



## *Fire & Light*

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

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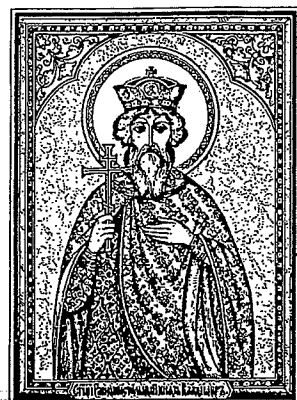
✠ **July 13, 2014** ✠

**Holy Fathers of the**

**First Six Ecumenical Councils**

**Synaxis of the Holy Archangel Gabriel**

**St. Stephen of St. Sabbas Monastery (794) St. Sarah, Abbess of Scetis (370)**



ST. VLADIMIR

**+ Wed. July 16 6:30pm Vespers - Royal Martyrs and Passion-Bearers Sts. Nicholas, Alexandra and children Olga, Tatiana, Maria and Alexei**

### **Love is The Greatest Thing in the World**

We must see to it that our pleasing of others always ministers to their good in some way, edifies them, adds something to their character, makes them braver, truer, happier. The world is full of discouraged people, and we have power to say a hopeful word or do a kindness which will drive the discouragement from their hearts and move them again, with strength for brave, victorious, and songful living. Love is the greatest thing in the world. We are to see to it that everything we do and every influence of our life shall be for our neighbor's good. We are bound so to live that we shall do hurt to none, but shall edify- **add something to the life of everyone.**

~ **St. Alexandra, Tsaritsa and New Martyr**

+ Remember that not a single word is lost during prayer, if you say it from your heart; God hears each word, and weighs it in a balance. Sometimes it seems to us that our words only strike the air in vain, and sound as the voice of one crying in the wilderness. No, no; it is not so!...The Lord responds to every desire of the heart, expressed in words or unexpressed. ~ **St. John of Kronstadt**

+ Let us force ourselves. Let us make a beginning and let us desire the good with all our heart. Because, even if we are not perfect, wanting to be is the beginning of our salvation. From wanting we come, with God's help, to struggling and from struggling one is helped in acquiring the virtues.

~ **St. Dorotheos of Gaza**

### **On Negative Thoughts – Elder Paisios (Remembered July 12)**

+ Once, a journalist, who had a negative way of thinking about everything, visited Elder Paisios. He began asking the Elder about various things and making him feel in distress. At one point, he asked the Elder:

- Why are staying here in the peace and quietness of Mount Athos feeling carefree, and you are not going out in the world to help people who have so many serious problems?

The Elder, slightly raising his tone of voice, told him:

- Your mind machine is a broken one and produces only negative thoughts. You misunderstand everything you see or hear. Now, you see me living here and ask me why I am not going out in the world. If I go to live in the world, you will then say that it is unsuitable for a monk and that I should go back to the quietude of my cell. For this reason, I will only tell you one thing: Repair your broken mind-machine and bear in mind the old saying, which says that "traffic lights are made for noisy streets, whereas lighthouses for deserted rocky mountains."

## This and That

- **Darwinism.** It is nothing if not a materialist eschatology of perfection, in many ways the culmination of the Enlightenment ideals. Foundationally it is a philosophy antithetical to Incarnational Christianity more than it is science. It continues to underpin the myth of progress and the ultimate triumph of technology over man more than any other single matrix of thought. – Michael Baumann

- We all know a great deal about evolution, one cannot help but know a lot about it in these times, but not enough about our Sacred Tradition. I learned too late in life that the reason so many Christians embrace any tall tale of human progress and the beginnings is because of their utter failure to understand their own ancient notions of progress and principles. – Internet comment

- **What a strange culture we live in,** in which people are expected to approve of everything those they love believe in and do, or be guilty of betraying that love. I have friends and family whose core beliefs on politics, sexuality, religion, etc., are not the same as my own, and it would not occur to me in the slightest to love them any less because of it. I hope it would not occur to them to love me any less because they don't agree with me. People are somehow more than the sum of their beliefs and actions. – Rod Dreher

- In any online conversation about an incident of violence perpetrated by adherents of Islamic fundamentalism, the conversation will inevitably devolve into claims that Christians commit the same type and degree of violent acts, regardless of how demonstrably false that is; further, the claim will be made that past historical violence involving Christians means that present-day Christians are morally incapable of denouncing current instances of religiously-motivated violence committed by Muslims. – Rod Dreher

- History repeats itself—but not exactly.

Statistics can help us establish some empirical facts, but there is no really important question in history to which the answer is a number.

One of the few certain things one learns from history is that nobody can predict the future.

Character is destiny, and that is as true of peoples as of persons.

People have a genuine desire to know the truth, but it is not as strong a priority as other desires. - - -  
- Clyde Wilson

- What makes people happy is not comfort, but earned success you struggle for...The opposite of earned success is "learned helplessness." Passivity is a threat to human freedom. – anon.

**Bible Reading** – "The problem is imposing our conception of God on the text. We don't read the Bible *the way it is*...We read the Bible the way *we are*...based on *our* conception of God."

- a Protestant complaining about Protestants, from a video documentary on hell

- I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear. – Nelson Mandela

- Cowardice asks the question, "Is it safe?" Expediency asks the question, "Is it politic?" Vanity asks the question, "Is it popular?" But conscience asks the question, "Is it right?" And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because one's conscience tells one that it is right. – Martin Luther King, Jr.

# IN MEMORY OF THE ROYAL MARTYRS

*Sermon given by  
His Eminence John, Bishop of Shanghai,<sup>1</sup>  
during the memorial service for Tsar Nicholas II  
and those slain with him - 1934*

In the name of the Father and of the Son  
and of the Holy Spirit.

Tomorrow (July 4/17)<sup>2</sup> the Holy Church praises Saint Andrew, the Bishop of Crete, the author of the Great Canon of Repentance, and at the same time we gather here to pray for the souls of the Tsar-Martyr and those assassinated with him. Likewise, people in Russia used to gather in churches on the day of the other Saint Andrew of Crete (Oct. 17), not the writer of the Great Canon whose day is celebrated tomorrow, but the Martyr Andrew, martyred for confession of Christ and His Truth. On the day of Martyr Andrew, people in Russia thanked God for the miraculous delivery of Emperor Alexander III from the train wreck at Borki on October 17, 1888. In the terrible derailment which occurred during his journey, all the carriages of the train were wrecked, except the one carrying the Tsar and his Family.

On the day of the Martyr Andrew of Crete, martyred by enemies of Christ and His Church, the Heir to the throne and subsequent tsar, Nicholas Alexandrovich, was saved, and on the day of Saint Andrew of Crete the Canonist, who reposed in peace, the Tsar was assassinated by atheists and traitors. On the day of Martyr Andrew, Russia also celebrated the day of the Prophet Hosea, who foretold Christ's Resurrection. Churches were built in honor of these saints wherever Russian people

thanked God for the delivery of their Sovereign. Thirty years later, on the day of Saint Andrew the Canonist, who taught repentance, the Sovereign was assassinated before the eyes of the whole nation, that did nothing to save him. It is especially dreadful and incomprehensible since the Sovereign, Nicholas Alexandrovich, incarnated the best virtues of those Tsars whom the Russian people knew, loved, and esteemed.

Most of all the Tsar-Martyr resembled Tsar Alexis Michailovich Tishayshiy (the Most Meek, 1645-76) excelling in unshakable meekness. Russia knew Alexander II (1855-81) as Liberator, but Tsar Nicholas II liberated even more nations of the fraternal Slavic tribe. Russia knew Alexander III (1881-94) as Peacemaker but Sovereign Nicholas II did not limit himself to care for peace in his own days but made a significant step towards establishing peace in Europe and in all the world so that all nations should solve their controversies peacefully. To that purpose, by his dispassionate and noble initiative, the Hague Conferences<sup>3</sup> were called. Russia admired Alexander I (1801-25) and called



*Emperor Nicholas II*

him the Blessed One because he liberated Europe from the alien rule of a tyrant, Napoleon. Sovereign Nicholas II under much more difficult circumstances rose against another ruler's attempt, Kaiser Wilhelm II, to enslave Slavic nations, and in the defense of that nation showed a determination that was devoid of compromises. Russia knew the Great Reformer Peter I but if we recall all the reforms of Nicholas II, we would be uncertain whom to give preference and the latter's reforms were conducted more carefully, more thoughtfully, and without abruptness. John Kalita (1328-40) and John III (1449-1505), Grand Princes of Moscow, were known for uniting the Russian people, but their cause was finally accomplished only by Sovereign Nicholas when in 1915 he returned to Russia all her sons, though only for a short time.<sup>4</sup> Sovereign of All Russia, Nicholas II was the first Pan-Russian Tsar. His inner, spiritual, moral image was so beautiful that even the Bolsheviks in their desire to blacken him could blame him only for his piety.

## ROYAL MARTYRS

It is known for certain that he always began and ended the day with prayer. He always received Communion on the days of the Church's great holidays and often went to receive the Great Sacrament in a crowd of commoners, as for instance during the opening of the relics of Saint Seraphim of Sarov. He was an example of marital fidelity and the head of an exemplary Orthodox family, bringing up his children to be ready to serve the Russian people and strictly preparing them for the future labors and feats of that calling. He was deeply considerate towards his subjects' needs and always wanted to ascertain clearly and acutely their labor and service. Everyone knows that he once marched alone many miles in soldier's full equipment in order to better understand the conditions of a soldier's service. He walked alone, which refutes the slanderers who say that he was afraid for his life. Peter I said: "know about Peter, that life is not precious for him, but may Russia live" and Sovereign Nicholas II indeed fulfilled his words. Some people say that he was credulous. But the great father of the Church, Saint Gregory the Great, says that the more pure the heart, the more credulous it is.

What did Russia render to her pure-hearted Sovereign, who loved her more than life? She returned love with slander. He was of great morality, but people began to talk about his viciousness. He loved Russia, but people began to talk about his treason. Even the people close to the Sovereign repeated the slander, passing on to each other rumors and gossip. Because of the ill intention of some and the lack of discipline of others, rumors spread and love for the Tsar began to grow cool. They started to talk of the danger to Russia and discuss means of avoiding that non-existent danger, they started to say that to save Russia it would be necessary to dismiss the Sovereign. Calculated evil did its work: it separated Russia from her Tsar and in the dread moment at Pskov<sup>5</sup> he was alone; no one near to him. Those faithful to him were not admitted to his presence. The dreadful loneliness of the Tsar... But he did not abandon Russia, Russia abandoned him, the one who loved Russia more than life. Thus, in the hope that his self-belittling would still the raging passions of the people, the Sovereign abdicated. But passion never stills. Having achieved what it desires it only inflames more. There was an exultation among those who desired the fall of the Sovereign. The others were silent. They succeeded in arresting the Sovereign; succeeded, and further events were almost inevitable. If someone is left in a beast's cage he will be torn to pieces sooner or later. The Sovereign was killed, and Russia remained silent. There was no indignation, no protest when that dread, evil deed happened, and this silence is the great sin of the Russian people, and it happened on the day of Saint Andrew, the writer of the Great Canon of Repentance, which is read in churches during Great Lent.

In the vaults of a basement in Ekaterinburg the Ruler of Russia was killed, deprived by the peoples' insidiousness of the tsar's crown, but not deprived of God's Sacred Anointment. Hitherto, all the cases of regicide in the history of Russia were committed by cliques, not by the people. When Paul I was killed, people knew nothing about it and when it became known, for many years they brought to his grave compassion and prayers. The assassination of Alexander II produced in Russia a storm of indignation that healed the people's morality and assisted the reign of Alexander III. The people remained innocent of the blood of the Tsar-Liberator, Alexander II. But in the case of Nicholas II the entire nation is guilty of shedding the blood of its tsar. The assassins did the terrible deed, their masters approved the murder, sharing the same sin, the people did not prevent it. All are guilty and indeed we must say: "His blood is on us and on our children." The garland with which the Russian people crowned their Tsar was made of treason, treachery, the breaking of the oath of allegiance to Tsar Michael Theodorovich, the first Tsar of the Romanov dynasty and his heirs, passivity, hardness of heart, and insensitivity.

Today is a day of sorrow and repentance. Why — we could ask — did the Lord save the Tsar [previously] on the day of Martyr Andrew and not save him on the day of the other Saint Andrew, the teacher of repentance? With deep grief we answer: the Lord could have saved him, but the Russian people **did not deserve it**.

The Sovereign received a martyr's crown, but this neither justifies us, nor reduces our guilt, as the Resurrection of Christ does not justify, but condemns Judas, Pilate, and Caiphas and those who demanded from Pilate the murder of Christ.

It is a great sin to lift up a hand against the God-Anointed Sovereign. When the news of the murder of Saul was brought to King David, he ordered the execution of the messenger, although he knew that the messenger did not participate in the murder but only hurried to bring that news, and he ascribed the murder to him. Even the slightest participation in such a sin is not without retribution.

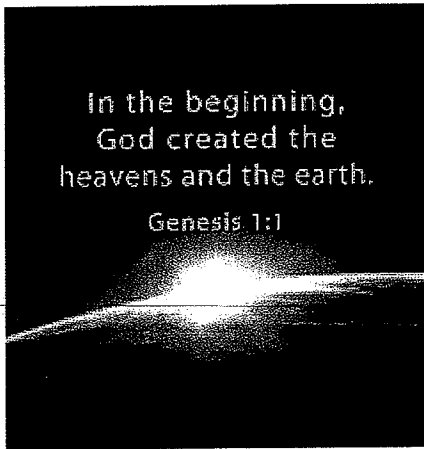
In sorrow we say, "his blood is on us and our children."

Let us remember that this evil deed of the whole nation was committed on the day of Saint Andrew of Crete, who calls us to deep repentance. Let us remember also, that there is no sin which cannot be washed away by repentance. But our repentance has to be full, without self-justification,\* without reserve, condemning ourselves and the evil deed from the very beginning.

After the deliverance of the Royal Family at Borki the icon depicting the patron saints of the family was painted. Perhaps the day will come when not just the patrons but also the Royal Martyrs themselves will be depicted on icons<sup>6</sup> in remembrance of the event we recollect today. But now let us pray for their souls and ask God for deep humble repentance and forgiveness for us and for all Russian people.

# Big Bang Evidence Points to God

by Frank Turek



The scientific evidence all points to the fact that the universe began from literally nothing physical or temporal. Once there was no time, no space, and no matter and then it all banged into existence out of nothing with great precision.

The evidence led astronomer Dr. Robert Jastrow—who until his recent death was the director of the Mount Wilson observatory once led by Edwin Hubble—to author a book called *God and the Astronomers*. Despite revealing in the first line of chapter 1 that he was personally agnostic about ‘religious matters,’ Jastrow reviewed some of the SURGE evidence and concluded,

“Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin of the world. The details differ, but the essential elements in the astronomical and biblical accounts of Genesis are the same: the chain of events leading to man commenced suddenly and sharply at a definite moment in time, in a flash of light and energy.”

In an interview, Jastrow went even further, admitting that “Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation to which you can trace the seeds of every star, every planet, every living thing in this cosmos and on the earth. And they have found that all this happened as a product of forces they cannot hope to discover. . . . That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact.”

Jastrow was not alone in evoking the supernatural to explain the beginning. Although he found it personally “repugnant,” General Relativity expert Arthur Eddington admitted the same when he said, “The beginning seems to present insuperable difficulties unless we agree to look on it as frankly supernatural.”

Now why would scientists such as Jastrow and Eddington admit, despite their personal misgivings, that there are “supernatural” forces at work? Why couldn’t natural forces have produced the universe? Because there was no nature and there were no natural forces ontologically prior to the Big Bang—nature itself was created *at* the Big Bang. That means the cause of the universe must be something beyond nature—something we would call *supernatural*. It also means that the supernatural cause of the universe must at least be:

- spaceless because it created space
- timeless because it created time
- immaterial because it created matter
- powerful because it created out of nothing
- intelligent because the creation event and the universe was precisely designed
- personal because it made a choice to convert a state of nothing into something (impersonal forces don’t make choices).

Those are the same attributes of the God of the Bible (which is one reason I believe in the God of the Bible and not a god of mythology like Zeus).

I mentioned in the debate that other scientists who made Big-Bang-related discoveries also conclude that the evidence is consistent with the Biblical account.

Robert Wilson—co-discoverer of the Radiation Afterglow, which won him a Noble Prize in Physics—observed, “Certainly there was something that set it off. Certainly, if you’re religious, I can’t think of a better theory of the origin of the universe to match with Genesis.”

George Smoot—co-discoverer of the Great Galaxy Seeds which won him a Nobel Prize as well—echoed Wilson’s assessment by saying, “There is no doubt that a parallel exists between the Big Bang as an event and the Christian notion of creation from nothing.”

Jastrow wrote,

“There is a kind of religion in science . . . every effect must have its cause; there is no First Cause. . . . This religious faith of the scientist is violated by the discovery that the world had a beginning under conditions in which the known laws of physics are not valid, and as a product of forces or circumstances we cannot discover. When that happens, the scientist has lost control. If he really examined the implications, he would be traumatized. As usual when faced with trauma, the mind reacts by ignoring the implications—in science this is known as “refusing to speculate.”

Christopher Hitchens admits the evidence but ignores its implications in order to blindly maintain his own religious faith (watch the entire debate at [CrossExamined.org](http://CrossExamined.org) [here](#)). How is it speculation to say that since *all* space, time, and matter were created that the cause must be spaceless, timeless and immaterial? That’s not speculation, but following the evidence where it leads.

Dr. Jastrow, despite his agnosticism, told us where the evidence leads. He ended his book this way: “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.”

Excerpts from: [Townhall.com](http://Townhall.com) (originally published on 1/14/2009)

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## Impossibility Theory

If you look at evolution from other than the perspective of an ideological warrior who believes that he is saving the world from the claws of snake-handling primitive Christians in North Carolina, difficulties arise. Chief among these is the sheer complexity of things. Living organisms are just too complicated to have come about by accident. This, it seems to me, is apparent to, though not provable by, anyone with an open mind.

Everywhere in the living world one sees intricacy wrapped in intricacy wrapped in intricacy. At some point the sane have to say, “This can’t be. Something is going on that I don’t understand.” Read a textbook of embryology. You start with a barely-visible zygote which, (we are told) guided by nothing but the laws of chemistry, unerringly reacts with ambient chemicals to build, over nine months, an incomprehensibly complex thing we call “a baby.” Cells migrate here, migrate there, modify themselves or are modified to form multitudinous organs, each of them phenomenally complex, all of this happening chemically and flawlessly. We are accustomed to this, and so think it makes sense. The usual always seems reasonable. I don’t think it is. It simply isn’t possible, being a wild frontal assault on Murphy’s Law. Unless Something Else is involved. - Fred Reed

## Freedom of Speech?

⇒ And what do we do with those who use their freedom of speech to express their view, rooted in religion and history, that traditional marriage is not only superior to same-sex marriage, the latter is a contradiction of the natural and moral law? And what of those institutions that teach and preach that outside traditional marriage sexual relations are wrong?

- Patrick Buchanan