemble present-day people of flesh and blood no more than resurrected saints on the transfigured Earth will do so. It follows that the world as we see it now differs much from the world as it was created. All creation has been altered drastically after man's disobedience. Let us call this way of thinking "alterism". St. Gregory of Nyssa is perhaps the most prominent exponent of this approach recognized by the Church. According to his "On the Making of Man", prelapsarian humans were "like angels" from the very beginning: "if then the life of those restored is closely related to that of the angels, it is clear that the life before the transgression was a kind of angelic life, and hence also our return to the ancient condition of our life is compared to the angels"<sup>8</sup>. In sharp contrast to those who had speculated about digestion and defecation before the Fall, Gregory of Nyssa argued that we should not "at all conceive, concerning the mode of life in Paradise, this transitory and perishable nutriment"<sup>9</sup>. The same goes for sexuality. As myriads of angels have been multiplied without sexual intercourse, there would have been no need for human sexuality: "whatever the mode of increase in the angelic nature is (...) it would have also operated in the case of men". Only because God had foreseen the Fall, he implanted "in mankind, instead of the angelic majesty of nature, that animal and irrational mode by which they now succeed one another"<sup>10</sup>.

Three centuries later, St. Maximus the Confessor also explicitly discussed the link between sexual reproduction and the Fall<sup>11</sup>. According to him, it is sin that "condemned human beings to be marked with the same characteristic as irrational animals, in

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<sup>8</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dogmatic treatises etc.*, p. 407.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 409.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 406.

<sup>11</sup> See Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 70.

being generated one from another”<sup>12</sup>. In St. Maximus's opinion, metabolizing and reproducing animal bodies of the fallen humans does not have much in common with the self-sufficient and perfect bodies that God originally bestowed us. St. Maximus is definitive in stressing “the difference between the temperament of the human body in our forefather Adam before the fall, and that which is now observed within us and predominates, because then the temperament of man's body was obviously not torn apart by mutually opposed and corrupting qualities, but was in a state of equilibrium devoid of flux and reflux”<sup>13</sup>. Of course, this is not to be understood as stating that before the Fall humans existed as souls separated from the bodies - St. Maximus lets to know clearly that he follows the refutation of this Evagrian doctrine by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553. What he wants to say is that the bodily nature of humans has changed dramatically after we went astray from God.

These teachings cannot be dismissed as extreme and untypical cases of spiritualism. For example, St. John of Damascus, sometimes called “the Thomas Aquinas of the Greeks”, who synthesized the doctrines of the Eastern Fathers and tried to find a balance between extremes, was of the same opinion. Postulating that Paradise can be understood in both a spiritual and a carnal sense, John of Damascus nevertheless could not assume that humans were intended by God to procreate in the state of innocence. In his opinion woman was created not for reproduction in Paradise, but with a view of the future sin: God knew “that man would transgress and become liable to destruction” and made a woman for “for the conservation of the race after the transgression”.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the turn to

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<sup>12</sup> Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers, The Ambigua. Vol. II*, p. 41.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>14</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, trans. S.D.F. Salmond, (Oxford: J. Parker, 1899), p. 43.

consumption of material food was viewed by John of Damascus as a consequence of the Fall: “for sensible food is by nature for the replenishing of that which gradually wastes away (...) he cannot remain incorruptible who partakes of sensible food”.<sup>15</sup> According to John of Damascus, before the Fall God “sustains him [man] like an angel with the sweetest of all fruits, the contemplation of Himself”.<sup>16</sup>

Alterism enjoyed support not only from the Greek tradition. Remarkably, the early Augustine also held alteristic views which were in contradiction to his later position. In his “Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees” (388-389), Augustine underscored that great changes had occurred in the ontology of humans because of their sin. Before the Fall, the lot of human beings was to bear “the spiritual offspring of intelligible and immortal joys”, but this propensity “changed into carnal fecundity after sin”.<sup>17</sup> Augustine in this treatise understood the life in the Paradise in highly spiritualistic terms - according to him, the man plunged into this world of flesh and blood, being “drawn down by the weight of his own sins to a place that suits him”.<sup>18</sup> Whether the early Augustine taught, as O’Connell has argued,<sup>19</sup> that humans initially were incorporeal souls and then fell into bodies, or rather that their original spiritual corporeity was transformed to the carnal one, he was an apparent supporter of alterism in the early stages of his career.

Arguing that “God changed their [the Fallen humans’] bodies into the mortal flesh”,<sup>20</sup> Augustine used the biblical image of

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> St. Augustine, *Two Books on Genesis against the Manichees and On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis: An Unfinished Book*, trans. Roland J. Teske (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), p. 77-78.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>19</sup> Robert J. O’Connell, *St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

<sup>20</sup> St. Augustine, *Two Books on Genesis*, p. 127.

garments of skin (Gen.3:21). This picture was very popular in alteristic thought since Origen, who in turn adopted an allegoric understanding of it from Philo of Alexandria. For example, Gregory of Nyssa associated “coats of skins” put on us after the Fall with almost all phenomena of our biological life: “sexual intercourse, conception, parturition, impurities, suckling, feeding, evacuation, gradual growth to full size”.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, another Cappadocian father, pointed out that tunics of skin are “qual to the more coarse and mortal and rebellious flesh”.<sup>22</sup> In other words, when God covers Adam and Eve with the coats of skin derived from the animals it symbolizes the transformation of angel-like human beings into the biological organisms.

Summing up, alterism seems to be a well-established theologian tradition which flourished in the first centuries of the Christian Era, especially in the Eastern Churches. However, it should be acknowledged that it has undergone little further development. Perhaps the latest great exponent of alterism was the Carolingian theologian John Scottus Eriugena, who drew inspiration from St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Maximus the Confessor, whose writings he translated into Latin. Eriugena wrote in full accordance with the Eastern theology that “the body which was created at the establishment of man in the beginning I should say was spiritual and immortal, and either like or identical with that which we shall possess after the Resurrection. For I would not easy admit that it could have been a corruptible and material body at a time when the cause of corruption and materiality, that is, sin, had not yet appeared”<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Dogmatic treatises etc.*, p. 465.

<sup>22</sup> St. Gregory of Nazianzus, “Oration 38: On the Birthday or Theophany of Christ”.

<sup>23</sup> Iohannis Scotti Eriugena, *Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae). Liber quartus*, trans. J. J. O’Meara and I. P. Sheldon-Williams (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1995), p. 139.

With the triumph of scholasticism during the High Middle Ages, a very different type of protology has been finally adopted by the Western theology. It is entirely detached from eschatology and based on a premise that the end will be far superior to the beginning. Thus what Bible tells us about life in the resurrection can be no way applied to Adam and Eve before they sinned. St. Augustine formulates this attitude in the following way: “We shall be renewed from the staleness of sin, not to the original ‘ensouled’ body which Adam had, but to something better, that is, to an ‘enspirited’ body, when we are made equal to the angels of God”<sup>24</sup>.

Because the followers of St. Augustine deny that the conclusions about prelapsarian past can be drawn from the eschatological *future*, they have nothing to do but to draw them from the *present*. They without hesitation ascribe all our bodily functions to the man in paradise. This type of protology, which is opposite to alterism, can be called “perseverism” (from Latin word “persevere” which means “to persist”). According to perseverism, God has created the world such as we can see it now, and it has undergone only minor, not principal, changes due to the sin of Adam, contrary to the teachings of many Eastern theologians. For example, the following expression of perseverism can be found in the “Summa Theologica” of St. Thomas Aquinas, one of its most prominent exponents: “in the beginning of Genesis Holy Scripture records the institution of that order of nature which henceforth is to endure (perseverat)”<sup>25</sup>. So, if today humans have two hands, two legs, gut, etc, they must have had all such features before the Fall:

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<sup>24</sup> St. Augustine, “The literal meaning of Genesis”, in *On Genesis*, trans. E. Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), p. 321.

<sup>25</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), p. 337.

“for what is natural to man was neither acquired nor forfeited by sin”.<sup>26</sup>

The foundations of perseverism were laid by the later Augustine, mostly in his “The Literal Meaning of Genesis” (401-415) and “The City of God” (413-426). In his understanding of Paradise as a real garden on Earth, Augustine was by no means alone. What was new in his approach was that Augustine felt no hesitation in ascribing all bodily functions we have today to people before the Fall. According to Augustine, in Eden Adam and Eve were not restricted to chewing fruits. If they had not sinned, they would have procreated. For what purpose, asked he, was Adam given a woman, if not for procreation? It follows that prelapsarian humans had all bodily parts needed for sexual reproduction. The only difference between them and us was that they could command their genital organs “in the same way as their other limbs”, without feeling “any sort of prurient itch for pleasure”.<sup>27</sup> So except aging, lust, and death brought by sin, people in Paradise were identical to people in the fallen state. In Augustine's opinion, Adam and Eve would have had to lead an animal life until they and their posterity were taken to heavens to become angels.

In the Middle Ages, theologians developed Augustine's views on paradise in even more naturalistic terms. For example, Peter Lombard, the “father of systematic theology in the Catholic Church,” argued in his famous “Four Books of Sentences” (1145-1151) that the procreation in paradise would have been ruled “by the same law by which we discern human birth to be regulated even now.”<sup>28</sup> Since nowadays children are to “be born small because of the needs of the maternal womb”<sup>29</sup>, in Paradise the situation would have been the same, contrary to

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 483.

<sup>27</sup> St. Augustine, “The literal meaning of Genesis”, p. 385.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Lombard, *The Sentences, Book 2: On Creation*, trans. Giulio Silano (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2008), p. 89.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

those who stated that children would have to be born fully grown and mature if humans had not sinned. Thomas Aquinas, the most influential Catholic theologian after Augustine, added that prelapsarian people were subject to “the loss of humidity by the action of natural heat”<sup>30</sup> and, besides sweating, had the need to defecate - it is quite a reasonable assumption, granting their need for food. He concluded that humans in Eden being an exact replica of us would have been protected against death and diseases only in a supernatural way: “man was incorruptible and immortal, not because his body had a disposition to incorruptibility, but because in his soul there was a power preserving the body from corruption”<sup>31</sup>.

The greatest Reformation theologians, such as John Calvin and Martin Luther, completely shared the protology of the Medieval scholastics. For example, Luther in his “Lectures on Genesis” underscored that humans have been created as living beings in their corporeal life indistinguishable from other biological species: “because as beasts require food, drink and sleep for the refreshment and restoration of their bodies, so Adam was designed also to use these even in his state of innocence”<sup>32</sup>. It was totally inconceivable for Luther, as well as for St. Thomas, to consider an animal mode of human living as a consequence of sin. Therefore, for many centuries Catholic and Protestant theologians taught that humans initially had been created having all bodily organs up to anus and womb, and it is unsurprising that Western Christians rushed to identify the evolutionary process with the process of creation, when it became apparent that the present organization of human body is a product of evolution.

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<sup>30</sup> St.Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, vol. 1, p. 491.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 500.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Luther, *On the Creation: A Critical and Devotional Commentary on Genesis*, trans. Henry Cole (Minneapolis: Lutherans in all Lands, 1904), p. 109.

Indeed, the conclusion Q1:

(Q1) God has created humans (and other species) through evolution

follows from the premises P1 and P2:

(P1) God created humans in their present bodily condition, that is, they were two-handed, bipedal hominids even before the Fall

(P2) Humans in their present bodily condition, as well as all other living beings, have emerged through evolution.

However, science provides us only with the premise P2. The premise P1, crucial for this reasoning, has nothing to do with Darwin or modern biology. It is a part of the specific Western theological tradition. It turns out that despite the fact that supporters of TE often pretend to act on behalf of science, in reality, they act on behalf of their specific theology. However, what if we try the alternative Eastern approach? There is no reason why the theological tradition going back to St. Augustine should be preferable to the no less honorable tradition going back to Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa. So, in place of the perseveristic P1, we have every right to choose the following alteristic premise:

(P1') God did *not* create humans in their present bodily condition; rather prelapsarian human beings had spiritual bodies and lived a kind of angelic life. Humans turned to the organismic life only after the Fall.

Combining P1' with P2, the latter of which is delivered by evolutionary science, we come to the conclusion that evolution with all suffering intrinsic is not the means by which God created the world, but a consequence of the Fall, which happened before the beginning of the empirically known universe. Indeed, since angel-like humans changed into the biological organisms because of the Fall, and, as science tells us, such biological organisms have been produced by evolution, it is entirely reasonable to suppose that evolution itself started in the fallen world after the first sin had been committed. So we can speak of humans in a twofold sense. Humans as a part of the

empirical realm are the *result* of evolution, but, as those who belong to the primeval and now unattainable order of things, they are its *cause*. Let us discuss this alteristic interpretation of evolution in more details.

### **3 The alteristic approach to evolution**

As I have shown, alterism states that humans before and after the Fall are two different things: the former were not a biological species needing nutrition and copulation, but the latter are like beasts in doing all of this. If animal conditions of our contemporary existence are a result of the sin, we should conclude that the whole chain of natural events which have led to them was also caused by sin. Current science tells us that the animality of man is due to his animal origin, that is, organic evolution; organic evolution on Earth was a consequence of the physical properties of Universe, and the material Universe started at the Big Bang. Following this logic, the Big Bang should be interpreted not as the first creative act of God, but as the first cognizable manifestation of the human Fall; it ruined primordial creation in a catastrophic manner. On such a view, the basic properties of matter that made evolution possible are in fact no other than corruption (φθορά) brought by sin to the “very good” world which preceded our observable Universe.

The Eastern theology traditionally viewed the human act of disobedience in paradise not as an isolated event, but as a trigger for the global transformation of the whole creation (“cursed is the ground because of you” (Gen. 3:17)). For example, Origen taught that the change of humans from the angel-like state to the animal one were accompanied by the recasting of the entire natural order because the world designed for spiritual beings is different from the world necessary to sustain biological life. So “descent from higher to lower conditions” has been experienced not only by fallen souls but by the whole of nature as well. Sun, moon, and stars against

their will “were subjected to vanity” (Rom. 8:21) for the sake of “those souls which on account of their excessive spiritual defects required these grosser and more solid bodies”.<sup>33</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor also wrote about the global consequences of sin: as a result of eating the forbidden fruit man “drew down on himself not simply the corruption and death of his body, but (...) not least, the instability and disorder of the material substance that surrounded him”<sup>34</sup>. Many centuries later, St. Symeon the New Theologian described the results of the Fall using the same expressions. In his opinion, the sun, the moon and all of the nature did not want to serve sinful Adam anymore, and the heavens were about to fall on him, so God had to make the world perishable to fit it with the corrupted state of humans.<sup>35</sup> Either these teachings make no sense at all, or universe known to us, where evolution is running, was preceded<sup>36</sup> by another - and perfect - state of being. An alteristic understanding of evolution by no means assumes in a gnostic style that the animals, human bodies, and the whole material realm have not been created by God. What it claims is that all these things were created in a different state

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<sup>33</sup> Origen, *On first principles*, p. 240-241.

<sup>34</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers, The Ambigua. Vol. I*, trans. N. Constat (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 143

<sup>35</sup> St. Symeon (the New Theologian), *On the Mystical Life, Vol. 1: The Church and the last things*, trans. Alexander Golitzin (Crestwood, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), pp. 29-30.

<sup>36</sup> The word “precede” herein does not need to be straightforwardly understood in terms of temporal succession, as if primeval creation were something that was “before” Big Bang and that will be restored “after” the collapse of the universe. Linear time with its event relations signified by “before” and “after” is itself belong to the order of fallenness. As Berdyaev puts it, “paradise is not in the future, is not in time, but in eternity (...). Paradise can only be conceived apophatically as lying beyond our time and all that is connected with it” (*The Destiny of Man*, trans. Natalie Duddington (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), pp. 288-289).

from one in which they are now. The beauty of the present world is just a pale imitation of the primordial creation originally made to be “very good”. Since the cognitive faculties of fallen humans have been impaired, we are shielded from any certain knowledge about the prelapsarian world by a kind of “veil of ignorance” (let me borrow this term from John Rawls). The Big Bang is the first event on our side of the veil, but we cannot know anything about what was behind the veil, except what is revealed in the Scripture. After all, how can a brain shaped by cruel natural selection learn about life in paradise? We do not know how we ourselves, stars, rivers, plants and other realities of our world looked like before the Fall. Certainly, at that time, the laws of nature worked in different ways from the ways in which they do now since such things as maintaining body power without food were possible. There was no entropy and struggle for existence. For example, St. Basil the Great believed that the predators and scavengers were herbivorous until they changed their habits after the Fall<sup>37</sup>, because Gen. 1:30 says that all the beasts of the Earth received green plants, not meat, for food. It is this primeval peace between animals that will be restored in the new world, according to the prophet: “the wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox” (Isa. 65:25). An assumption of such a paradisiacal state preceding our visible world may sound like a fairy tale. However, it is based exactly on the same principle as traditional Christian eschatology. Over the centuries Christians have believed that the state of perfection described just above would be achieved in the final consummation when God resurrects humans in renewed bodies. Many theistic evolutionists do not find anything wrong with this view and have done much to elaborate it. For example, Jürgen Moltmann, famous for his eschatological-oriented “theology of hope”, wrote that in order

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<sup>37</sup> Basilus Caesariensis, "Oratio II, De hominus structura", *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, 30 (1857), pp. 43-46.

to redeem evolutionary suffering, God would “banish fear and the struggle for existence from creation”, so in the kingdom of glory renewed nature will enjoy “change without transience” and “life without death”<sup>38</sup>. According to John Polkinghorne, “if the world to come is to be free from death and suffering, its ‘matter-energy’ will have to be given a different character. There will have to be discontinuous change of physical law”.<sup>39</sup> Christopher Southgate supposes that resurrected animals will live in the special “pelican heaven”, “without competition or frustration on the part of predator or prey”<sup>40</sup>.

If the world after the resurrection of the dead is going to be so dissimilar to what we see, why cannot we assume the same for prelapsarian creation, keeping in mind Origen's principle “the end is like the beginning”? The notion of such a perfect world has always been a constitutive part of Christian religion. Alterism does not bring anything new in this respect. What it adds is that the perfection promised by God in the future had already taken place in the past and once was lost due to sin. It was not God's will to create an evolving universe, full of suffering, destruction, and extinctions. Such a universe is a deviation from God's created order. Of course, we cannot know how the transformation of prelapsarian creation into our world occurred, and what rule caused certain things to reappear in this or that form after the Fall. However, we have the same problem with traditional eschatology - nobody knows how the world will change in the end of times and how, for example, the sun and the stars are going to look like after “the heavens pass

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<sup>38</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 213.

<sup>39</sup> John Polkinghorne “Eschatology: Some Questions and Some Insights from Science”, in *The End of the World and the Ends of God: Science and Theology*, ed. Polkinghorne J. and Welker M. (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), pp. 29-41.

<sup>40</sup> Christopher Southgate, *The Groaning of Creation: God, Evolution, and the Problem of Evil* (London: John Knox, 2008), p. 87.

away with a terrible noise” (2 Peter 3:10). Discussing “the theory of a premundane Fall which some theologians have devised in order to account for the elements of imperfection and struggle in the world of nature”, Charles Raven (1885-1964), English theologian and theistic evolutionist, said derogatory: “mythology of this sort is no doubt as legitimate as any other speculations upon matters for which mankind can have no clear evidence”<sup>41</sup>. However, what clear evidence do we have for the resurrection of the dead or eschatological transfiguration of creation? Should we reject these beliefs too in order to comply with the Bultmannian-like “demythologization” of Christianity? In a word, the notion of paradise is no less a part of a full-blooded Christian faith than the “things hoped for” (Hebr. 11:1), and there is no reason to reject the former, if we accept the latter.

Is alterism consistent with the scientific worldview? Perhaps it is even more than TE is. Theistic evolutionists traditionally rely on the two-book model, which implies that the first three chapters of Genesis and the Book of Nature, with all its relic radiation and the fossil record, have the same subject. Because God is the author of two books, they cannot conflict. However, they apparently *do* contradict one another, so there have been countless attempts to adjust discrepancies of Genesis narrative and the scientific worldview. Sometimes they have been made at the expense of Christian teaching; sometimes, at the cost of science. For example, especially in early times, many conservative theologians who accepted evolution as God's method of creation, nevertheless insisted on the special creation of man.

The alteristic approach does not have such a problem. Since cosmology and evolutionary biology describe what was going on after the Fall, when the world was plunged into chaos, traditional notions of the Divine creative activity remain

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<sup>41</sup> Charles E. Raven, *Natural Religion and Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 123.

untouched. The first chapters of Genesis and science do not tell the same story in different ways but tell us about different things in different eons. Evolution does not correspond to the six days of creation, as theistic evolutionists usually state; rather, it should be considered as a process of “putting on” the garments of skin, the way by which the fallen humans got their mortal animal bodies. In other words, the evolution of physical matter in a broad sense, from the formation of the first stars to the emergence of *Homo sapiens*, corresponds to the interval beginning when God started making garments of skin for Adam and Eve and ends when they found themselves outside the Eden dressed in such clothes. The six days of creation and other events preceding the expulsion from Paradise simply lie beyond what science can discover. So “Moses's Book” possesses its own truth, independent of what scientists can say about the observable world. There can be no reason for conflict.

## **5 Advantages of the alteristic approach**

While both theories are at least on a par regarding the consistency with science, an alteristic interpretation of evolution appears to have two significant advantages over TE. First, accepting alterism does not require abandoning traditional Christian teachings on the Fall and Redemption. By contrast, TE almost inevitable leads to the rejection of these two pillars of Christian faith. As early as 1885, Henry Ward Beecher, the famous Congregationalist clergyman and one of the first American theistic evolutionists, declared his “hate” to “the old theory of sin”. In “the new light is thrown upon the origin of man”, Beecher claimed, “the doctrine of original sin will disappear”<sup>42</sup>. Since “God has made a man a progressive

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<sup>42</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, *Evolution and Religion*, Part I (New York: Fords, Howard & Hurlbert, 1885), p. 141.

creation"<sup>43</sup>, sin is no more than an inevitable result of "the conflict between the lower elements in human nature and the higher"<sup>44</sup>. Therefore, the biblical salvation story should be reconsidered: "the atonement confounded with the fable of Adam's fall will give place to a more glorious development"<sup>45</sup>.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Beecher was joined by Reginald J. Campbell, a popular British Congregational preacher, who pointed out in his controversial book "The New Theology" (1907), that "modern science knows nothing of it [the Fall] and can find no trace of such a cataclysm in human history. On the contrary, it asserts that there has been a gradual and unmistakable rise"<sup>46</sup>. Anglican priest James Maurice Wilson, who was cited with approval by English theologian Frederick R. Tennant, in his address to the Church Congress of 1896 interpreted sin as "the survival or misuse of habits and tendencies that were incidental to an earlier stage in development"<sup>47</sup>. Discussing the evolutionary account of sin, Tennant admitted that the "nature of redemption would need to be defined in terms somewhat different from those to which we have long been used"<sup>48</sup>.

After a century the situation has not changed. Moreover, the reconsideration of Christian teachings on original sin and Atonement, initiated by the pioneers of TE, has become commonplace in the writings of their modern successors. For instance, John F. Haught feels no hesitation claiming that "Darwin's great gift to theology (...) is that the age of expiation is over and done with". With no less confidence, he states that, in the light of evolutionary science, the "assumption of an original

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>46</sup> Reginald John Campbell, *The New Theology* (New-York: The Macmillan Company, 1907), p. 60.

<sup>47</sup> Frederick Robert Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1908), p. 82.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 113.

cosmic perfection, one allegedly debauched by a temporally 'original' sin, [is] obsolete and unbelievable"<sup>49</sup>. The same claims can be found in the books of Arthur Peacocke: "human beings evolutionarily are 'rising beasts' rather than 'fallen angels', so that much talk of 'redemption' needs radical revision"<sup>50</sup>.

By contrast, alterism seems perfectly consistent with that of traditional Christian teaching which is rejected by theistic evolutionists. The only traditional dogma with which alterism is not compatible is the perseverism of Western theology. However, beliefs about the link between physical death and sin and the doctrine of redemptive action of Christ are much more decisive for Christian tradition than speculations about sexual reproduction in Paradise. After all, the former was common ground equally shared by supporters of perseverism and alterism, by St. Augustine and St. Gregory of Nyssa as well. The drastic changes destroyed the whole world order after the Fall seem to provide an even more sensible reason for the sacrifice of God than an act of disobedience expressed through eating a piece of forbidden fruit by a couple of hominids somewhere on Earth.

Second, an alteristic interpretation offers a more satisfactory answer to the problem of natural evil, than TE does. Of course, this issue is not new. Christians always were aware that suffering and death afflicted humans and animals, but all these evils were traditionally interpreted as a result of original sin. It is humans who freely turned away from God and brought sin and hence death into the world, and therefore it is humans who should be blamed for it. Rejection of the Fall by theistic evolutionists has made this explanation irrelevant. The proponents of TE are forced to blame God, who has chosen to create the living world by means of evolution, thus making

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<sup>49</sup> John F. Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2008), p. 149.

<sup>50</sup> Arthur Peacocke. *Evolution: The Disguised Friend of Faith?* (London: Templeton Foundation Press, 2004), p. 194.

death and sufferings inevitable. Even those theistic evolutionists who seek to retain some elements of the Fall in their worldview, like Raymund Schwager<sup>51</sup> and Denis Alexander,<sup>52</sup> have to deal with the same problem. Whether or not a couple of Neolithic farmers or a group of proto-humans could have committed something like original sin, humans would be mortal like any other biological species merely because they arose via evolution.

To meet the problem of natural evil, theistic evolutionists developed theodicy based on the concept of eschatological redemption. The main point of this theodicy is that in the end of times God will offer full compensation for pain and suffering endured in the course of evolution. For example, Denis Edwards writes that “every wallaby, dog, and dolphin” must be redeemed and reconciled.<sup>53</sup> According to him, “only a theology of resurrection that is eschatologically transformative can begin to respond to the suffering that is built into an evolutionary universe”.<sup>54</sup> The most famous evolutionary theodicy, “Irenaean theodicy” by John Hick, relies on the same assumption. Although Hick did not give much attention to animal suffering, for the center of his attention was self-aware “souls”, he considered the promised eschatological consummation to be the basis of theodicy: “Christian theodicy must point forward to that final blessedness, and claim that this infinite future good

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<sup>51</sup> See Jonathan Chappell, “Raymund Schwager: Integrating the Fall and Original Sin with Evolutionary Theory”, *Theology and Science* 10 (2012), pp. 179-198.

<sup>52</sup> Denis R. Alexander, *Creation or Evolution – do we have to choose?* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2008).

<sup>53</sup> Denis Edwards, “The Redemption of Animals in an Incarnational Theology”, in *Creaturely Theology: God, Humans and Other Animals*, ed. Deane-Drummond C.E. and Clough D. (London: SCM Press, 2009), pp. 81-99.

<sup>54</sup> Denis Edwards, “Resurrection and the Costs of Evolution: A Dialogue with Rahner on Noninterventionist Theology”, *Theological Studies* 67 (2006), pp. 816-833.

will render worthwhile all the pain and travail and wickedness that has occurred on the way to it".<sup>55</sup>

However, insisting on the inevitability of eschatological fulfillment and, hence, on the omnipotence of God who ensures it, evolutionary theodicy suffers from a large problem. If life without death and struggle for existence is possible, why would God have not created humans and other living beings in such a state of perfection from the very beginning? It's hard to believe that God powerful enough to raise every wallaby from the dead in the end of times was unable to create immortal humans and wallabies in one step. It turns out that God has permitted needless suffering by creating through evolution instead of having made the world perfect at once.

The only way out of this conundrum is to postulate that creation has to obtain some new qualities through evolution, which are required for the happy life in the Kingdom of God. It seems that John Polkinghorne means something like this: "a world allowed to make itself through evolutionary exploration of its potentiality is a better world than one produced ready-made by divine fiat".<sup>56</sup> John Hick developed this argument in the most systematic way. He viewed the present world as "a place of soul-making", a kind of a school, where the strength of character is to be fostered. Ethical personalities cannot be produced "except through a long process of creaturely experience in response to challenges and disciplines of various kinds",<sup>57</sup> so humans first had to emerge as a product of an evolutionary process in a world full of challenges and difficult tasks. God could not have bypassed this stage. As Hick pointed out, "there is a logical impossibility in the idea of free persons being ready made in the state (which is to constitute the end-

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<sup>55</sup> John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 340.

<sup>56</sup> John Polkinghorne, *Science and Theology: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1998), p. 94.

<sup>57</sup> John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p. 308.

product of the creative process) of having learned and grown spiritually through conflict, suffering, and redemption”.<sup>58</sup>

Contrary to Hick, there is nothing unimaginable in the idea that almighty God could have straightforwardly created humans in such a condition that they would have achieved as if they had come through evolution. From the very beginning, God could have set humans in paradise and supplied them with the necessary experience as if the history needed for producing this experience had really happened. One and a half century ago the similar thought with respect to paleontology was expressed by British popular science writer Philip Gosse in his notorious “*Omphalos*”. Gosse stated that the Earth could have been created with the skeletons of ichthyosaurs and other animals in its crust, while these animals had never actually existed. This line of argument does not deserve such a bad reputation as it has earned. Gosse did not want to say that God sought to deceive people or test their faith with the help an arbitrary forgery. He did assert that the time required for the development of any created things is not an insuperable obstacle for an omnipotent God. To create a pine with rings in wood God does not need to start with a seed; with a view to create the world containing fossils and relic radiation he does not need to start with the Big Bang.

Gosse suggests admitting that the “Creator had before his mind a projection of the whole life-history of the globe, commencing with any point which the geologist may imagine to have been a fit commencing point, and ending with some unimaginable acme in the indefinitely distant future”.<sup>59</sup> Of course, God can determine “to call this idea into actual existence not at the supposed commencing point, but at some stage or other of its course”<sup>60</sup>. If God selected 1857 as the starting point, Gosse says,

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>59</sup> Philip Henry Gosse, *Omphalos: An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot* (London: John Van Voorst, 1857), p. 351.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

he would create the world in which there would be sedimentary deposits with bones and "cities filled with swarms of men", whose brains would contain apparent memories about the past.

This argument, let us call it "omphalos argument", does not look very promising for reconciling paleontology findings with Christian faith, as Gosse himself thought. However, it seems to be lethal to any kind of "Irenaean theodicy". Why did not God wind evolutionary tape forward to the state of perfection at once? If he did so, he would provide humans with false signs of the past that never actually happened, but it would be better than to allow the suffering to happen in reality. Theoretically, God could have created the world last Tuesday, as Bertrand Russell suggested ironically, but, obviously, we are not in the Kingdom of God yet. Therefore, God has permitted needless evil. Therefore, we have to conclude he is not all-loving, and that means that Irenaean theodicy fails.

In contrast to TE, alterism appeals to the standard free will theodicy. It attributes natural evil, including evolution, to the free action of humans performed before the present material universe came into being. Alterism is impregnable against the omphalos argument because it states that God did not put off the eradication of evil till kingdom come but originally created the world in the state of the greatest perfection possible for created beings. Life in a fallen world at a distance from God was the consequence of the choice of humans, who freely turned away from their Creator. God cannot immediately return human beings to Paradise without violating their freedom. On the contrary, theistic evolutionists have to admit that God placed humans in the world full of death and suffering by default, without any decisions on this matter from them, although he could have made them perfect and immortal from the very beginning.

It may be objected that the free will theodicy used by supporters of alterism imposes some limitations on God's omnipotence. The main limitation is an impossibility for God to

make creatures with free will who are unable to fall into the sin. Since humans have to be created at the center of the world, God also cannot prevent consequences of their sin from affecting the whole creation. Also, proponents of alterism need to explain how the choice for evil was possible in the flawless primordial Paradise (perhaps beings created in the image of God inescapably feel the temptation to rebel against him in striving to replace him with themselves, as Alvin Plantinga supposes<sup>61</sup>). However, all of these difficulties have haunted Christian theology from the very beginning. Therefore, the problem of natural evil for alterism is at least no harder than it was in pre-Darwinian time, while theistic evolutionists have to concede that “the most challenging problem posed by evolutionary biology is that of ‘natural evil’”<sup>62</sup>.

Of course, it is not easy to weigh up all pros and cons of the Orthodox-centered view of evolution. What is clear that it cannot be dismissed out of hand. Everything has its limitations, and alterism does not look too bad against the background of TE.

## 5 Contemporary exponents of alterism

Despite being beyond the mainstream discourse, the alteristic attitude toward evolution was not without supporters in the twentieth century. One of them was famous Canon Peter Green of Manchester (1871-1961). He hardly came to alterism under the influence of Greek Fathers, of whom he mentioned only Origen in his “Problem of evil” (1920). Rather Green was prompted to alterism by reasons of theodicy. He realized how unconvincingly Tennant and others theistic evolutionists of his

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<sup>61</sup> Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 212.

<sup>62</sup> Robert J. Russell, “Recent Theological Interpretations of Evolution”, *Theology and Science*, 11 (2013), pp. 169-184.

time were in responding to the problem of natural evil. Green was perhaps one of the first who put forward omphalos argument against TE: "All attempts to explain the fact that 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together' as a necessary feature of man's evolution to some far distant good seem to me incompatible either with God's goodness or His power. Why could He not give us this far distant good without the preliminary centuries of pain and sin?"<sup>63</sup>.

If we do not want to blame God for natural evil, we must connect it somehow to human sin, Green says. It is evident, however, that our primitive ancestors in the African savanna may not have been responsible for wrongdoing that has led to more or less disastrous consequences. So we have to assume that "the Fall must have occurred, if at all, in some state of being very different from our present state"<sup>64</sup>. Pointing out that the external world is made of our perceptions, Green argues that the whole created nature depends on the human spirit in some profound sense. Hence, the Fall of man could not have been without a grave effect on the entire visible universe. As a result of sin, the universe has been reduced to chaos, which was a starting point for evolution and other natural phenomena studied by science. Green concludes that "unfallen race would inhabit a world free from pain and death, and 'all very good'"<sup>65</sup>, the idea which much resonates with the Eastern theology.

Several years later an entirely different concept of the pre-mundane Fall was developed by Oxford theologian Norman Williams (1883–1943) in "The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin" (1927). In contrast to Green, Williams attributed natural evil not to human sin, but to the pre-cosmic defection of World Soul (or Life-Force), which then shattered into men, beasts, and

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<sup>63</sup> Peter Green, *The problem of evil* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920), p.111.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

demons<sup>66</sup>. It is without question that Williams's views stray too far from traditional Christian teaching. More successful and more philosophically sophisticated attempt in this direction was made by Russian thinker Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948). He was well aware of Eastern theology, often citing St. Gregory of Nyssa and especially St. Symeon the New Theologian. Berdyaev combined insights from them with a Kantian philosophy to interpret the Fall as objectification (or self-estrangement) of the human spirit, as a result of which primary reality has been fallen apart into subject and object, mutually impenetrable realms of phenomena and noumena (things-in-themselves).

“Man is the supreme center of the cosmic life, it fell through him, and through him it must rise”<sup>67</sup>, Berdyaev writes. God did not create the current world order with universal laws of nature. What he did create is concrete beings or “existential centers” which on account of the sin have been turned into phenomena in space and time, subjected to a rigid principle of causation. ““The world is the servitude, the enchainment of existences, not only of men but of animals of plants, even of minerals and stars (...). The enslavement, the enslaving state of the world, the determinism of nature are the outcome of objectification. Everything is turned into object”<sup>68</sup>. “Evolution belongs to the system of objectification”<sup>69</sup>, it is related only to humans in the phenomenal sense, that is, to humans as fallen beings, and cannot be regarded as an expression of God's creativity.

In the eschatological consummation, God will reverse objectification to return all created things to themselves. “The

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<sup>66</sup> Norman Powell Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1927), p. 527.

<sup>67</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, p. 294.

<sup>68</sup> Idem, *Slavery and Freedom*, trans. R.M. French (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944), p. 95.

<sup>69</sup> Idem, *The Beginning and the End*, trans. R.M. French (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1970), p. 164.

end of the world will be an end of that world of objects"<sup>70</sup>. Like Moltmann and his followers, Berdyaev links the resurrection of the dead with the global transformation of the whole natural order: "my salvation is bound up with that not only of other men but also of animals, plants, minerals, of every blade of grass – all must be transfigured and brought into the Kingdom of God"<sup>71</sup>. By this the core structure of reality, now distorted by the Fall, will be restored. But until it happens, we have to remain objects among objects: "man as a noumenon is at the beginning, and as a noumenon, he is at the end, but he lives out his destiny in the phenomenal world"<sup>72</sup>.

As the examples of Green, Williams and Berdyaev suggest, in the 1920-1940<sup>th</sup> alterism experienced some development, although modest. It even gained some credence in academies. When discussing alteristic interpretation of evolution (just to rule it out) in his paper of 1947, Teilhard pointed out that St. Gregory of Nazianzus "explains the expulsion from Eden as the fall in a 'denser' form of life" and that "the same views were re-adopted and taught at Louvain [Catholic University of Louvain] some few years ago"<sup>73</sup>. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, alterism was mostly neglected. Among those few who adhered to it were Orthodox Bishop Basil (Rodzianko) of San Francisco (1915-1999) and Olivier Clément (1921-2009), French Orthodox theologian.

Basil (Rodzianko) claimed straightforwardly that the Christian view on evolution should be based on the legacy of Cappadocian fathers, who taught about a profound impact of sin on the whole creation, by contrast to St. Thomas Aquinas, who "with the help of Aristotelian philosophy equated fallen

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>71</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man*, p. 294.

<sup>72</sup> Idem, *The Beginning and the End*, p. 232

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

world with the world created by God in the beginning”<sup>74</sup>. Bishop Basil stated that “we deal with the problem of another world, which preceded the Big Bang and differed much from our world”. The pristine world “lies in principle beyond the reach of natural science”<sup>75</sup>. Because of human sin, it had undergone a “total collapse” and then turned into “this world”. Evolution started in the fallen world after the expulsion from paradise. Bishop Basil pointed out that so-called mitochondrial Eve “cannot be identified with biblical Adam and Eve for the simple reason that creation of them in paradise does not belong to any history of our planet: there is a deep gulf of the Fall between this creation and our ancestors found on our planet”<sup>76</sup>. Olivier Clément, strongly influenced by Berdyaev, also took theology of St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Maximus the Confessor as his starting point. “Holy fathers, delving into the biblical texts, showed that the Fall represented a cosmic catastrophe, an eclipse of the paradisiacal mode of being and emergence of a new mode of existence in the whole universe”<sup>77</sup>. If science cannot find any trace of paradise in our past, it does not follow that paradise has never existed at all, but rather that it is not within the sphere of competence of scientific inquiry. “Geology and paleontology, with all their achievements, stop at the gate of paradise, for it is a different state of existence. Science cannot reach beyond the Fall, because it itself is a part of the fallen state of the world, being inseparable from spatial, temporal and material conditions that arose from the destruction of paradisiacal state”<sup>78</sup>. Since events described in Gen. 1-3 pertain to the realm of unknown, evolution studied by science is not a

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<sup>74</sup> Basil (Rodzyanko), *Theory of the Collapse of the Universe and the Faith of the Fathers* (Moscow: Palomnik, 2003), p. 204 [In Russian] All translations are mine.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>77</sup> Olivier Clément, “Le sens de la terre (Notes de cosmologie orthodoxe)”, *Contacts* 19 (1967), pp. 252–323. All translations are mine.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

synonym of six days of creation. “What science calls ‘evolution’ from the spiritual point of view is a process of objectification of primeval Adam or universal Man, which involves all humanity and all the world”.<sup>79</sup>

When these words were written in 1967, Clément was well aware that Western theology was moving in the opposite direction, towards a progressivist worldview modeled after Teilhard's “mystical evolutionism.” Theological Progressivism implies that there can be no break in the relationship between Creator and creation, but only “unmistakable rise”, to use Campbell's expression. Western theologians “completely rejected symbolism of paradise and thereby an essential component of Biblical revelation and Christian tradition”<sup>80</sup>, wrote Clément a half-century ago, and this is still true today. The voice of the Greek fathers is still silenced in the discussion of issues posed by modern science. At least in this respect, the legacy of Eastern theology remains an object of orientalisation and scientific curiosity by patristic scholars - a museum artifact, a kind of mummy or ancient vase, but not a source of inspiration for Christian intellectuals. Maybe it is time to change this situation and seriously take into account alteristic alternative to TE.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.