

## *Fire & Light*

### **St. Symeon Orthodox Church**

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**June 4, 2017**

## **Holy Pentecost**

St. Metrophanes,

First Archbishop of Constantinople (325)

Sts. Martha & Mary, Sisters of St. Lazarus (1<sup>st</sup> C)

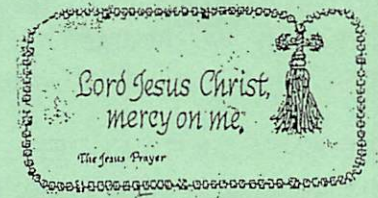
Holy Martyrs of Niculitsel, Romania (320 / 1971)

“The Word of God, the writings of the Church Fathers, and amongst them, the various prayers and hymns which we hear in church...are all the breathing and words of the Holy Spirit. It is, so to say, the Holy Spirit Himself Who ‘maketh intercession’ for us and through us, ‘with groanings which cannot be uttered.’”

- St. John of Kronstadt

## **Fast-Free Week**

- ✠ Tuesday, June 6, 6:30pm - Inquirer’s Class
- ✠ Next Baptism – Sunday, June 18, 1:30pm – Baby Helena Jones



## **On the Feast of Pentecost** - Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

In the Church’s annual liturgical cycle, Pentecost is “the last and great day.” It is the celebration by the Church of the coming of the Holy Spirit as the end—the achievement and fulfillment—of the entire history of salvation. For the same reason, however, it is also the celebration of the beginning: it is the “birthday” of the Church as the presence among us of the Holy Spirit, of the new life in Christ, of grace, knowledge, adoption to God and holiness.

This double meaning and double joy is revealed to us, first of all, in the very name of the Feast. Pentecost in Greek means fifty, and in the sacred biblical symbolism of numbers, the number fifty symbolizes both the fullness of time and that which is beyond time: the Kingdom of God itself. It symbolizes the fullness of time by its first component: 49, which is the fullness of seven (7 x 7): the number of time. And, it symbolizes that which is beyond time by its second component: 49 + 1, this one being the new day, the “day without evening” of God’s eternal Kingdom. With the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Christ’s disciples, the time of salvation, the Divine work of redemption has been completed, the fulness revealed, all gifts bestowed: it belongs to us now to “appropriate” these gifts, to be that which we have become in Christ: participants and citizens of His Kingdom.

### **THE VIGIL (Vespers and Matins) of PENTECOST**

The Vigil service begins with a solemn invitation:

**“Let us celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit  
The appointed day of promise, and the fulfillment of hope!  
The mystery which is as great as it is precious!  
In the coming of the Spirit, the very essence of the Church is revealed:  
The Holy Spirit provides all,  
Overflows with prophecy, fulfills the priesthood,  
Has taught wisdom to illiterates, has revealed fishermen as theologians,  
He brings together the whole council of the Church!”**



## **Pentecost (con't)**

In the three readings of the Old Testament (Numbers 11:16-17, 24-29; Joel 2:23-32; Ezekiel 36:24-28) we hear the prophecies concerning the Holy Spirit. We are taught that the entire history of mankind was directed towards the day on which God "would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh." This day has come! All hope, all promises, all expectations have been fulfilled. At the end of the Aposticha hymns, for the first time since Easter, we sing the hymn: "O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth...", the one with which we inaugurate all our services, all prayers, which is, as it were, the life-breath of the Church, and whose coming to us, whose "descent" upon us in this festal Vigil, is indeed the very experience of the Holy Spirit "coming and abiding in us."

Having reached its climax, the Vigil continues as an explosion of joy and light for "verily the light of the Comforter has come and illumined the world." In the Gospel reading (John 20:19-23) the Feast is interpreted to us as the Feast of the Church, of her divine nature, power and authority. The Lord sends His disciples into the world, as He Himself was sent by His Father. Later, in the antiphons of the Liturgy, we proclaim the universality of the apostles' preaching, the cosmical significance of the Feast, the sanctification of the whole world, the true manifestation of God's Kingdom.

### **THE KNEELING VESPERS OF PENTECOST**

The liturgical peculiarity of Pentecost is a very special Vespers of the day itself. Usually this service follows immediately the Divine Liturgy, is "added" to it as its own fulfillment. The service begins as a solemn "summing up" of the entire celebration, as its liturgical synthesis. We hold flowers in our hands symbolizing the joy of the eternal spring, inaugurated by the coming of the Holy Spirit. After the festal Entrance, this joy reaches its climax in the singing of the Great Prokeimenon:

***"Who is so great a God as our God?"***

Then, having reached this climax, we are invited to kneel. This is our first kneeling since Pascha. It signifies that after these fifty days of Paschal joy and fullness, of experiencing the Kingdom of God, the Church now is about to begin her pilgrimage through time and history. It is evening again, and the night approaches, during which temptations and failures await us, when, more than anything else, we need Divine help, that presence and power of the Holy Spirit, who has already revealed to us the joyful End, who now will help us in our effort towards fulfillment and salvation.

All this is revealed in the three prayers which the celebrant reads now as we all kneel and listen to him. In the first prayer, we bring to God our repentance, our increased appeal for forgiveness of sins, the first condition for entering into the Kingdom of God.

In the second prayer, we ask the Holy Spirit to help us, to teach us to pray and to follow the true path in the dark and difficult night of our earthly existence. Finally, in the third prayer, we remember all those who have achieved their earthly journey, but who are united with us in the eternal God of Love. The joy of Easter has been completed and we again have to wait for the dawn of the Eternal Day. Yet, knowing our weakness, humbling ourselves by kneeling, we also know the joy and the power of the Holy Spirit who has come. We know that God is with us, that in Him is our victory.

Thus is completed the Feast of Pentecost and we enter "the ordinary time" of the year. Yet, every Sunday now will be called "after Pentecost"—and this means that it is from the power and light of these fifty days that we shall receive our own power, the Divine help in our daily struggle. At Pentecost we decorate our churches with flowers and green branches—for the Church "never grows old, but is always young." It is an evergreen, ever-living Tree of grace and life, of joy and comfort. For the Holy Spirit—"the Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life—comes and abides in us, and cleanses us from all impurity," and fills our life with meaning, love, faith and hope.

~ Father Alexander Schmemmann (1974)

## ***St. Paisios: The Key to Acquiring God's Grace is by being Humble***

“[St. Paisios responds to the question: ‘Geronda, which virtues are needed for one to be overshadowed by the Grace of God?'] Humility alone will suffice. I am often asked: ‘How long does it take for one to acquire divine Grace?’ Some may spend their entire life living in a supposedly spiritual way, with great asceticism and so forth, but because they think too highly of themselves, do not receive the Grace of God. And others become full of Grace in a short period of time, simply because they have been humbled.”

“If one becomes humble, he can be instantly immersed in divine Grace, become an angel and find himself in Paradise. On the contrary, if he becomes prideful, he can turn into a devil in a moment's time and find himself in Hell. In other words, one can become a lamb if he wants to; he can also become a goat if he wants to. The poor goats can never become lambs, even if they want to. But God has given us humans the ability to change from being a goat to being a lamb — it is enough that we want to do so.”

“What God desires from us is to have a little humility, in order to have kinship with Him, and then all His gifts come abundantly — one after another. For - in a way - God owes much Grace to the humble person, and so He gives it to him as a gift — without being asked to do so. This is a spiritual law. ‘*God resisteth the proud, but giveth Grace to the humble*’[James 4:6]; is this not written in the Gospel? This is how God has arranged it. To be humble means I have divine Grace. A very humble person receives much Grace from God. For the humble person absorbs divine Grace like a sponge.”

“Whoever bows humbly and receives the blows of others, dispels his own bumps and lumps, becomes spiritually as an Angel and is, therefore, admitted through the narrow gate of Paradise. The only way to heaven is thorough a spiritual descent, not a worldly ascent.”

“Humility opens the doors of heaven, and then the Grace of God comes to people; whereas pride closes them. Father Tychon used to say: ‘*One humble individual has more Grace than many persons together. Each morning, God blesses the people of the world with one hand. But when He sees a humble person, He blesses him with both hands. He who has great humility is the greatest of all.*’

“Everything depends upon a humble frame of mind. When one has a humble frame of mind, then earth and Heaven come together naturally. People with humility have found the button; they press it and ascend to the ‘*Third Heaven*’, with the spiritual lift of love. Yet, you hear some people ask: ‘*Why does God want us to be humble?*’ What a thing to say! If one is not humbled, he is not admitted into Paradise and has no respite — even in this life. What did Christ say? ‘*Take up My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls.*’[Matthew 11:29]”

“I have noticed that one humble thought makes a person shine, makes him beam. When a person assumes the entire fault upon himself, he is showered with the Grace of God. Some time ago, a doctor who had many children visited and told me: ‘*Father, I have a lot of inner pride, and it is this that makes my children misbehave.*’ As he was saying this in front of his children, his eyes were tearful but his face was shining!”

“I noticed the same thing here [i.e., at the Monastery] a few days ago. Some Sisters had come to see me to have a talk about various matters. At one point, I had to scold them severely. One of them was not helped at all; she left as cold as she had come. The only thing she did throughout the discussion was relate the faults of the others to the last detail. This, you see, is the ... ‘*gift*’ of those who do not work on themselves. Another Sister was moved to the point of tears. She was humbled, but afterwards her face was shining. This is what a humble thought with contrition can do! Immediately, all faults are put aside, one's life is put in order and his face beams; whereas, a prideful or blasphemous thought darkens one's face.

† † †

## The Holy Martyrs of Niculitsel, Romania

The graves of Saints Zoticus, Atallus, Camisius and Philip were discovered in 1971.

Lesser Scythia (modern Romania), between the Danube and the Black Sea in the northeastern territory of the Roman Empire, was a place of exile or death for Christians who refused to worship the pagan gods.

During the persecutions of Decius (249-251), Diocletian and Maximilian (284-305), and Licinius (308-324) thousands of people died there from cold, hunger, or torture. The relics of those who endured martyrdom because they openly proclaimed their faith in Christ were taken by Christians and buried in secret places. Accounts of the lives and sufferings of these holy Martyrs were written and preserved so they would not be forgotten. When the persecutions ended, the relics were moved from their temporary resting places and placed in special crypts (martyria). Churches were built over these crypts, and the ruins of some of them may be seen today in Dobrogea.

In September 1971 a creek overflowed its banks near the village of Niculitsel in the county of Tulcea, revealing one of the oldest of these martyria. The crypt, which is made of bricks, is divided into two rooms, one on top of the other. In the upper room, the relics of four Martyrs were found in a single wooden coffin. All had been decapitated. The heads of three Martyrs were found atop their necks, while the head of the fourth martyr was resting on his chest. An inscription on the left wall reads: "Christ's Martyrs." The names of the four Martyrs (Zoticus, Attalus, Camasius, and Philip) were scratched into the right wall.

According to the records which have been preserved, these Martyrs were tried by the Roman authorities of Noviodunum (modern Isaccea) and sentenced to death. They were beheaded, then buried at Niculitsel. The exact date of their martyrdom is not known. Some believe that they were slain early in the fourth century during the persecutions of Diocletian or Licinius. Others, however, think the four men may have been martyred north of the Danube during the persecution of the Gothic king Athanaric (370-372) against the Christians.

About a hundred fragments of the bones of two men (aged between 45-50) were found in the lower crypt. It is thought that they died during the persecution of Decius, and then their relics were reinterred at Niculitsel around 370-380. The names of these Martyrs are not known.

The Syrian Martyrologion and Saint Jerome's Martyrologion give June 4 as the date of the Martyrs' execution. The Synaxaria list these four Martyrs along with six others: Eutychius, Quirinus, Julia, Saturninus, Ninita, Fortunio. Twenty-five others were also beheaded with these Martyrs, but are not named.

The relics of these holy Martyrs were moved to the Cocosh Monastery in 1971, where they are venerated by the faithful.

**Spiritual Gifts:** St. Paisios responds to the question: "Geronda, when one is aware that a particular talent of his is God-given, how can he possibly be robbed by the evil one?" "He is robbed because he is not watchful. God endows each person with many gifts. However, instead of being grateful to God for these gifts, he is often not watchful. He claims them as his own, inwardly boasting. Then the cunning devil, the thief that he is, goes and steals the gifts — infects them with his poison, rendering them useless."

"Is one in a good spiritual state? If he becomes proud, the Grace of God will abandon him and he will fall into a bad spiritual state. Is one in a bad spiritual condition, because, for example, he did something wrong? If he becomes aware of his mistake and repents sincerely, humility then comes to him, so that he attains a good spiritual state, because humility brings the Grace of God. But in order for humility to become one's permanent condition, such that the Grace of God remains within him, spiritual work is required."

# The House of the Father (excerpt)

by Fr. George Florovsky

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In the teachings about the Church “a great pious mystery” is revealed to the believer’s consciousness in all its unexplored fullness. The Church relates to Christ on earth, and is the objective result of his redemptive feat, the image of his dwelling in grace in the world, “every single day, until the end of time.” It is in the Church that the divine *oikonomia* (God’s plan of salvation) culminates and is fulfilled. It is to the Church that the Holy Spirit descended in the “terrible and inscrutable mysterious act” of Pentecost; and it is in the Church, as “the house of God,” that the salvation, sanctification and “deification” of creation have been accomplished, and continue by the strength, action and grace of the All-Holy Spirit. The Church is the single “door of life,” as St. Irenaeus of Lyons wrote, and moreover — is a rich “treasure house” of everything relating to truth. And that is why only in the Church, from the Church and through the Church is the real path of Christian knowledge and piety revealed. For Christianity is not a teaching which could have been apprehended through external teaching, but *life*, which must essentially *be gained*, which can be received only through real birth from the source of life. It is insufficient to *know* Christianity, “to have a Christian image of thought”; it is necessary to *be* a Christian, *to live* “in Christ,” and this is possible only through life in the Church. Christianity is *experience*. And all Christian dogma by its origin is namely *Church dogma*, the description of Church experience, the witness of the Church about the “guarantee of faith” entrusted to it. Only through this charismatic Church confirmation of the definition of faith do the forces and significance take on fullness, receiving them from the Church not as from power and authority but as the voice of the Holy Spirit and the Lord himself, “never becoming remote, but existing continuously.” “Allow the Holy Spirit to us,” this solemn prayer of the regulations of the councils raises all the

testimony of the Church to its real “life-bearing source.” Not only mystically but also historically, the Church is the single source of Christian life and Christian teaching. For Christianity appeared to the world only in the aspect of the Church. On the other hand, even by its content, Christian theology in the final account is reduced namely to teachings about the Church, as the eternal New Testament, as the “Body of Christ”; and any harm to the teachings about the Church, any destruction of the fullness of Church self-consciousness inevitably drags behind it dogmatic and theological imprecision, error and distortion. This is why, in essence, there cannot be particular, individual, complete dogmatic teachings about the Church, set forth in generally accessible dogmatic formulations. For the Church is the focus of all Christianity and is known only from within, through experience and the accomplishment of a life of grace — not in individual dogmatic definitions but in the entire fullness of the doctrine of the faith. And, as one contemporary Russian theologian correctly noted, “there is no *understanding* of churchness, but there is the Church *herself*, and for any living member of the Church, Church life is the most definite and tangible thing he knows.”

Christianity is not exhausted by teachings or morals, nor by the totality of theoretical knowledge, nor the canon of moral prescriptions and rules; and they are not central to it. Christianity *is* the Church. It is *in the Church* that the teachings, the “Divine dogma,” is contained and delivered, and the “rule of the faith,” the rules and regulations of piety are suggested. But the Church itself is something immeasurably greater. Christianity is *not only teachings about salvation but salvation itself*, the once and for all perfect God-manhood; “and it is his death, and not his teachings and not the severe life of human beings that compose the means of reconciliation,” in the clear and firm expression of the Russian theologian, Philaret, Archbishop of Chernigov. In the

Orthodox consciousness, Christ is above all the Savior, not only the “teacher of blessings” and not only the Prophet but above all — the King and High Priest, the “King of the World and Savior of our souls.” And salvation is based not so much on the heralding of the heavenly Kingdom so much as in the God-manhood image of the Lord himself and in his deeds, in his “saving passion” and “life-creating Cross,” in his death and resurrection. For “if Christ has not risen, then our faith would be vain.” Christianity is Eternal Life, having been revealed to the world and human beings in the inscrutable Incarnation of the Son of God, and having been revealed to the faithful through the holy Sacraments by the grace of the Holy Spirit. “For life appeared, and we saw and we witness and proclaim to you this eternal life which the Father possessed and which appeared to us.” As the remarkable Russian ascetic of the recent past, Bishop Theophan (the Hermit) said: “in the consciousness of the Christian first is seen the Figure of Christ the Lord, Son of God Incarnate, and behind the curtain of his flesh is seen the Tri-hypostatic God.” In the Orthodox consciousness the Lord Jesus Christ above all is the Son of God, the Logos Incarnate, “One of the Holy Trinity,” the Lamb of God, having taken on the sins of the world. And Orthodox faith is totally inseparable from the Image of God-manhood, impossible outside of a living contact with him through the sacraments of the Church.

Given the totality of symbolic expressions, the entirety of the life of prayer, the liturgical life, and the Creed, the Orthodox Church confirms the *mystery of God-manhood* in the spirit and meaning of the Chalcedonian dogma. It professes the mysterious unmixed “fullness of Divinity” and the fullness of humanity in the entire earthly life of the Savior, in his mysterious birth from the Ever-Virgin Mary by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in his temptations, humiliation and sufferings — “even until death, and death on the Cross,” in his resurrection and “in the heavens with the Divine Ascension of his pure flesh.” All these are real and historical

events, having been accomplished in *this* world, and in this way having enlightened this world. “The Logos became flesh, and dwelt among us” — this was accomplished in Judaic Bethlehem in the days of King Herod. And this *historical event* stands as the focus of the Christian faith. The Christian faith is essentially historical, historically concrete, for it takes its essence namely from historical events. Apostolic preaching was historical in character — from the very day of Pentecost, when the Apostle Peter testified, *as a witness*, about the completed salvation, about the wonders, miracles, and signs which God did through Christ, about his sufferings, Resurrection, and Ascension, and about the descent of the Holy Spirit. In the apostolic preaching the empirical experience grew together with mystical experience, for in the empirical itself, in the invisibility of the creation, appeared the supra-empirical, the Divine — the mystery of Godmanhood. And this mystery is contained in and manifested by the Holy Church, the “Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Confirmation of Truth”. The entire Christian faith is the clarification and revelation of the mystery of the Hypostatic Godmanhood; and only in connection with this *event* — “the Son of God is the Son of the Virgin”— is the essence and nature of the Church understood as the real “Body of Christ.” It is namely this image of the Apostle Paul which is the most precise and fundamental definition of the Holy Church, making possible all other and later definitions.

The Savior testified about himself that he “conquered the world.” And his victory, his redemptive achievement is included in the fact that he created his Church, the beginning of the “new creation.” Beginning with the holy apostles, ancient Christians called themselves the “people of God,” a new nation, the “chosen people,” “a holy people.” And in truth the Holy Church is the “House of God,” the City of God, “of which the artist and builder is God,” the “Kingdom of God,” “the New Jerusalem from above.” Already in the name itself — *ekklesia* — the idea of the Church is contained and is carried on, as a City or Kingdom of God.

## Evolution in Three Parts (conclusion)

More Fred on Evolution - Fred Reed, March 7, 2005

### Consciousness

With evolution the sciences run into the problem of consciousness, which they are poorly equipped to handle. This is important. You don't need to consider consciousness in, say, physical chemistry, which gives the correct answers without it. But evolution is a study of living things, of which consciousness is at least sometimes a quality. Evolutionists know this, and so write unwittingly fatuous articles on the evolution of consciousness. They believe that they are being scientific. But...are they?

Obvious questions: What is consciousness? Does it have a derived definition, like  $f = ma$ ? Or is it an undefined primitive, like "line" or "point"? With what instrument do you detect it? Is something either conscious or not, or do you have shades and degrees? Is a tree conscious, or a rock? How do you know? Evolution means a continuous change over time. How do you document such changes? Do we have fossilized consciousness, consciousness preserved in amber? Does consciousness have physical existence? If it does, is it electromagnetic, gravitational, or what? If it doesn't have physical existence, what kind of existence does it have?

If you cannot define it, detect it, or measure it, how do you study its evolution, if any? Indeed, how do the sciences, based on physics, handle anything that is physically undetectable?

Speculation disguised as science never ends. For example, some say that consciousness is just a side-effect of complexity. How do they know? Complexity defined how? If a man is conscious because he's complex, then a whole room full of people must be even more conscious, because the total complexity would have to be more than any one fellow's complexity. The universe has got to be more complex than anything in it, so it must be motingator conscious.

Ah, but the crucial questions, though: (Again, the possible answers are, "Yes," "No," "I don't know," or "The question doesn't make sense.")

First, does consciousness interact with matter? It seems to. When I drop a cinder block on my foot, it certainly interacts with my consciousness. And if I consciously tell my hand to move, it does.

Second, if consciousness interacts with matter, then don't you have to take it into account in describing physical systems?

### Vague Plausibility Revisited

Humans are said to have a poor sense of smell because they evolved to stand upright in the savanna where you can see forever and don't need to smell things. This makes no sense: Anyone can see that the better your senses of smell and hearing, especially at night but even in daytime if you have lions that look like dirt and know how to sneak up on things, you are better off. I note that horses have good vision and eyes at about the same altitude as ours, but they have great noses.

Then the evolutionist says, well, people's noses retracted into their faces, and there wasn't room for good olfaction. How much olfactory tissue does a house cat have? They can sure smell things better than we can. Oh, then says the Evolutionist, a large olfactory center in the brain would impose too much metabolic strain and require that people eat more, and so they would die of starvation in bad times. Evidence? Demonstration?

My favorite example, which does not reach the level of plausibility, is such artifacts as the tail of a peacock which obviously makes the bird easier to see and eat. So help me, I have several times seen the assertion that females figure that any male who can survive such a horrendous disadvantage must really be tough, and therefore good mating material. The tail increases fitness by decreasing fitness. A Boy Named Sue.

## Traits That Ought To Be Dead, But Don't Seem To Be

Supposedly traits that kill off an animal die out of the population, and things that help the beast survive spread till they all have them. That makes sense. But does it happen?

That it does is certainly an article of faith. I once asked a doctor why Rh negative people stayed in the population. Fifteen percent of white women are negative, so they are usually going to mate with positive men, with the consequent possibility that children will suffer from hemolytic disease. Well, said the doctor, being Rh negative obviously must have some survival value, or it wouldn't exist. (Then why hasn't it become general? Or is it doing so?) She simply believed.

She then rolled out sickle-cell anemia, the poster child of evolution, which is caused by a point mutation on the beta chain of hemoglobin and, when heterozygous, helps people survive malaria.

Maybe Rh negativity does have some survival value, which can be shown to be greater than its non-survival value. Maybe asthma does too, and fatal allergies to bee stings, and migraines, schizophrenia, panic, cluster headaches, masochism, anaphylactic shock in general, homosexuality in males, allergies, a thousand genetic diseases, suicide, and so on. (I suppose you could argue that being a suicide bomber ensures wide dispersal of one's genetic material.)

For that matter, why are there so many traits that have no obvious value? For example, kidneys have well developed nerves. Kidney stones are agonizing. Yet there is absolutely nothing an animal can do about a kidney stone. How do those nerves increase fitness? Traits that do not increase fitness, remember, die out.

Evolutionists don't ask. Always the question is How does this fit in with evolution, instead of, Does this fit in with evolution?

## Intelligent Design

An interesting thought that drives evolutionists mad is called Intelligent Design, or ID. It is the view that things that appear to have been done deliberately may have been. Some look at, say, the human eye and think, "This looks like really good engineering. Elaborate retina of twelve layers, marvelously transparent cornea, pump system to keep the whole thing inflated, suspensory ligaments, really slick lens, the underlying cell biology. *Very clever.*"

I gather that a lot of ID folk are in fact Christian apologists trying to drape Genesis in scientific respectability. That is, things looked to have been designed, therefore there must be a designer, now will Yahweh step forward. Yet an idea is not intellectually disreputable because some of the people who hold it are. The genuine defects of ID are the lack of a detectible designer, and that evolution appears to have occurred. This leads some to the thought that consciousness is involved and evolution may be shaping itself. I can think of no easy way to test the idea.

In any event, to anyone of modest rationality, the evolutionist's hostility to Intelligent Design is amusing. Many evolutionists argue, perhaps correctly, that Any Day Now we will create life in the laboratory, which would be intelligent design. Believing that life arose by chemical accident, they will argue (reasonably, given their assumptions) that life must have evolved countless times throughout the universe. It follows then that, if we will soon be able to design life, someone else might have designed us.

## In Conclusion

To evolutionists I say, "I am perfectly willing to believe what you can actually establish. Reproducibly create life in a test tube, and I will accept that it can be done. Do it under conditions that reasonably may have existed long ago, and I will accept as likely the proposition that such conditions existed and gave rise to life. I bear no animus against the theory, and champion no competing creed. But don't expect me to accept fluid speculation, sloppy logic, and secular theology."