

X P O N I K A

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS

B Y

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The important meeting of the Third International Conference of Orthodox Theological Schools was held in Brookline, MA., from August 30 through September 4, 1987, at the invitation of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in celebration of its 50th anniversary of existence. Representatives from graduate schools of theology and academies, as well as several seminaries in Greece, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Lebanon, Finland, Australia, Kenya, Canada, and the USA gathered together for this significant event. The only prior convocations of this kind were two such meetings held in Athens, Greece in 1936 and 1976.

The general theme of the entire conference was «Icon and Kingdom: Orthodoxy Faces the 21st Century.» This theme refers directly to the Seventh Ecumenical Council which marked its 1200th anniversary in 1987. The conference therefore focused on the contemporary significance of Jesus Christ as God's unique image, the human person as the image of God, and the Church as the sacramental image of God's Kingdom.

The conference commenced with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy by Archbishop Iakovos, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas, Metropolitan Silas, President of HC/HC, the V. Rev. Alkiviadis Calivas, Dean of Holy Cross, and other dignitaries and official delegates.

Special blessings were read from His All-Holiness, the Patriarch of Constantinople Demetrios, as well as messages and greetings from Church leaders here and abroad. In addition, Metropolitan Theodosios, Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, visited the Conference and also bestowed blessings and prayers for its success.

In the evening of August 30, the keynote message of Professor Savas Agourides, of the University of Athens Theological School, opened the official meetings of the conference. His timely address entitled, «An Assessment of Theological Issues Today», gave a perceptive analysis of contemporary theological issues facing Orthodoxy today. He classified these into three parts: 1) issues related to the identity of Orthodox theology today in relation to contemporary Christian thinking, the world ideologies and world religion; 2) issues related to the special mission of the Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement of our times; and 3) issues concerning the relations of Church and Society within a secularized technical world. Furthermore,

he called for an immediate «all-Christian crusade against nuclear tests and all kinds of weapons, particularly nuclear and chemical weapons».

The rest of the program for the duration of the conference was made up by the presentations of papers, meditations, and discussions by these Orthodox scholars and professors.

The morning session of August 31 was opened by an inspiring meditation by Professor George Bebis from Holy Cross. After this meditation, the paper presented was by Rev. Dr. Alexis Kniazeff from St. Sergius in Paris on the topic of «The Kingdom of Caesar, Caesar and the Reign of Christ». He made twelve proposals as starting points for action aimed at achieving Christ's Kingdom. The moderator for this session was Rev. Professor Dr. Paul Tarazi from St. John of Damascus Seminary, Balamend, Lebanon and St. Vladimir's Seminary in New York.

The second session was a panel presentation by the Holy Cross faculty on the topic, «The Message of the Church Contextualized». The panelists were Bishop Prof. Dr. Demetrios Trakatellis, Rev. Prof. Dr. Alkiviadis Calivas, Rev. Prof. Dr. Emmanuël Clapsis and Rev. Prof. Dr. Stanley Harakas. Each presented a brief paper on the Church in America and its task to fulfill its sacred mission within the American context. The moderator for this session was Prof. Dr. Lewis Patsavos from Holy Cross. Bishop Demetrios Trakatellis discussed the divine revelation in the world, that is, the Gospel in the secularized world. The contemporary question Christians are compelled to ask concerns the meaning of a theological enterprise in the secular context. In secular culture today the dominant social and political philosophy rejects religion and theological enterprises. The other pertinent question concerns the place and role for divine revelation in the secular context. The tension between immanence and transcendence is quite clear.

Fr. Emmanuël Clapsis focussed the discussion on the contextualization of the faith as *theoria* and *praxis*. He stated that we must not limit theology only to understanding the world, but to change it in accordance to the principle of God's Kingdom.

Fr. Alkiviades Calivas spoke about «Orthodox Worship in the American Context.» He stressed that worship of God in the Church transcends all chauvinism and radical individualism. A life in Christ promised by the Eucharist makes the difference for people.

Fr. Stanley Harakas in his presentation emphasized: 1) the role of Christian value; 2) this role in a military context, particularly in a nuclear context. He expressed that an Orthodox Christian must clearly *reject* nuclear weapons. This inaugural session proved to be excellent, offering timely issues which were responded to by sound and heated discussions.

Bishop Methodios of Boston hosted a luncheon for the official representatives at the Diocese center and offered his own warm greeting. There the representatives also shared much fellowship.

Afternoon found the representatives at a reception held in their honor at the Cotsidas-Tonna Library. The undersigned offered greetings and spoke about the library collection.

In the third session the following presentations were made: «Eschatological Dimensions of the Church» by V. Rev. Prof. Dr. Athanasios Yevtic from the Belgrade Theological Academy, and «Icon and Church in the Book of Revelation» by

Prof. Dr. Petros Vasiliades from the University of Thessaloniki School of Theology. Professor Yevtic gave an excellent presentation on the eschatological character of the icon and the church. The Church as *community* is not confined only within historical human society but is the assembly (*synaxis*) of all God's children from the beginning of creation (Rom. 8:23). The Church is not a perfect society on earth but is instead, the liberating force in creation, i.e., man is liberated from the oppression of the world. The Church offers renewal through sacramental rebirth, and especially in the *parousia* of Christ. Professor Vasiliades presented indepth scholarly papers on «Icon and Church in Revelation.» He explored the biblical foundation of the Christian theology of images in relation to the Seventh Ecumenical Council. The moderator for this session was Rev. Prof. Dr. Thomas Hopko from St. Vladimir's Seminary, New York.

The evening meditation was given by Rev. Prof. Dr. Paul Tarazi and following dinner a warm fellowship took place at the Maliotis Cultural Center, the sight for all the conference meetings.

On Tuesday, September 1, the opening worship meditation was offered by Rev. Lawrence Barriger from Christ the Savior Seminary, Johnstown, PA.

The fourth session began with the presentation of «Bio-Medical Technology of the Kingdom or of the Cosmos» by the Rev. Prof. Dr. John Breck from St. Vladimir's Seminary, New York. In an inspiring and scholarly manner he focussed on contemporary bio-medical moral issues that pre-occupy Orthodox today. The moderator of this session was Prof. Dr. Veselin Kesich from St. Vladimir's Seminary, New York.

The fifth session continued with the discussion on «Kingdom and World». Professor Michail Stepanovic Kvanov at the Moscow Theological Academy and Archdeacon Professor Constantine Voicu from the Institute Teologic Ortodox de Grad Universitar, Bucharest, Romania, offered a paper on Orthodox «Theology and Ecological Problems». Professor Ivanov emphasized man's attitude towards nature, specifically the love and care man has for nature within the theological context of Orthodoxy. He stated however that the «ecological question is a world-wide, global issue», that all humanity must face. Professor Voicu along a similar vein expressed his concern for the purity of the ecological environment today in the midst of technological progress. Discussion followed. The Rev. Dr. Jaroslav Suvarsky from Pravoslavna Bohoslovecka Fakulta, Czechoslovakia moderated a lively discussion after the two presentations.

On Tuesday afternoon and evening the official representatives took a delightful excursion to Newburyport, MA., where the Mayor of the city hosted a reception and presented to all a momento from the city. Fr. Stanley Harakas and the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church of Newburyport hosted a dinner at the church hall following vespers. At the vespers the Rev. Dr. Thomas Fitzgerald from Holy Cross offered the meditation.

On Wednesday, September 2, at the morning prayer service, Rev. Prof. Dr. John Meyendorff gave the meditation and the sixth session of the conference was underway.

At the sixth session the topic was «Aspects of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod.» The Metropolitan Iossif Bossakov spoke on «The Iconoclastic Controversy—Historical Perspective», and the Rev. Dr. Blogoy Tchiflianov spoke on «The Iconoclastic

Controversy—Theological Perspectives». Both Metropolitan Iossif and the Rev. Dr. Tchiflianov are from the Theological Academy of St. Clement of Ochrida, Bulgaria. They both listed the problems of the use of icons in the past and the importance of icons today. Father Tchiflianov laboriously presented the dogmatic definitions of the Councils and of the Fathers relating to icons. He considered both the opponents and proponents of icons, iconoclast and iconodules, respectively. The definition of the Church Synod of 787 clearly forbids the worship of icons — «only to God is worship due» — and supports the veneration of icons. Fr. George Christulides from Holy Cross moderated this session.

The presenters for the seventh session were Prof. Dr. Nikolai Zablotsky, from the Leningrad Theological Academy, on «The Aesthetics of Iconography», and Metropolitan Dr. Athanasios Papas from the Theological School of Halki, Turkey, on «Religious Art in the Polis in the 19th and 20th Centuries.» Professor Zablotsky also distributed a paper which was not read on «The Seventh Ecumenical Council Today». He discussed the importance of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod beyond the veneration of icons, that is, the canonical and the Christological issues of the day as well as the continuation of the Orthodox faith and its legacy for today. Metropolitan Athanasios Papas discussed the importance of Greek Orthodox religious art in Istanbul during the 19th and 20th centuries and the influence of Western Religious Art on iconography of that genre. In addition he gave historical perspectives of the artistic creations of Greek Orthodox religious artists in Constantinople (Istanbul). The moderator for this session was Prof. Dr. George Bebis from Holy Cross.

Rev. Dr. Jaroslav Suvarsky from Czechoslovakia presented a paper on the «Message of the Icon». He stated: «Today as well as in the future, at a time when technology offers new possibilities of cognition, especially by vision such as television and video, the revelation of the mystery, that is, of the deep sense of the icon has great and promising possibilities for faith dissemination.» The message of the icon is an invitation to look from the visible world into the mystery of the invisible world just as Christ, the divine mystery, was revealed to humanity through his physical incarnation.

In the afternoon a reception was given in honor of the participants at the Department of Religious Education where Mr. Ernest Villas, Director, offered warm greetings.

Afterwards the eighth session followed. The Rev. Prof. Aurel Jivi from the Institutul Teologic Orthodox de Grad Universitar, Sibiu, Romania, presented a paper on the «Revelance of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod». His paper was a penetrating investigation on the importance of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod for Orthodox Theology in relation to contemporary Christianity. The moderator for this session was Prof. John Erickson from St. Vladimir's Seminary.

At the vespers, Prof. Dr. Elias Moutsoulas from the University of Athens School of Theology offered a meditation extolling the mystery of the icon which includes the divine economy of the Incarnate Logos, and the truth of man, and of God.

On Wednesday evening, following dinner, an organizational meeting of official representatives took place. Prof. Dr. Constantin Andronikof from St. Sergius, Paris, presided. At this meeting, the necessity of the International Conference of

Orthodox Theological Schools, was affirmed. It was voted and passed that this conference would meet every five years in a specific location decided by the official representatives of the schools. The next meeting will be in 1992, at the Orthodox Church in Rumania. A five-member committee was elected in order to plan the details of this next meeting.

On Thursday, September 3, Rev. Dr. Matti Sideroff from the Finnish Orthodox Theological Seminary offered the meditation at the morning matins.

The ninth session followed on the topic «Kingdom and Church». Prof. Dr. Vlasios Pheidas from the University of Athens, School of Theology, presented a paper on «Those Outside the Church» and Bishop Prof. Dr. Anastasios Yannoulatos, from the University of Athens and St. Makarios III Seminary in Kenya, presented his paper on «Facing People of Other Faiths from an Orthodox Point of View.» Professor Pheidas in no uncertain terms stated that the sacramental grace of Christ is channeled through the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, that is, the Orthodox Church which, in fact, maintains and perpetuates the faith of the Apostles undefiled. Professor Pheidas also emphasized the importance of the canons in ecclesiology that relates to those who stand outside the Church. He made an excellent and scholarly presentation of traditional Orthodoxy held through the centuries. Bishop Yannoulatos took a different vein and made a summary of the classification of other religions (non-Christian), and spoke of God's relation to the world through his glory. His thesis was that in Orthodoxy we begin with the Trinitarian doctrine which allows relationship among all religions with Christianity. All religions, he stated, have a common root, the *transcendental reality*. The Incarnation of the Logos relates to the whole world. The Logos «enlightens every man who comes into the world». Also, the Logos relates to all people through the *spermatikos logos* (the seminal reason) that is in every man. This approach was well received by most of the participants. The moderator for this session was the Rev. Prof. Nicholas Kastanas from Holy Cross.

In the tenth session Professor Dr. Constantine Scouteris of the University of Athens, School of Theology, presented his paper on «Doxology, the Language of Orthodoxy». He pointed out that Wirgenstein, Hare, Ayers and others have taken a new philosophical approach to knowledge through linguistic analysis. In their approach, verification of the truth of statements does not allow room for knowledge gained from experience above and beyond the limits of this world. In other words transcendental experiences were not valid to offer as evidence for statements. Orthodoxy approaches the spiritual experience through silence. The doxological approach of the divine logos is related to the human logos as manifested in worship. The task of Theology is to develop the divine logic or *theo-logos* that relates all human beings in the act of worship. The moderator for this session was the V. Rev. Tymofit Minenko from St. Andrew's College, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

The eleventh session dealt with the topic «Kingdom and World». The Rev. Prof. Victor Petuchenko from Odessa Theological Academy delivered a paper on «Threat of Nuclear Holocaust». He emphasized the threat of nuclear extinction and of the Christian responsibility for peacemaking. He stated that «one thing is absolutely clear: we need reconciliation, and the common language of love will be the basis for peaceful existence». This is learned in the Church where Christ the Prince of Peace dwells. The moderator for this session was the Prof. Dr. Kyriaki Fitzgerald for Holy Cross.

In the evening the official representatives participated in an excursion to Worcester, Mass., where they visited all the Orthodox parishes there. Each pastor gave the history and activities of the parish. A dinner followed at the Antiochian parish where greetings were offered by the local church officials.

On Friday, September 4, the meditation at the morning matins was given by Prof. Dr. Constanin Andronikof from Paris.

The twelfth session took place on the topic, «Kingdom and Person». Prof. Dr. Remus Rus from the International Institutul Teologic de Grad Universitar, Bucharest, Rumania, presented his paper on «Freedom and Person», and the V. Rev. Prof. Archimandrite Platon Igoumnov, from Moscow Theological Academy on «Freedom and Personality». Professor Rus spoke of the importance of freedom in the human person. The human as an authentic person has no value without freedom. The image of God is the freedom of a man not dominated by the power of the nation. Fr. Platon made an excellent theological presentaion on the freedom of the human personality. He spoke of the freedom of God, the freedom of creation, and the freedom of man. His paper may be summarized in the following statement: «For a man who possesses the highest spiritual value, choice is no longer a problem as he has already chosen his way of life, has found the source of joyful existence, living inspiration and truth, and thus has predetermined all future choices. Value illuminates from inside the whole human life, filling it with real freedom and opening to creativity.» The moderator for this session was Rev. Dr. Professor George C. Papademetriou from Holy Cross.

Fr. Igoumnov distributed another paper that was not read at the conference on the topic, «Search for Peace». He stated: «the aspiration of each man and all humanity is to enjoin peace, the absolute and eternal gift commanded by the Gospel, as a necessary condition to all levels of human relations.»

The final session of the conference consisted of a panel of several theologians who discussed «Conference Reflections in Future Theological Work and the Role of Theological Schools». The moderator was Rev. Dr. Prof. Theodore Stylianopoulos for Holy Cross. A discussion took place on how Orthodox theologians approach theology today and the importance of international cooperation among schools and faculties of Orthodox theology.

At the conclusion of the Conference a communique was issued to the press.

All the papers will be published in a unique volume by the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.