

Orthodox Bishop Answers 4 Questions on Science and the Theory of Evolution



Metropolitan Nicholas of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki studied Physics at the University of Thessaloniki where he received his Bachelors in 1976, and after serving in the army he continued his studies at Harvard and M.I.T. where he received his Masters of Arts and Masters in Science, and then in a combined program of Harvard and M.I.T. (HST = Health-Sciences-Technology) he received his Ph.D in Biomedical Engineering. Upon completing his studies he worked simultaneously for New England Deaconess Hospital, NASA and Arthur D. Little. After teaching at Harvard and M.I.T., he went on to teach at the School of Medicine at the University of Crete as well as at the University of Athens. He then went back to Boston where he received both a Masters in Theological Studies and a Masters in Theology from Holy Cross School of Theology, and a doctorate from the University of Thessaloniki in Bioethics. In 2008 he received an Honorary Doctoral Degree from the University of Athens School of Theology in Science and Religion.

The following questions on science and the theory of evolution were presented to His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki:

Q. As a person who believes in God, what is your perspective on someone who wants to deal with modern research, especially that which in the end challenges God, such as genetic engineering, cosmology or neurology?

A. Research that is done to challenge God, has the disease of prejudice. Research is done to discover scientific truth. What problem is there with someone wanting to broaden the horizons of their thoughts and knowledge? God is approached better this way. God is not an ideology that we should by all means defend, but we believe in Him because He is Truth. In this sense, even scientific truth reveals Him. If He is still questioned, it is time to find out about Him. A believer who fears scientific research, fears the truth. Perhaps he is a believer who does not believe.

Q. What do you have to say about the theory of evolution? Does it not contradict the teaching of the Church?

A. In regards to this issue, the teaching of the Church is based on the inspired book of Genesis. This is not a book about Physics or Biology. The important thing it talks about is not whether God molded man from soil and where He found it, but that man was made "in the image and likeness" of God. Everything else falls into details. How can science subvert this? Beyond this, if science improves our understanding of this world and our image of Him, why should we challenge it? The most we can say is that we understand some things better.

The God-likeness of man, that is, that we are made with divine life and engraved with the purpose of divine likeness, this cannot be changed by science. Though it can be arrogantly challenged by some scientists.

Q. So it doesn't matter if man descended from animals?

A. What matters is the divine origin of man and his relationship to God, namely that God created us, not how He created us. And also, the danger is not that man descended from the animals, but rather that we end up like them: "People, despite their honor, do not endure; they are like the beasts that perish" (Ps. 49:12). While our purpose is to be like God, we are trying to prove that we are animals?

The problem therefore is not the scientific confirmation of evolution, but the commitment to the sick interpretation of it. The latter does not prove the non-existence of God, but affirms the impassioned nearsightedness of man. To exchange the divine purpose with an unwise degeneration to an animal! Not even animals would like this.

Q. But we have important similarities with animals and need to find their importance.

A. The interest in our likeness with animals surprises me. If there was similar interest in our affinity with God, how different things would be. We should discover the significance of this affinity. As for the animals, there are certainly similarities. Our body in one way or another resembles the higher primates. We can even teach animals instinctive virtues. There are so many examples that exist in Holy Scripture. Christ Himself says in the Sermon on the Mount to "look at the birds in the air" and in what way we can imitate them.

But what matters is our differences from the animals. Man is psychosomatic. This is the source of his value. It is time to turn our attention away from our similarity with animals and towards the possibility of our likeness to God.

Source: From the book *Αν υπάρχει ζωή, θέλω να ζήσω (If Life Exists, I Want To Live)*. Translated by John Sanidopoulos.