



The Trophy-Bearer

Published by St. George Greek Orthodox Church, Southgate, Michigan

June 2017

<http://www.stgeorgesouthgate.org/>

Faith and Reason

Rev. Fr. Anthony Cook



We spoke last time about the Christian belief that our God is the Infinite First Cause of all things, and of the alternative idea that the material order is itself infinite. This month, we will consider these conflicting beliefs, and how we can rationally choose between them.

We would, of course, prefer to prove once and for all which option is right - but that is simply impossible. As creatures within the universe, while we struggle to understand how it works, and where it and we come from, we can never see it from the outside. We are like people trapped in a whitewashed room, deprived of all memory and knowledge of the world outside. We can know very little about where we, or the whitewashed room, come from...but we can determine that one of two things must be true: either that whitewashed room is the whole of existence, or it is not - and without being able to leave it, we can't know for certain which is correct.

But this, of course, is only an analogy. We aren't in a whitewashed room - we are in a universe of apparently limitless expanse and complexity. And that is the question we have to ask: is it, in fact, infinite, with no boundaries in time or space? Or is it finite?

We can start by asking where things come from? This isn't too difficult to begin with - whatever we are looking at, all we need to do is observe it very carefully, both zoomed in close, and zoomed out so we can see the big picture, and we can usually find the answer. But if we ask where that answer comes from, and the next answer in its turn, and push into the distant past, or out into far distant space, we eventually get to a question that we can't easily answer. Even if we eventually find an answer to that difficult question (as we have countless times before throughout the history of scientific discovery), we know that whatever answer we find will just become another question in its turn. We have to assume that either this will continue forever, or that we will eventually ask a question for which there is no answer. Either option has implications. If the questions and answers continue forever, then the universe is infinite, with no beginning or end, either in time, or in space. But if there is an end to the questions and answers, then it has boundaries.

The problem with this is that there is simply no way to prove either one. So long as we haven't found a question that can't be answered, the universe looks infinite to us...but it could simply be really, really, really big, bigger than we are currently able to see. On the other hand, if we ever were to hit a wall that we couldn't find our way past, the universe would look like it has boundaries...but we really couldn't know for sure.

What we can say is that either option has an inescapable implication. An infinite, uncreated, self-sustaining universe has no room for God, not as the Christians understand Him. It may have gods, as the old pagans thought, beings of greater power than humanity, what we would more likely call aliens than gods in our modern age. But it can have no First Cause, no Creator, no one or thing that sustains it.

Conversely, a finite, limited world must have a First Cause, a Creator, some thing or one that makes and sustains it. Such a first cause, however, must also be beyond our sight, our

REGULAR SCHEDULE

Sunday

8:50 am – Orthros (Greek)
10 am – Div. Liturgy (bilingual)

Saturday

5 pm – Great Vespers (English)
Holy Confession during Vespers

*Please see included calendar for other meetings
& weekday services, and for any variations to
this regular schedule.*

COMMUNITY UPDATES

Funerals

May 8, 2017

Aikaterini Golematis

40-Day Blessings

May 21, 2017

Dimitrios Callis

Parents: Kostantinos & Fotini

Baptism

May 21, 2017

Endric Nektarios Apperson

Billy Apperson & Maria Deneen

COMMUNITY UPDATES

*If you would like your news to be included above,
please call or email the Church Office.*

SAINT GEORGE

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

16300 Dix-Toledo Highway
Southgate, MI 48195

Office: (734) 283-8820

Fax: (734) 283-8866

Office Hours: 9-5 Mon-Fri

Website: www.stgeorgesouthgate.org

Outside of office hours, parishioners may leave a voicemail for Fr. Anthony or the office. In case of emergency, they may call Fr. Anthony directly on his cell. Please leave a message if Father does not answer, and he will return your call shortly.

Clergy

Fr. Anthony Cook

Presiding Priest

Email: franthonyc@mac.com

Cell: (734) 716-2268

Office Staff

Susan Solo

Administrative Assistant

Email: stgeorgesouthgate@gmail.com

Lisa Campbell

Bookkeeper

Email: stgeorgebkkpr@gmail.com

2017 Parish Council

Nicholas Minton

John Kontos

Michael Liakos

Louis Kircos

Bob Kollias

Chris Kontos

Bill Colovos

John Diamantis

Stavros Dionyssopoulos

Pete Georvassilis

George Kaltsas

Sam Kiouis

George Kotronis

Pete Makarounas

Kim Moody

Christian Tougas

Peter Vougiouklakis

understanding - completely and utterly other to everything we know and experience. From a purely rational and observational perspective, there is no way that we could ever examine such a Creator - we are forever on the "wrong" side of the boundary between what is caused and what is uncaused. We cannot use the tools of a finite universe to examine the Infinite First Cause...on our own, constrained by our smallness, we can only guess that It may exist.

The upshot is that, from a purely rational perspective, either the universe is infinite, or it isn't. If it is infinite, there can be no God...not as Christians understand Him. If it is finite, then some infinite First Cause must exist, but we can't deduce anything about it. More to the point, we must admit that neither conclusion is more or less rational than the other. Proof for either option lies beyond our sight, our understanding, and our capacity. This point is important enough that it bears repeating: it is impossible to prove either that there is a God, or that there isn't. Either way, the question is too big to fit inside the box of rational thought, and any attempt to stuff infinity inside a logical proof which will limit, constrain, and define it is the height of folly.

The most obvious conclusion to draw from all this is that any discussion of this ultimate, cosmic question requires a great deal of humility. We need to know how little we are capable of knowing - and be gracious to those who disagree with us about these profound questions.

That said, we can and should attend to what we can observe and experience from our limited place inside of this universe, to see what we can conclude. With that in mind, there are two aspects of reality that we can and should consider. The first is the material world, how it works, what laws govern its operations, and how far it goes, in time and space - in short, the option is to continue the experiment of tracing causality as far as we possibly can, and see if we hit a wall. The other option, however, is to turn our gaze inward, and examine ourselves, our nature and purpose, our desires and yearnings, and our experience of this material world. If we look at ourselves through the first lens, we see ourselves as merely complex biological machines - through the other, we see ourselves as something else, something quite different, as persons, beings built for and fulfilled in relationships.

Both aspects have room for deep reflection and study - but they both indicate to us one way in which it might be possible for us to know where the universe comes from. If it is finite, and if there is indeed a First Cause, a Creator, then it is not unreasonable to think that such a First Cause would have impressed upon its Creation something of itself, and that we might see, in the material world, a shadow, as it were, of the nature of the First Cause. And if that is the case, then our own nature, as social persons, beings built for and fulfilled in relationships, may itself be a reflection of the nature of the First Cause. This would make the First Cause is personal, a He, not an It, and if that is true, then He might well have intervened in His Creation. Indeed, it would only stand to reason that He would have, since the universe can only exist so long as He sustains its existence. If these points stand, then it is rational to not only study the laws and operations of the material universe, but also to watch closely for any aberrations to the normal laws of science, signs of intervention from outside the bounds of the universe, indications of infinity acting within the finite world - and more than that, we should not dismiss the possibility of Infinity revealing Himself Personally, Relationally, for such interventions and revelations are the only way we could ever know an Infinite God.

It should not be surprising that it is precisely such a revelation that is at the foundation of the Christian Faith. The Church proclaims to us just such a phenomenon, contrary to every natural norm, united with a Voice speaking things beyond human imagination or comprehension - and not just once, but time and again. So next time, we will consider how it is that the Infinite God Who Exists has revealed Himself to us.

The above is the eighth installment of our new Adult Education Program, updated weekly at <http://theruleoffaith.typepad.com>. Comments/questions are welcome, by email or via a comment on the website.

St. George Calendar of Events • JUNE / JULY 2017

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| 11 ✠ All Saints Bartholomew and Barnabas Revelation of the Axion Estin Epistle: Acts 11:19-30 Gospel: Matt: 10:32-33, 37-38; 19:27-30 Orthros/Liturgy: (8:50 & 10 am) | 12 ⇐ Apostles Fast Begins Onouphrios the Great Peter the Almonite Epistle: Romans 2:28-29, 3:1-18 Gospel: Matthew 6:31-33; 7:9-11 Greek Fest Meeting (6:00 pm) | 13 ⇐ Aklythra the Martyr of Syria Eulogios, Pat. of Antioch Epistle: Romans 4:4-12 Gospel: Matthew 7:15-21 | 14 Elisha the Prophet Methodios, Pat. of Constan. Epistle: Romans 4:13-25 Gospel: Luke: 4:22-30 Philopotochos Meeting (7:00 pm) | 15 ⇐ Amos the Prophet Righteous Perome Epistle: Romans 5:10-16 Gospel: Matthew 8:23-27 Seniors Luncheon (Noon) Book Club (7:15-9:15 pm) | 16 Tychon the Wonderworker 40 Martyrs of Rome Epistle: Romans 5:17-21; 6:1-2 Gospel: Matthew 9:14-17 | 17 ◆ ⇐ Isaurus, Companions of Athens Manuel, Sabel, & Ismael Epistle: Romans 3:19-24 Gospel: Matthew 7:1-8 Great Vespers/Confession (5 pm) |
| 18 ✠ ⇐ Father's Day Leontios, Hypatios, & Theodoulos the Martyrs of Syria Epistle: Romans 2:10-16 Gospel: Matthew 4:18-23 Orthros/Liturgy: (8:50 & 10 am) | 19 ⇐ Jude the Apostle Martyr Zosima Epistle: Jude 1:1-25 Gospel: John 14:21-24 | 20 ⇐ Methodios, Bishop of Olympus Epistle: Romans 7:14-8:2 Gospel: Matthew 10:9-15 | 21 Julian the Martyr of Tarsus Terentios, Bishop of Iconium Epistle: Romans 8:2-13 Gospel: Matthew 10:16-22 | 22 ⇐ Eusebios, Bishop of Samosata Zenon & his servant Zenas Epistle: Romans 8:22-27 Gospel: Matthew 10:23-31 Parish Council (7:00 pm) (tentative) Book Club (7:15-9:15 pm) | 23 Agrippina the Martyr of Rome Aristodeus, Demetrius, Athanasius Epistle: Romans 9:6-19 Gospel: Matthew 10:32-36; 11:1 | 24 ⇐ Nativity of John the Baptist Elizabeth, Mother of Forerunner Epistle: Romans 13:11-14; 14:1-4 Gospel: Luke 1:1-25; 57-66; 76-80 No Great Vespers |
| 25 ✠ ⇐ Prokopios the New Martyr Righteous Febronia Epistle: Romans 5:1-10 Gospel: Matthew 6:22-33 Orthros/Liturgy: (8:50 & 10 am) GOYA Game Night (5:00 pm) | 26 ⇐ David of Thessalonika Icon of Theotokos of Tikhvin Epistle: Romans 9:18-33 Gospel: Matthew 11:2-15 | 27 ⇐ Sampson the Innkeeper Epistle: Romans 10:11-21; 11:1-2 Gospel: Matthew 11:16-20 Greekian Center (5:30 pm) Diaconess (7:00 pm) Executive (8:00 pm) | 28 Relics of Cyrus and John Pappas the Martyr Epistle: Romans 11:2-12 Gospel: Matthew 11:20-26 | 29 ✠ Apostles Peter and Paul Epistle: 2 Corinthians 11:21-33; 12:1-9 Gospel: Matthew 16:13-19 Orthros/Liturgy: (8:50 & 10 am) Book Club (7:15-9:15 pm) | 30 ☩ Synaxis of the Holy Apostles Michael, New Martyr of Athens Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16 Gospel: Matthew 9:36; 10:1-8 | 1 JULY ◆ Cosmas & Damian Unmercen. Constantine, Martyr of Cyprus Epistle: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 13:1-8 Gospel: Matthew 10:1, 5-8 Great Vespers/Confession (5 pm) |
| 2 ✠ Deposition of Robe of the Theotokos in Vlachernae Epistle: Hebrews 9:1-7 Gospel: Matthew 8:5-13 Orthros/Liturgy: (8:50 & 10 am) | 3 Hyacinth of Caesarea Anatolios, Pat. of Constan. Epistle: Romans 12:4-5; 15-21 Gospel: Matthew 12:9-13 Office Closed | 4 Independence Day Andrew of Crete Marthia, mother Symeon (Stylite) Epistle: Romans 14:9-18 Gospel: Matthew 12:14-16; 22-30 Office Closed | 5 Athanasios of Mount Athos Lampadus the Wonderworker Epistle: Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2 Gospel: Matthew 11:27-30 | 6 Sisoos the Great Archippus, Philemon, Onesimus Epistle: Romans 15:17-29 Gospel: Matthew 12:46-50; 13:1-3 | 7 Thomas of Maleon Kyriaki the Great Martyr Epistle: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5 Gospel: Mark 5:24-34 | 8 ◆ Prokopios the Great Martyr Theophilos the Myrtbearer Epistle: 1 Timothy 4:9-15 Gospel: Luke 6:17-19; 9:1-2; 10:16-22 Great Vespers/Confession (5 pm) |
| 9 ✠ Pancratios, Bishop of Sicily Dionysios the Orator Epistle: Romans 10:1-10 Gospel: Matthew 8:28-34; 9:1 Orthros/Liturgy: (8:50 & 10 am) | 10 45 Martyrs Nikopolis, Armenia Martyr Apollonios Epistle: Romans 16:17-24 Gospel: Matthew 13:10-23; 43 | 11 Euphemia the Great Martyr Olga, Equal-to-the-Apostles Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10 Gospel: Luke 7:36-50 | 12 Proklos & Hilarios of Ancyra Michael Maleimus Epistle: 1 Corinthians 29-16; 3:1-8 Gospel: Matthew 13:31-36 | 13 Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel Stephanos of Savvas Monastery Epistle: Hebrews 2:2-10 Gospel: Matthew 13:36-43 | 14 Aquila of the 70 Joseph the Confessor Epistle: Romans 1:6-16 Gospel: Matthew 13:44-54 | 15 ◆ Julia & Kyrikos the Martyrs Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles Epistle: 1 Corinthians 13:11-14; 14:1-5 Gospel: Matthew 17:24-25; 18:1-4 Great Vespers/Confession (5 pm) |

• Shaded days denote a fast day. ✠ denotes a Liturgy ◆ Great Vespers/Compline ❖ Akathist/Paraklisis & Presanctified Liturgy ⇐ fish/wine/oil allowed ☩ wine/oil allowed