

Fire & Light

St. Symeon Orthodox Church

3101 Clairmont Ave. Birmingham, AL 35205

Church Tel. 930-9681 / 907-9447

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✠ **November 9, 2014** ✠

St. Nectarios the Wonderworker of Pentapolis & Aegina (1920)

Martyrs Onesiphorus & Porphyrios

of Alexandria (305) Martyr Alexander of Thessalonica (311)

St. John the Short, of Egypt (407) St. Simeon Metaphrastes of Constantinople (960)



➤ **The Nativity Fast – Begins this Saturday, November 15**

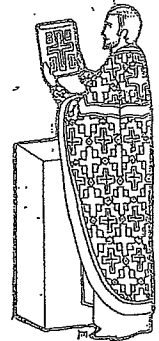
⇒ **No Wednesday Service**

➤ **One more Landscaping Workday - Saturday, November 15**

+ **Baptism – Sat. November 22, 3:00pm ~ Helen Simmelink**

➤ **Next Feastday – Friday, November 21 – Entrance of the Theotokos**

+ **Memory Eternal – David Foote - November 1, 2014**



Old Eve – New Eve

+ "For though He appeared as man yet He was not in all things subject to the laws of humanity; that He was born of woman, savored of lowliness; the virginity however that attended His birth shows that He transcended mankind. His carrying in the womb was joyful. His birth immaculate, His coming forth without pain, His Nativity free of blemish, neither taking rise from the will of the flesh, nor brought forth in sorrow; for since she (Eve) who by her fault had brought death to our nature was condemned to bring forth in sorrow, it was fitting that the Mother of Life (the New Eve) should bring forth in joy. And in that hour, in which the shadows begin to retire, and the immense gloom of night was forced back by the splendor of this Light, Christ, through this virginal incorruption, comes to share the life of mortal men. For death had reached the boundary of the domination of sin, and now it moves towards nothingness, because of the presence of the True Light, which by its evangelical rays has given light to the whole world."
~ **St. Gregory of Nyssa**

No Enemies

+ It is said of a certain Elder...When he spoke of "enemies" the Staretz was merely using current language. His own attitude was different. He would say that **for Christ there are no enemies** – there are those who accept "the words of eternal life" and there are those who reject and even crucify. But for the Creator of every living thing there can be no enemy. So it should be for the Christian too, who, "in pity for all must strive, for the salvation of all."

Monasticism was always a trustworthy indicator of the spiritual condition of the people, as if it were both a thermometer and barometer at one and the same time, showing its religious, moral level. The monastic life flourished, and this meant that the whole people were at a high in their Christian vocation; it falls, monasticism is wiped out, and this is a sign of a religious and moral decline, and the spiritual fall of a given people. This, in its turn, shows that monasticism, although it was as it were divorced from the world, was nonetheless always closely bound to the world by invisible spiritual ties.

+ **Archbishop Averky of Syracuse**

This and That

Orthodoxy indeed holds that there is but one path taken by monastic and lay (there is only one set of canons for us all). But it teaches small steps for one and greater steps for another, and many gradations. I never think it is useful to contrast one life as greater than another – though I am deeply aware (as we should all be) of how many others are greater than ourselves. Every impulse to envy or to “make us all equal” should ultimately be a matter of repentance. For the excellence of someone else should be the cause of my rejoicing, just as my own failure should be the cause of his compassion and mercy. The torture created by the false ideas of modernity (that we’re all equal, that everything should be fair, just, etc.) particularly when they are individually internalized are less than useless to us. I should rejoice at someone else’s excellence as easily as I rejoice at the beauty of a sunset and not envy the sky! A good, reasonable practice of asceticism, with measured self-denial is always to be part of a normal Christian life.

– Fr. Stephen Freeman

The entire “access to the Scriptures” notion is simply modern. It is certainly post-printing press. The Church and the reading of the Scriptures in public made the Scriptures the most publicly accessible literature in all of Western history. But then, there comes the idea of each man with his own Bible. It’s fine, but don’t confuse it with something rooted in Christianity. It’s rooted in Protestant thought.

– Fr. Stephen

Science is not everything and Faith is not nothing

It is fairly well agreed upon by philosophers of science these days that neither do the empirical sciences offer any completely certain proof. The physical sciences can get us no further than the scientific method can take us, and it is essentially limited to more or less certain knowledge.

The ideal of scientific method is to consider all of the possible causes of a phenomenon, and by experimentation show that all of them *except one* are *not* the causes of the phenomenon. In other words, it’s a systematic process of elimination of possible causes except one (or one particular combination of causes).

The problem is that the scientists now realize that they can never be sure that they have in fact considered *all* of the possible causes. It is always possible that some unknown cause might be the cause. This is why scientific paradigms are always shaky – other explanations might do as well or better than the theory we accept now. (You can see this principle operating in physics right now – there are competing theories in particle physics, none of which account for all the phenomena that have been found.)

And it simply isn’t true that there is NO evidence for the existence of God. Aristotelians think that the proof of the Unmoved Mover is quite valid. But many object that the “God” of the theologians means a lot more than “Unmoved Mover”. Still other philosophers, however, claim that other proofs for God’s existence are valid, and that they prove many things about him.

And, of course, there is testimony in the Bible and other sacred books about what they claim God is. No, they don’t prove He exists, but they do provide some evidence, as do the claims of many, many mystics (some of whom seem to be crazy, but some do not), not to mention the individual experiences of many, many people who think they have been aware of the presence of God and/or His grace within themselves. But none of that can be proven – that’s why it’s called “faith”. Still, it’s not nothing.

~ Ann Oliver, internet comment

St. Nectarios the Wonderworker of Pentapolis – November 9.

St. Nectarios was born on October 1, 1846, in Selevria of Thrace and was named Anastasios (Kephalos). He was from a poor humble family but a God-fearing one. At the age of 14, he was forced to go to Constantinople to find work in order to assist their financial condition. He would spend his spare time reading the writings of the Holy Fathers. Such was the zeal that enflamed his heart, that while working in a tobacco store, he would write some of their sayings on the paper bags in which cigarettes were sold, so that the buyers would also be able to read them and be edified.

In 1866, he moved to the isle of Chios, where he found employment in a village school. Seven years later he joined the brotherhood of Nea Moni, an 11th century monastery on the island. Here he was guided by the blessed Elder Pachomios. After 3 years, he was tonsured and named Lazarus, but a year later he was ordained hierodeacon by Metropolitan Gregory of Chios and according to custom renamed again, this time Nectarios.

He then went to Athens to complete his education and at the end of his studies, he went to Alexandria, Egypt, where he received sponsorship from the Patriarch, Sophronios IV. He urged him to enroll at the School of Theology at Athens University, and receiving a blessing from his monastery at Nea Moni, he did so.

After graduating, he returned to Alexandria and was ordained priest by Sophronios. Three years later, in Cairo, he was consecrated Metropolitan of Pentapolis in Egypt. Such was his ministry that he became greatly beloved and admired by his flock and by others. This love and admiration in turn aroused jealousy and envy amongst his peers. They accused him of false piety and of seeking after the throne of Alexandria. All this malice led to the suspension of the Saint from ecclesiastical functions and in having him removed from his see. The Saint went to live in Greece, where, as a bishop without a see and apparently discredited, he was only able to find a preaching position on the island of Euboia, where clerical jealousy again attacked him. Then a friend got him a teaching appointment, becoming the director of the Rizarios School in Athens. However, the life of St. Nectarios would continue to be filled with distress, maltreatment and human suffering.

At this period, as throughout the greater part of his life, he was instrumental in publishing a number of edifying and instructive papers on the Orthodox Faith and practice. In December 1908, he resigned as director of the school, and settled on the island of Aegina (pronounced "Egg-eena"), where he had founded the Holy Trinity Convent, which now enshrines his sacred and wonderworking relics. He himself served as the priest of the Monastery, yet did not cease his publishing work. At the end of his life he suffered from prostatitis and for a long time would not seek medical help until prevailed upon to do so by his nuns.

He was admitted into the hospital where he reposed in the Lord on November 8, 1920, at the age of 74 (His feast was moved to the 9th to be separate from the Feast of the Holy Archangels on November 8). He was in a ward for the poor. When they removed his cardigan and begun to prepare his body for burial, they carelessly threw it onto the next bed where the patient there, who had been a paralytic for many years, was immediately healed. A fragrance then filled the room where the Saint's body lay. The same day the body was transported to Aegina to be laid to rest.

After five months, wishing to entomb the body of their founder more fittingly, the sisters exhumed the Saint, and found his relics intact and fragrant. Three years later, the

relics were again uncovered and found to be incorrupt. The Archbishop of Athens was informed and ordered that they be entombed until seven years had elapsed from his repose and then again inspected.

In his lifetime, St. Nectarios was known to be humble, meek, kindly and extremely charitable and compassionate; since his repose this service of love has continued and increased because literally thousands of miracles of healing have been worked through his relics and through his intercessions. His convent, as poor during the Saint's lifetime, has become one of the most beloved places of pilgrimage in Greece, and the faithful from all over the world have recourse to his prayers.

His prophecy to the nuns upon the founding of the monastery was fulfilled: "*I am building a lighthouse for you, and God will put the light in it that shall shine unto the breadth and length of the whole world. Many shall see the light and come here to Aegina.*" Through the prayers of St. Nectarios, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us!

A Love Letter

One of the most moving and memorable documents of the Civil War is the letter below of Major Sullivan Ballou to his wife Sarah from the battlefield. A testimony of love, honor, and courage in the face of the mystery of life and death!

My Very Dear Sarah:

The indications are very strong that we shall move in a few days—perhaps tomorrow. Lest I should not be able to write again, I feel impelled to write a few lines that may fall under your eye when I shall be no more. . . .

I have no misgivings about or lack of confidence in the cause in which I am engaged, and my courage does not halt or falter. I know how strongly American civilization now leans on the triumph of the Government, and how great a debt we owe to those who went before us through the blood and suffering of the Revolution. And I am willing, perfectly willing, to lay down all my joys in this life to help maintain this Government and to pay that debt. . . .

Sarah, my love for you is deathless: it seems to bind me with mighty cables that nothing but Omnipotence could break, and yet my love for country comes over me like a strong wind and bears me irresistibly on, with all these chains to the battle-field.

The memories of all the blissful moments I have spent with you come creeping over me, and I feel most deeply grateful to God, and you, that I have enjoyed them so long. And how hard it is for me to give them up and burn to ashes the hopes of future years, when, God willing, we might still have lived and loved together and seen our sons grown up to honorable manhood around us. If I do not [return], my dear Sarah, never forget how much I love you, and when my last breath escapes me on the battle-field, it will whisper your name. Forgive my many faults and the many pains I have caused you. How thoughtless, how foolish I have often-times been. . . .

O Sarah, if the dead can come back to this earth and flit unseen around those they loved, I shall always be near you in the gladdest day and in the darkest night, amidst your happiest scenes and gloomiest hours—always, always: and if there be a soft breeze upon your cheek, it shall be my breath, or the cool air cools your throbbing temple, it shall be my spirit passing by.

Sarah, do not mourn me dead: think I am gone, and wait for me, for we shall meet again. . . .

Sullivan¹

Major Ballou was killed one week later at the first battle of Bull Run.

Islam and the Closing of the Secular Mind

Samuel Gregg, Lewrockwell.com

Given the decidedly strange response of the Obama Administration and much of the Western commentariat to the violence sweeping the Islamic world, one temptation is to view their reaction as simple incomprehension in the face of the severe unreason that leads some people to riot and kill in a religion's name... It also reflects something far more problematic: the Western secular mind's increasing inability to think seriously and coherently about religion at all.

This problem manifests itself in several ways. The first is the manner in which many secular thinkers seem to regard all religions as "basically the same." By this, they often mean either equally irrational or as promoting essentially similar values.

A moment's reflection would indicate to even the most militant atheist that this simply isn't true. Islam and Christianity, for instance, have very different understandings of who Jesus Christ is. Christians believe that he is God, the second Person of the Trinity. Muslims do not. *Ergo*, Islam and Christianity are *not* effectively the same. At their respective cores are fundamentally irreconcilable theological positions. It's also very difficult to find robust affirmations of free will outside Judaism and Christianity (at least the orthodox varieties of these two faiths).

Likewise, as any informed Muslim will tell you, Islamic theology has no real equivalent of the Christian idea of the Church. The Greek word for "church" (*ekklesia*) literally means to be "called out." That, alongside Christ's words about the limits to Caesar's power, had immense implications for how Christians think about the state and its relationship to religion. Among other things, it means Christianity has always maintained significant distinctions between the temporal and the spiritual realms that are far less perceptible — again, as any pious Muslim will inform you — in Islamic theology and history.

All this, however, is a little complicated for those secular intellectuals who simply regard religion as just another lifestyle-choice rather than being essentially about people's natural desire to (1) know the truth about the transcendent and (2) live their lives in accordance with such truths. That's why the left talks so much today about "freedom of worship" (as if your faith-decisions are akin to choosing which mall you shop at) and are trying to peddle a version of religious liberty that basically confines religious freedom to what happens inside your church, synagogue, mosque or temple on your given holy-day of the week. The notion that religious liberty is all about creating space for people to live out their beliefs consistent with others' freedom to do the same and even permits us to peacefully *argue* — gasp! — about the truth of different religions' claims seems to be beyond their grasp.

Then there is the sheer ignorance of history prevailing among much of the secular intelligentsia. This was unfortunately exemplified by the lamentable historiography that was on full display in President Obama's once much-touted, now much-forgotten 2009 Cairo speech. Among other things, the President referred to how Islam "carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's Renaissance and Enlightenment."

Really? Were they (the President and his speechwriters) aware that the works of Antiquity never somehow vanished but were preserved for centuries by Greek-speaking Eastern Christians? Or that Aristotle was known and read in the medieval West long before Arabic translations appeared in Europe?

The answer to all the above questions hardly needs to be stated.

In other words, civilizational development is a much more complicated affair than many secular-minded people are willing to concede. And that partly reflects their ongoing efforts to whitewash Christianity's immense civilizational achievements out of history.

Today's history textbooks, for example, are full of mythologies about the so-called "Dark Ages." These publications invariably overlook, for instance, the powerful contributions made to the development of the modern sciences by figures such as the 13th-century saint Albertus Magnus or the profound advances made in constitutional theories of limited government by medieval theologians like Thomas Aquinas.

Why? Because acknowledging such facts raises the question of whether the various Enlightenments (which saddled us with such intellectual dead-ends as David Hume's skepticism and Rousseau's egalitarian-obsessions) were as radical and enlightened as many liberals make them out to be.

And that brings us to yet another problem with the secular mind regarding religion: its increasing embrace of what might be called suppressive tolerance. This is the art of discouraging people from expressing their views on particular subjects on the grounds that saying what you think might involve what's become the ultimate crime of modern times: hurting other peoples' feelings.

Of course, most secular intellectuals are very selective about applying this. You can, after all, say the most uninformed and truly bigoted things about Christians and that's free speech. If, however, you ask polite but direct questions about aspects of particular schools of Islamic thought (even while acknowledging parallels with specific Christian thinkers) as Benedict XVI did in his 2006 Regensburg lecture, then you're being "hurtful."

Lastly there's the difficulty of wishful thinking. This might be described as many secular intellectuals' belief that, deep down, everyone *really* wants to be like them: what George Weigel calls "debonair nihilists."

Eventually, or so the theory goes, the unwashed masses will "get over" all those pesky questions about the meaning of life, death, good, and evil to which religious faiths attempt to provide comprehensive answers — many of which are far more convincing than the default philosophical materialism, relativism, and skepticism that passes for sophisticated thinking in the faculty lounge these days. Instead, they expect we'll eventually accept that life is meaningless and the most we can do is, as Marx described his future society, "one thing today and another tomorrow; to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, breed cattle in the evening and criticize after dinner, just as I please."

Unfortunately for the urbane hedonist crowd, God's death has been forecast on numerous occasions by figures ranging from Marx and Nietzsche, to the Economist in 1999. The latter, however, was smart enough to retract this assertion in 2007 in the face of overwhelming evidence that, globally speaking, the world was becoming more religious rather than less.

And that perhaps points to the greatest tragedy of the secular mind's remarkable close-mindedness to any serious contemporary conversation about religion. Its core operating assumptions, historical unawareness, and reliance upon numerous legends for legitimacy translates into many Western intellectuals having little of a meaningful nature to say about how we address real problems of religiously inspired violence and of truth-suffocating intolerance masquerading as tolerance.

Put another, more troubling way, one of the West's greatest impediments in its struggle against religious extremism may well be the fact that the secular part of its soul turns out to be far less enlightened than anyone imagined possible.

Samuel Gregg is Research Director at the Acton Institute.

✘ "A brother consulted an Elder, saying, 'What am I to do, for I am afflicted by pride?' The Elder said to him: 'You do well, for you created Heaven and earth.' Moved to compunction at this, the brother made a prostration, saying: 'Forgive me, for I have done nothing of the kind.' The Elder replied: 'If He Who created these things came in humility, why are you - who are mere clay - vainglorious? What work do you have to boast about, you pitiful man?'" **From the Gerontikon**

✘ "We can neither strengthen faith nor increase faith except through suffering. That is why the much-suffering Apostle Peter says: "That the same afflictions (such as yours) are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." The Apostle does not speak of his affliction out of humility but rather speaks of the affliction of our brethren in Christ. One in faith and one in affliction. Brethren, you do not suffer alone for the True Faith but your other brethren also suffer for the same Faith. Let this comfort your afflictions. But most of all let the afflictions of the First-born in suffering, our crucified Lord Jesus Christ Himself, comfort you!" **St. Nikolai of Serbia**

What are Angels?

My fascination with angels began many years ago during my childhood days. While in a coma with a childhood illness, I vividly recall 'seeing' and listening to an angel. As I never clearly understood them, or their position in the order of creation, I knew they were there for a purpose.

In my journey, I have discovered some information on angels which proved to be important. This I should like to share with you, especially at this time of year.

" Angels and archangels, although spirit, are not supernatural. God alone is supernatural, for He alone is uncreated. Like us, the holy angels are created, natural beings, as much a part of our world as we ourselves. 'Yes, in Him all created things took their being, heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible...' (Col 1:16) .

An angel has character, individuality, and a will of his own, much as we have; but in other ways angels do not resemble us. When, to make himself manifest to us, an angel takes on human semblance, he never is physically like a human being, but only a mental image of one. If we are so little aware of them, it is because we do not as a rule see them with our mortal eyes, and our spiritual perception is either dulled or undeveloped.

Angels are pure integral spirits: they are not confined to time or space; they know neither youth nor old age but life ever at its fullest.

There are nine "choirs" of angelic hosts divided into three hierarchies (St. Dionysius the Areopagite called them "choirs").

First: the Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones. These are counsellors and have no direct dealings with man, but are absorbed in unending love and adoration of God. No other creature is so intensely capable of loving God.

Second: the Dominions, Virtues, and Powers. These are understood to be the governors of space and the stars. Our orb, consequently, as part of the galaxy is under their dominion; other wise, we have no direct contact with the second choir.

Third: The Principalities, Archangels and Angels. These have this earth of ours in their special charge. They are the executors of God's will, the perpetual guardians of the children of men, and the messengers of God.

There are seven Archangels Michael (Who is Like God?), Gabriel (The Man of God), Raphael (The Healing of God) Uriel (The Fire of God), Selaphiel, Jegudiel and Barachiel. The more we become aware of the angels of light, the more strengthened we are in our capacity for good, and the sharper becomes our ability to detect and resist the snares of our bitterest enemies, the angels of darkness. "

The source of this information is THE HOLY ANGELS, Light and Life Publishing Company, Minneapolis, Minn. by + Mother Alexander, 1987.

The Names of the Holy Archangels

- St. Nikolai from the Prologue – Nov. 8

Holy Scripture clearly and irrefutably witnesses that angels ceaselessly communicate with this world. The Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition of the Orthodox Church teach us the names of the seven leaders of the angelic powers: Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, Salathiel, Jegudiel, and Barachiel (an eighth, Jeremiel, is sometimes included).

``Michael'' in the Hebrew language means ``Who is like unto God?'' or ``Who is equal to God?''

St. Michael has been depicted from earliest Christian times as a commander, who holds in his right hand a spear with which he attacks Lucifer, Satan, and in his left hand a green palm branch. At the top of the spear there is a linen ribbon with a red cross. The Archangel Michael is especially considered to be the Guardian of the Orthodox Faith and a fighter against heresies.

``Gabriel'' means ``Man of God'' or ``Might of God.'' He is the herald of the mysteries of God, especially the Incarnation of God and all other mysteries related to it. He is depicted as follows: In his right hand, he holds a lantern with a lighted taper inside, and in his left hand, a mirror of green jasper. The mirror signifies the wisdom of God as a hidden mystery.

``Raphael'' means ``God's healing'' or ``God the Healer.'' (Tobit 3:17, 12:15). Raphael is depicted leading Tobit (who is carrying a fish caught in the Tigris) with his right hand, and holding a physician's alabaster jar in his left hand.

``Uriel'' means ``Fire of God,'' or ``Light of God'' (III Esdras 3:1, 5:20). He is depicted holding a sword against the Persians in his right hand, and a fiery flame in his left.

``Salathiel'' means ``Intercessor of God'' (III Esdras 5:16). He is depicted with his face and eyes lowered, holding his hands on his bosom in prayer.

``Jegudiel'' means ``Glorifier of God.'' He is depicted bearing a golden wreath in his right hand and a triple-tongued whip in his left hand.

``Barachiel'' means ``Blessing of God.'' He is depicted holding a white rose in his hand against his breast.

``Jeremiel'' means ``God's exaltation.'' He is venerated as an inspirer and awakener of exalted thoughts that raise a man toward God (III Ezra 4:36).