



210. Feb. 22/March 6, 1976 Cheese-fare Saturday

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Dr. Kalomiros,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We received your new letter on evolution. I have read it only once and it will be a long time before I will be able to answer it in detail. However, in general I will say this: I find it very helpful because I see that I have made some mistakes and expressed some things imprecisely, which you have corrected. I see also that you have made some mistakes, and you have accused me of saying things I did not say at all!—about these I will write later. Most of all, I am glad to see that you have expressed yourself in this letter much more clearly on some points than in your first letter, and therefore some of my criticisms do not apply to the kind of evolution in which you believe. But you did not express these points clearly in your first letter, and therefore I do not think I can be made entirely to blame for misunderstanding your position.

However, I am unhappy concerning the tone of your letter. You treat me as if I am your enemy, and say that I have been “dishonest” in my reply. I assure you that this is not so. My reply was very strongly worded, I admit, because there was nothing in your first letter to inform me that you did not share some of the worst errors of the evolutionists here in the West; and you spoke with such self-assurance that I did not know how to begin discussing the issue of evolution with you without expressing some things very strongly. I was not writing for publication, and therefore I was not afraid to make mistakes, trusting that you would correct these in a charitable spirit if you found them.

Now, however, I do not know if it is possible to continue this discussion or not. You have placed me in a “category”: I am a “fundamentalist,” a “literalist,” I am “against science” and under “Western influence.” I am afraid that anything I may now say, you will dismiss as of no value. If so, there is no point in my even replying to your letter; your mind is already made up about me and you will not listen to whatever I may say. I hope that this is not so, because you are the first Orthodox evolutionist I have found who is willing to discuss this question at all, and I think both of us could gain greatly by continuing this discussion. But I will have to tell you clearly that, despite your impression, I am not a fundamentalist, nor am I “against science”; quite the contrary.

But you are placing an impossible limitation to this discussion when you say (p. 12): “I would discuss evolution with you from the scientific point of view only if you had some diploma of one of the biological or geological branches of natural science.” Since you wish it to be so, I of course can say nothing. But let me quote one of your scientific statements (p. 11): “The stages of the embryo



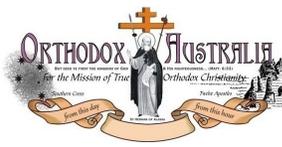
in the uterus are exactly the stages of life's evolution upon earth. This is so exact that even the gills of our ancient ancestors, the fishes, exist in the foetus of even the most perfected animals of the solid earth, the mammals." And now let me quote two statements made in scientific journals and textbooks by scientists possessing advanced degrees in their specialties:

1. "Haeckel's recapitulation theory (which is exactly what you have described to me as an unquestioned scientific fact) has been demonstrated to be wrong by numerous subsequent scholars." (Walter J. Boch, biologist of Columbia University, New York, in the article "Evolution by Orderly Law," in *Science*, Vol. 164, May 4, 1969, p. 684.)

2. "The type of analogical thinking that leads to theories that development is based on the recapitulation of ancestral stages or the like no longer seems at all "convincing or even very interesting to biologists." (Prof. ? H. Waddington, University of Edinburgh, in *Principles of Embryology*, 1965, p. 10.)

I do not bring these examples in order to debate this theory with you; I do so only in order to show you that something which you accept as undisputed scientific fact is not only disputed but even denied by reputable scientists, many of whom are themselves evolutionists! The same is true of some other "scientific facts" which you cite, and which you refuse to allow me to discuss with you.

Despite your accusation, I am not "against science." I do not have an advanced degree in science, but I have taken college courses in zoology and done considerable reading in scientific sources on the theory and facts of evolution. I have read the Life book on Evolution and found it very disappointing, because I hoped to find in it demonstrations of facts (because I am sincerely interested to know whether evolution is true or not!), and instead I found only diagrams and pictures and descriptions which are not convincing to anyone with an open mind, but only to someone who already believes in evolution on other grounds. Your mind is evidently closed on this subject, and you seem to be unaware of the great mass of scientific literature in recent years which is highly critical of the evolutionary theory, which talks about relegating it to poetry and metaphors instead of scientific theory (Prof. Constance, professor of botany at the University of California, Berkeley), or even deny its validity altogether. If you wish (but it is quite pointless!), I could indeed compile a list of hundreds (if not thousands) of reputable scientists who now either disbelieve in evolution entirely or state that it is highly questionable as a scientific theory. Many of them state quite openly (evidently Greece is still behind the West in this regard) that a "literal" creation in six 24-hour days is one possible interpretation of the scientific facts which we now have. (Although you will recall that I wrote in my first letter that this question is not one of the first importance, in my opinion.) There is also now much scientific evidence that the world is no older than 8 to 10,000 years. (I do not say that this is "scientifically proved"—I say only what scientists themselves now say—that there are some undisputed scientific facts which make sense only if the world is very young.) Are you going to tell me that I am crazy or "against science" when I can quote doctors of geological and biological sciences (Many of whom are not "fundamentalists") who say things like this? If so, then there is no point discussing the issue further, because that would mean that you



yourself are against science, are against an impartial and objective examination of scientific facts. I pray that this is not so, for then your views on evolution would be worthless, being only the creation of your own imagination.

I do not wish to discuss in detail with you any of the scientific evidence for or against evolution—there are others who can do this much better than I. I only ask, to begin with, that you allow me to send you one book, written by a scientific specialist (in geology, I believe), who has given his views at lectures to geological societies here in America, that contains, in a rather balanced discussion, criticisms of the many weak points of the evolutionary theory. I do not agree with everything written there (it is on a somewhat popular, college-age level), but it does give us a beginning for possible further discussion. Religion is not mentioned in this book, which discusses only scientific evidence. If you are willing to read this book, or at least some chapters of it which interest you, with a reasonably open “scientific” mind—then it will be possible to continue our discussion.

Please be assured that I am not at all disrespectful of your views; if my previous letter seemed harsh to you, I sincerely ask your forgiveness and beg that we both can continue this discussion in a more moderate tone. From your other letters I see that we have much in common in our approach in Orthodoxy. We are both very interested in the evolutionary question, and the fact that we approach it in such different ways means that our discussion of it could be very fruitful. If we both approach it with an open mind, I am even persuaded that we can finally come to a basic agreement on it—assuming also, of course, that we are both willing to accept criticism and recognize and correct our errors, whether of theology or science or philosophy. Both of us are obviously under “Western influences” of various kinds—we can see it in you just as you can see it in me. But must we therefore cease to live and talk because of that and just accept what some “experts” are going to tell us is the Orthodox teaching? Who today is not under Western influence?—that is the air we breathe, and we can hardly help being influenced by it. But let us battle together against it and try to come to the truth.

I assure you of my utmost respect.

With love in Christ our Saviour,
Seraphim, monk

P.s. Alexey Young has informed me that you have sent him a copy of your letter to us. We have already discussed this question with him and were planning to show him your letter anyway. But I hope that you have sent a copy to no one else. Later we can share with others the results of our discussion; but to expose our preliminary writings to outsiders now would only cause many unnecessary comments and even “disputes”!