

## 148. Feb. 25/March 10, 1974. Second Sunday of Lent

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : September 2, 2016

Dear Brother in Christ, Alexey,  
Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We received yesterday the long-awaited epistle of Dr. Kalomiros on “evolution” — 40 pages long! I must confess that it is shocking beyond our expectations — giving the “evolutionary” teaching quite unadorned and unqualified, complete with the “evolved beast Adam” and “he who denies evolution denies the Sacred Scriptures.” In a way, however, we are rather glad of this — because now for the first time we have found a reputable Orthodox “evolutionist” who is willing to be quite frank about matters which others, I believe, are afraid to speak up about for fear of offending “weak consciences” which are under “Western influences.”

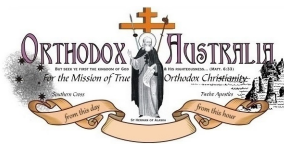
I have written him a short letter saying I wish to make a long and detailed reply to him and to start a “dialogue” with him on this subject. I believe that if we can answer him point by point, and raise the points he doesn’t mention, we can make the forthcoming publication a very powerful one.

I must confess to being rather disappointed in the tone of his letter, which is somewhat in the “elevated” tone of Fr. Ephraim, with repeated comments about “Western rationalists,” etc. However, he ends very nicely and begs us to tell him where he is wrong — so we must do this. Frankly, I would like to “convert” him completely. But God only knows what is possible, and how much his mind is still open. The most encouraging thing is that he, like us, regards the matter as extremely important, as opposed to those who think it’s unimportant and that everyone can believe as he wishes. With Dr. Kalomiros at last the real battle begins.

You can read the letter on your next visit (I’m beginning now on my reply to it, but in general this is my feeling about it (Father Herman hasn’t read it yet):

1. Patristically it is very weak. Very few Fathers are quoted, and the only really “evolutionary” quote is a passage from St. Gregory of Nyssa — a passage which I noted a few weeks ago, by the way, and thought at the time: “I’d better use this and explain it, because one who already believes in evolution will be sure to think it ‘proves evolution.’” It does not, of course — it is merely a general statement of the orderly progression of God’s creation from the lowest to the highest, with the most perfect creature, man, coming last. Nothing is said about man or any creature “evolving,” and in another part of the same book (“On the Creation of Man”) St. Gregory says explicitly that Adam was « «generated, but was created directly by Christ.

2. There is a long “theological” discourse on man’s nature, which is very partial and one-sided,



but will require a solid answer with quotes from Holy Fathers — for evolution above all involves a false anthropology, doctrine of man.

3. It is quite obvious that Kalomiros has gone to the Fathers already knowing that evolution is a “fact.” He obviously has not given deep thought to examining the presuppositions of the “fact” of evolution, so we will have to challenge him to start thinking and not bring to the Holy Fathers his preconceptions based on modern Western “wisdom.”

4. He is very imprecise on the very meaning of the word “evolution” — he thinks the development from embryo to mature man is “evolution,” and that the existence of different races of men is due to “evolution.” Very naive.

5. The man is not a theologian, but reads the Fathers by hit and miss.

We are almost forced to a painful conclusion: the Greeks have lost the patristic tradition, and all their shouting about “Latin influence,” etc., is only an expression of their own uncertainty. They try to “reconstruct” the patristic tradition, but they have no living Fathers to guide them. Perhaps Father Theodoritos of Mt. Athos is more in the patristic tradition, but the impression becomes ever stronger that modern “Orthodox Greece” is theologically corrupt and disjointed, whereas the so-maligned Russian tradition kept the theological tradition intact.

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We rejoice to hear the news of Felicity. May God ever protect her.

About the baptism: it is out of the question to get a priest to go anywhere on a weekend of Lent. Our priest was here last Tuesday (with Vladika Anthony), but cannot come again unto (hopefully) Pascha week. You would do best to go ahead with the plans for the baptism, and then leave it in God’s hands whether you can go to S.F. for Pascha also. If you cannot make it to S.F. for Pascha, you are welcome (all of you) to spend it with us here — we will be having services off and on from 2 a.m. Saturday morning to 2 a.m. Sunday morning. However, please don’t mention this possibility to anyone in S.F., as we have trouble enough already from people (who don’t know the Orthodox skete tradition) who call us “priesdless,” and if we invite people to share our “priestlessness,” it must be twice as bad! It would obviously be best for you to be able to receive Holy Communion at Pascha, but we will be here in case you can’t. (We ourselves follow the tradition of Russian desert-dwellers, which is not to leave the desert at Pascha, but either to have a priest come, or else go to the world shortly before or after the feast, when there are few people in church.)

Don’t be discouraged if the response to Nikodemos seems to diminish. That is “natural” once it ceases to be a novelty. Of course it’s difficult to know what the readers are thinking — but just go on giving what you think they need. We thought the issue was good, and the Kourdakov quotes indeed added a “punch.” I think we “explain” Sergei K. sufficiently in the new Orthodox Word (sent



out yesterday); tell us what you think of it.

With love in Christ our Saviour,  
Seraphim, monk

p.s. From Kalomiros' letter it is obvious that as a part of the "scientific" part of our "evolution book" (as it now seems to become) there should be a discussion of what evolution is and what it isn't. In the patristic quotes I gave you there are good points from St. Basil on this — but it would be best to keep them in the final, theological section, and have a separate discussion of the same subject in the scientific section.