



## 155. CHRIST IS RISEN! St. Thomas Tuesday, 1974. April 10, 1974

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : September 2, 2016

Dear Brother in Christ, Alexey,

We were glad to hear of your joyous Pascha and the spiritual profit from these holy days for the Etna Orthodox community. Do not worry about the increased responsibilities and new souls that come your way; God will not send you more burdens than you can bear, and what can we poor Christians do if we don't help at least a little those who are thirsting for the truth? Let us labor a little for others, who often have nowhere else to turn to in this wasteland of modern life, and let us look forward to the repose of the next life, when the spiritual harvest will be in and secure from harm! And even in all our trials and sorrow — for which constantly be prepared! — what joy our loving God sends to us unworthy ones!

We are happy to hear about the new David and his simple acceptance of Holy Orthodoxy. May God bring him safely into His fold. We also had a very moving "missionary experience" this Bright Week. Michael returned and we had a joyous and peaceful Pascha, getting back ?? work sufficiently to send out the new issue of The Orthodox Word on Thursday. The same afternoon Michael and I went to Redding on business and to visit the Harveys, and in the Redding library I was approached by a young bearded "seeker" who offered me a bag of bananas which someone had given him in Safeway — "for your community, or whatever it is." He went away and in five minutes returned to find out of what religion we were. After talking for a few minutes with him I could see he was sincere, and after finding out that he lived "nowhere" (all his worldly possessions were in his knapsack in the Greyhound depot, and he was on his way from Mexico to Washington on another leg of a 5-year fruitless "search for the meaning of life"), I invited him to come and stay with us for a while and find out about Orthodoxy. He instantly accepted, and he was with us until Sunday, attending all our services, reading and working, and sitting in a kind of wide-eyed stupefaction as we tried to open up Orthodoxy to him, about which he had never heard except through Dostoyevsky. He left in tears and was evidently overwhelmed in a way he doesn't yet understand. What will happen in the future we don't know, but we had a very good feeling about him — he is a very normal and good-hearted boy of 23 (not a slouchy hippy type at all) who has been miserable and mixed up because he has been deprived of knowing the meaning of life (he comes from a very weak Catholic family). His encounter with us was certainly providential, as it came at a critical time for him — just 10 minutes before he saw me he had put his head on a table in the library in despair at finding that everything he read about philosophy and religion was absolutely empty and there was no answer to the questions he was asking. He left without knowing fully what had happened to him, but at least he knew that "a ray of light has dawned." He left on



the Sunday of “Doubting Thomas” — the significance of which he got. May God grant that, as I told him, in exchange for a bag of bananas he may receive the Kingdom of Heaven!

All of this somehow reminds me forcibly that — just as our Saviour could say of Nathaniel that “here is a true Israelite, there is no guile in him” — so too there is such a thing as a “true American”: an honest, forthright, normal person for whom Holy Orthodoxy is quite “natural”; and the harvest of these “true Americans” is only beginning. Doubtless the “Orthodox Americans” will be few in number, but it is precisely the best part of America which is waiting (without knowing it) to hear the glad tidings of Orthodoxy.

Our encounter with a receptive outsider like Gary (please pray for him — he’s promised to write us when he’s settled) is quite inspiring, because it shows us clearly that treasure which we have that such outsiders can’t even dream of. It also helps to offset the troubles and sorrows we have “inside” our Orthodox family, since we are all so human. The “kind but distant” attitude of the Hoffmanns is painful; and again it seems so important — never to regard ourselves as “experts” who have “authoritative answers” and regard everyone else with some kind of suspicion. We certainly hope that Daniel does not get mixed up with this kind of attitude.

I must apologize again for not having any comments ready on the two parts of the “evolution” study you sent. Hopefully in a week or so I will have some comments, and also another book for you and the Dobzhansky article (which I finally found in the Paschal cleanup which, fortunately, Father Herman forces us to make). The more I think of it, the more I see how important it is for us to keep chipping away at every chapter until we get just the right tone in which to talk about the question. We agree that the word “evolution” should be only in a sub-title (although I wrote Vladimir that we simply don’t have the necessary information for this year’s “Books in Print” and it would be better to list it next year when, hopefully, it will be a reality). In general, we must work at it until the whole study will have such a “calm and objective” tone that the ordinary open-minded yet somewhat brainwashed person will at least consent to read it. Thus it will not be an “anti-evolution” study, but rather a Patristic study with calm Orthodox reflections on evolution.

For my own background I checked out two books in the Redding library: Raymond Dart’s *In Search of the Missing Link*, which looks to be too popular to be of much use; and Leakey’s *Adams Ancestors*, to which I find myself, after a few chapters, rather sympathetic, inasmuch as it seems to be rather careful and precise scientifically (of course, if one discounts the attempt to fit all the evidence into an “evolutionary” framework, which does indeed seem to be a philosophical intrusion). There are so many possible pitfalls in this study (and other imaginary ones which we must also avoid!) that it is good to proceed slowly and carefully in getting the whole text together. I have a pretty good idea of how I want to revise and rearrange the letter to Kalomiros, but I hope to get a reply from him before starting this. Your comments too will be welcome. Some of his statements should definitely be quoted in the final version, but probably anonymously; and probably in the preface it should be mentioned that there was an exchange of correspondence with him on the subject. What do you think?



The general outline of the study seems clear now, and I think you've made at least a first draft of everything except the general "proofs of evolution" — i.e., that "irrefutable evidence" which can be interpreted in so many different ways (the "evidence" from embryology, homology of living structures, similarity of blood types, etc.). It would be good to have a paragraph or so discussing each of these points which seem so convincing to evolutionists. Also, I've come across several references to the "fluorine dating system," but no thorough discussion of it — Leakey mentions it as being in its infancy in the 1940's. It has to do apparently with the rate of absorption of fluorine, which seems to be vastly variant depending on moisture, etc. It would be good for us to give a kind of "philosophy" of the dating systems — i.e., showing that we do not reject them outright, but that their significance is relative and limited, somewhat helpful in the genuine study of paleontology (which we should also emphasize is a legitimate science), but not any absolute answer to anything. In general, we should communicate a very "friendly feeling" toward genuine science.

Spring barely arrived with Pascha here, and even on "New" Sunday (St. Thomas) there were barely green leaves on the oaks. Our garden is finally growing a little, such as it is, after a battle with mice, who ate up everything the instant it came up. Have you ever heard of a garden full of mouse traps?

We will be glad to see you (and David) whenever you can come. Pray for us.

With love in Christ,  
Seraphim, monk