

Conference Concluding Remarks

By H. G. Philotheos (Theocharis), bishop
of Oreoi (now Metropolitan of Thessaloniki)*

By the Grace of God, we have finally reached the conclusion of the work of the Conference: “Orthodox Theology *in via* in the ‘Dematerialized Reality’ of Late Modernity”, in order to commemorate this year’s 100th anniversary of the founding of the journal *Θεολογία/Theologia*. We did not wish for this anniversary to be simply an inward-looking process of a lackluster record of its so far achievements. Theology, moreover, must consistently resist the temptation to become a sterile narration of the past or an archaeology of the sacred letters. On the contrary, it is called upon in every age to give effect to the prophetic voice of the Church, and to reveal the way in which the Church is moving through history and heading towards the Last Days. Theology must therefore be in constant and lively dialogue with the world, with contemporary currents of thought and with the problems and challenges that man is called upon to face in every age. With this in mind, the Organizing Committee of the Conference, under the inspired chairmanship and guidance of his president, His Beatitude, Archbishop of Athens and All Greece Hieronymos II, had the ardent desire to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the journal *Θεολογία/Theologia*. With an eye to the future, responding to the challenges which the modern man is facing in the 21st century due to the dizzying progress of technology and technical science.

Even the most benevolent observer cannot dispute the dominance of the technical spirit, as it is embodied in the current era of Late Modernity.

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The rapid spread of AI and the digital and virtual environment in all aspects of public and private life, as well as the modern applications of biotechnology and the bioethical dilemmas to which it gives rise, are leading to the ever increasing objectification of human existence, the annihilation of the human identity and, ultimately, the elimination of the subject.

As it becomes clear from the contributions we've heard during the last few days, the Orthodox Theology, in the face of these challenges, can play a decisive role, in understanding under a new prism the man's existential self-consciousness. The anthropological presuppositions emerging from the rich Orthodox tradition can lay the foundations for eradicating the phenomenon of the new immaterial and digital idolatry caused by the new technology, and highlight the ways leading to the de-demonization of the creation and material reality through the affirmation of the intra-secular mystery, which entails the Incarnation of the Word and the salvation of both humanity and the universe – material and immaterial.

With the successful completion of the Conference's work that has exceed all expectations, please allow me, as the Director of the Department of Editions of the Communication and Education Service of the Church of Greece (C.E.S.C.G.), to express my sincere thanks, first of all, to the Holy Synod of the Most Holy Church of Greece and its President, His Beatitude Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, Mr. Hieronymos II, for his inspired guidance of the work of the Organizing Committee and for his unstinting interest in the preparation of the Conference, which is undoubtedly the fruit of his paternal care and blessing, but above all of his love for the Church.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deepest thanks to His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch, Mr. Bartholomew I of Constantinople, who with his high presence brightened, together with his distinguished entourage, the opening ceremony and the work of the Congress, as well as His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria, Theodore, who also honored our Conference by being present in person. Consequentially, thanks are due to His Beatitude Archbishop George of New Justinian and All Cyprus, His Grace Archbishop George of Tirana, Durres and All Albania, Anastasios, the venerable and serene theologian, missionary and teacher of the Sacred Science, as well as His

Eminence Archbishop Leo of Helsinki and All Finland, and His Eminence Metropolitan of Tallinn and All Estonia, Mr. Stephen, who attended the proceedings of the Conference in person, together with their companions, and the delegations of the Ancient and Holy Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem, as well as the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches of Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia and Poland, which gave a truly pan-Orthodox character to the celebrations of the centenary of the journal *Θεολογία/Theologia*.

Subsequently, sincere thanks are due to the most learned professors and scientists from Greece and abroad, who responded positively to the official invitation of the Church of Greece and took the trouble to present us the fruits of their research and scientific knowledge. Their contribution to the Conference's successful completion was substantial and invaluable, a fact that is proven not only by the high level of the papers presented, but also by the fruitful and constructive dialogue that followed. Once again, therefore, we are expressing our thanks, and we would like you to know that your constructive and fruitful cooperation is a great honor and a legacy for the future of the journal *Θεολογία/Theologia*. For the smooth rotation of the sessions and the observance of the time limits, I would like to thank Your Eminence Metropolitans and the most erudite Professors who undertook the demanding task of co-chairing the sessions and coordinating the subsequent dialogue, both of which they accomplished with discretion and success.

We would be remiss not to acknowledge the essential contribution of the members of the Organizing Committee, as well as of the Eminent Bishops, the members of the Academic Committee, and especially of the Editorial Director of the journal, Mr. Alexandros Katsiaras, who was its true inspirer and visionary. He, together with the team of the Publications Department, whose employees have surpassed themselves and proved to be invaluable scavengers of the work of the Church of Greece, as well as the other collaborators of the Church of Greece's Communication and Educational Service, carried out the titanic task of preparing and successfully and efficiently conducting the Conference, which, I believe, all of us have deeply enjoyed. The Conference would not have taken place without our sponsors, whom we would like to particularly thank. Last but not least, I have left the unsung but equally important heroes of the

Conference, the team of volunteers who worked hard to resolve all the practical issues and the interpreters who, through their arduous work, managed to break down the language barrier and make communication between the participants possible and constructive.

To conclude, allow me to inform you that for the coming year, 2024, we are planning –God willing– to hold another Conference, in Thessaloniki this time, in order to examine the history, the themes and the important milestones of the centenary of the journal *Θεολογία/Theologia*¹. We look forward to seeing you there and thank you all again for your participation.

1. [Editor's note: For organizational, technical and other reasons, the Conference has been scheduled to take place in Thessaloniki one year later, from 29 September to 1 October 2025; its general theme is: "Second International Conference for the 100th Anniversary of the Journal *Theologia*. Its contribution to Theological Literature and the Future of the Orthodox Church and Theology in the Digital Age"].