

# Official Report of the 7<sup>th</sup> Symposium of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ORTHODOX DOGMATIC THEOLOGIANs

Paralimni, Cyprus

5-7 March, 2024

The Seventh International Symposium of the IAODT, entitled “THE HUMAN BEING IN THE IMAGE OF GOD”, was organized in Paralimni, Cyprus on March 5-7, 2024, under the Auspices of His Beatitude Georgios, Archbishop of Cyprus. This academic event was made possible through the gracious hospitality of His Eminence Vasilios Metropolitan of Constantia and Ammochostos, who hosted it at the premises of his Holy Archdiocese.

## **I. SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS**

This academic event was opened on Tuesday March 5, with a service of Thanksgiving at the chapel of St Anna, which was followed by the Message of His Beatitude Georgios, Archbishop of Cyprus, delivered by His Grace Gregorios, Bishop of Messaoria. In His Message, His Beatitude, speaking about the dogmatic theology of the Church, emphasized that the doctrine of faith serves as guidelines leading the faithful to correct practice and, by extension, to salvation. The topic of the Symposium “The Image of God” is one of the foundational doctrines of our faith. The proper pastoral treatment of modern man is the greatest challenge for Orthodox Theology today, which must take into consideration in pastoral practice the human being in a postmodern context while also avoiding the pitfalls of secularization. And he shared his wishes and prayers for the success of the Symposium.

In his welcome speech, his Eminence Metropolitan Vasilios stressed the significance of Dogma in the Orthodox Church as the correct formulation of the content of faith, for the sake of which the Church of Christ engaged in countless struggles with its martyric witness in order to preserve Orthodoxy. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of this assembly of Orthodox theologians, gathered to discuss issues of faith and ecclesiology, as a testament to the unity of our faith before the modern world.

Fr. Prof. Porphyrios Georgi, President of the IAODT, reminded in his Opening Address of the mission statement of the Association, namely “to serve as an academic fellowship of professors and scholars involved in the study and teaching of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology”, aiming at “promoting research in Dogmatic Theology at the international level in the spirit of the Holy Tradition as it expresses itself in the Bible, in the Ecumenical Councils, in the writings of the Holy Fathers, and in the Church’s liturgical life”. He noted the relevance of the topic of the present conference highlighting that “our 7<sup>th</sup> conference acquires an exceptional importance in responding to crucial questions and challenges that human societies face nowadays all over the planet which put into doubt firmly established values and beliefs which have, for so many years, provided our life with clear orientation and solid convictions concerning the meaning of human life, the family and its constituents, gender identity, the human body, interpersonal relationships, pain, happiness, beauty and once again the meaning of human freedom, its parameters and horizons. He also thanked the former and current members of the Board of IAODT and announced the release of the Sixth Volume in the series of the Conference Proceedings: *The Eschatological Vision of Orthodox Theology*.

Then, the Symposium proceeded according to the following Program:

In **Session I**, moderated by Rev. Porphyrios Georgi

His Eminence Metropolitan Vasilios presented the Keynote Lecture:

The Garments of Skin of Adam and Eve: From Origen to St. Maximus the Confessor

In **Session II**, moderated by Rev. Ștefan Buchiu the following reports were presented:

Rev. Ioan Tulcan, Arad

*Le mystère de la Sainte Trinité reflété dans la qualité de l'homme comme image de Dieu*

Rev. Cristinel Ioja, Arad

*In the image of God and in the image of man. The challenges of anthropology in the context of new technologies*

In **Session III**, moderated by Rev. Ioan Tulcan the following reports were presented:

Rev. Ștefan Buchiu, Bucharest

*Le rôle cognitif de l'esprit humain, restauré dans la Personne du Logos divin incarné*

Rev. Amphilochios Miltos, Volos

*Totus Christus and Corporate Personality: An Anthropological Approach*

In **Session IV**, moderated by Rev. Nikolaos Papantoniou the following reports were presented:

Dr. Stavros Yangazoglou, Athens

*Image and Person: From Theology to the Anthropology of the Person*

V.R. Nathanael Neacsu, Iasi

*The Human Being as a Person: An Orthodox Anthropological Perspective*

*Amidst Contemporary Debates.*

In **Session V**, moderated by Marina Kolovopoulou the following reports were presented:

Dr. Ioannis Kaminiis, Sofia

*The Role of Human Body in the Spiritual Ascent according to the Gnostic Trilogy of Evagrius Ponticus*

Dr. Ion Croitoru, Targoviște

*The man as the image of God in the “Mystagogy” of Saint Maximus the Confessor*

In **Session VI**, moderated by Dr. Ion Croitoru the following reports were presented:

Fr. Phillip LeMasters, Texas

*The “One Flesh” Union of Man and Woman in the Image of God*

Dr. Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Volos

*Created “In God’s image” through Man or through Subordination to Man: Questioning the Public Relevance of Patristic Anthropology about Woman Today*

Dr. Achilleas Dellopoulos, Athens

*The Overcoming of the “Gender Division” and the Emergence of the Ontological Attribute “human” in the theology of the Fathers of the Church*

Fr. Nikolaos Loudovikos, Ioannina (online presentation)

*Para-ontology, or the Revenge of Meanings: a Theologico-philosophical Reading of the Homo-sexual Marriage*

On **WEDNESDAY, March 6** the Symposium’s participants paid a visit to the Holy Archdiocese of the Church of Cyprus in Nicosia. They were welcomed by His Beatitude Georgios, Archbishop of Cyprus and by the Mayor of the city Mr. Konstantinos Yiorkadjis. The Symposium participants also had the opportunity to visit the Theological School of the Church of Cyprus as well as the old and new Cathedrals of Nicosia.

In the afternoon, the sessions continued.

In **Session VII**: moderated by Rev. Nicolae Mosoiu, the following reports were presented:

H. E. Metropolitan Irineu, Craiova (online presentation)

*Man and his Deification according to St. Maximus the Confessor*

Rev. Mihai Burlacu, Bucharest  
*From Image of God to Homo Deus*

Dr. Georgios Panagopoulos, Athens  
*Imago Dei and Deification: An Orthodox Hesychastic Approach*

Rev. Porphyrios Georgi, Balamand  
*The Divine-Human Ethos of Hesychast Anthropology: The Contributions of Saints Symeon the New Theologian and Gregory Palamas*

In **Session VIII**, moderated by Rev. Dr. Georgios Panagopoulos the following reports were presented:

Dr. Theofilos Abatzidis, Volos  
*L'image de Dieu dans l'homme est-elle indépendante de la nature humaine?*

Dr. Nikolaos Xionis, Athens  
*The Primordial Sin and the Division of Human Nature*

Dr. Marina Kolovopoulou, Athens  
*Divine Image and Human Mutation: Theological Reflection on the Post Human Condition*

Rev. Aurel Mihai, Bucharest  
*The Orthodox Anthropology in the European Cultural Context*

#### **THURSDAY, March 7**

In **Session IX**: moderated by Rev. Dr. Stavros Yangazoglou the following reports were presented:

Rev. Dumitru Megheșan, Oradea  
*The Human Soul God's Altar*

Rev. Savvas Kokudev, Sofia  
*The Divine Image and Eucharist: Anthropological Correlations in the Context of Iconoclastic Controversy*

Dr. Alexandru Malureanu, Bucharest (online presentation)  
*The Image of God in the Human Being: The Mission and Responsibility for Interpersonal Communication and Communion with the Holy Trinity*

In **Session X**: moderated by Rev. Rev. Cristinel Ioja the following reports were presented:

Rev. Nicolae Mosoiu, Sibiu  
*Some Considerations on the Origin of Man from a Theological and a Current Scientific Perspective*

Fr. Sorin-Grigore Vulcanescu, Craiova  
*Man – the Image of God in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Challenges and Responses*

In **Session XI**: moderated by Rev. Rev. Phillip LeMasters the following reports were presented:

Dr. Ilche Micevski-Ignat, Skopje  
*Sin – Its Impact on God’s Image of Man and Deliverance from It, According to Saint Justin Popovich*

Dr. Lucian Bot, Craiova  
*Anthropology and Apophatic Theology in Arhim. Andre Scrima’s Writings*

Rev. Filip Albu, Arad  
*The Role of the Word-Logos in the Anthropological Thinking of Father Dumitru Staniloae*

Each session was followed by discussions.

With the courtesy of the Metropolis of Constantia and Ammochostos, these eleven sessions were streamed live on the YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/@imconstantias> .

**Session XII** was dedicated to the General Ordinary Assembly of the IAODT.

In the closing session of the 7th Symposium convened by the General Assembly of the International Association of Orthodox Dogmatic Theologians, which took place on March 7, 2024, in Paralimni, Cyprus, at 5 p.m., in the presence of His Eminence Vasilios, Metropolitan of Constantia and Ammochostos (Cyprus), the following matters were discussed:

Thirty (30) members of the Association responded to the letter of invitation sent by the Board of IAODT (see Appendix 1: Conference Program) and came to Paralimni, Cyprus (see the program of the Symposium – Appendix 2) the signatory members who can be found in the document attached to these minutes (Appendix 3).

The President of IAODT, Fr. Prof. Porphyrios Georgi, together with the other members of the Board, Fr. Prof. Ioan Tulcan and Fr. Prof. Ștefan Buchiu, confirmed that the conditions laid out in the By-Laws for convening the General Assembly had been properly fulfilled, and they proposed the following points for discussion:

1. Acceptance of New Members
2. Election of New Board Member
3. Addition to the By-Laws of the Association
4. Establishment of the topic, date and location of the next Symposium
5. Miscellaneous.

Discussions and decisions:

### **1. Acceptance of New Members**

In accordance with the By-Laws, the following participants declared their desire to join the Association, in writing and verbally:

1. Archimandrite Dr. Amfilochios Miltos (Greece),
2. Dr. Theofilos Abatzidis (Greece),
3. Dr. Ioannis Kaminis (Bulgaria)
4. Dr. Ilche Micevski-Ignat (North Macedonia)
5. Dr. Nikolaos Papanthoniou (Cyprus)
6. Dr. Sorin Vulcănescu (Romania)

All six candidates were accepted through the vote of the assembled members of the Association.

## **2. Election of New Board Member**

Father Tulcan announced the completion of his mandate as Board Member of the Association, thanking the other members for their many years of fruitful collaboration. Therefore, the position of vice-president became vacant.

Father Porphyrios requested that the General Assembly nominate candidates for this position.

Following the nomination of Prof. Marina Kolovopoulou, proposed by Prof. Ion Croitoru, and seconded by Fr. Prof. Cristinel Ioja, a secret vote was held.

After the votes were collected, in which the nominee received 17 votes in favor with 5 abstentions, Dr. Kolovopoulou was elected as Vice-President of the Association.

Prof. Marina expressed her joy at being elected as Vice President, thanking Father Tulcan and the group from Arad for helping to foster an academic environment of cooperation and friendship between theologians.

## **3. Addition to the By-Laws of the Association**

Thanking Fathers Ioan Tulcan, Cristinel Ioja and Filip Albu from the University of Arad for their efforts in founding and supporting this project, Fr. Porphyrios proposed an addition to the By-Laws of the Association, which would create the position of Honorary President for Fr. Tulcan. Following an open vote, the General Assembly unanimously approved his proposal.

## **4. Establishment of the topic, date and location of the next Symposium**

Fr. Porphyrios proposed to the Assembly that it convene symposia every year for the foreseeable future instead of every two years, given that during the period of the pandemic, symposia were unable to take place as decreed in the By-Laws. The proposal was accepted by the General Assembly.

Fr. Ștefan Buchiu suggested that the theme be related to the First Ecumenical Council.

Prof. Xionis proposed the theme of Tradition and Novelty.



Fr. Cristinel Ioja suggested the Creed and its Significance for Theology and the Church.

Prof. Kolovopoulou brought to the attention of the Assembly the saying of St. Athanasius that the Creed is the first “Lesson of Faith”.

The Assembly approved the theme: “The Creed as Lesson of Faith”.

Proposed date: The week between April 28 and May 2, 2025

Location: Pendeli Monastery (Athens, Greece)

## 5. Miscellaneous

Gratitude was expressed to:

- His Beatitude, Archbishop Georgios of Cyprus, for blessing the meeting and receiving the participants in the premises of the Archdiocese in Nicosia.
- His Eminence, Metropolitan Vasilios, for generously hosting the Symposium and his willingness to undertake the publication of the proceedings of the Symposium in collaboration with IOADT;
- The Staff of the Holy Metropolis of Constantia and Ammochostos for their devotedness in serving the Symposium
- Fr. Nikolaos Papantoniou and Fr. Filip Albu for their diligent efforts in the preparation and organization of the Symposium.
- August 31, 2025 was chosen as the deadline for each participant to submit the finalized version of his/her paper;
- The Assembly approved granting Frs. Ioan Tulcan and Filip Albu the right to sign legal and banking documents on behalf of the Association;
- Fr. Filip Albu was put in charge of updating and maintaining the Association’s website, with the assistance of Mr. Vincent DeWeese.

## II. FINAL STATEMENT

During the presentations of the papers, it was emphasized that the human being as a creation of the Triune God, Who is the fullness of Goodness, Life, Love, and Perfection, is an image of the divine Logos. Through relevant treatments of patristic teaching (Athanasius the Great, the Cappadocian

Fathers, Cyril of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory Palamas, and others) as well as the ascetical tradition (Origen, Evagrius Ponticus, Macarius the Egyptian, and others) aspects of the theological anthropology of the Church were presented which, nevertheless, cannot be understood in isolation from Trinitarian theology, Christology, the Doctrine of Creation, Ecclesiology and Eschatology. In this regard, it was emphasized, among other things, that the unity of human nature provides the perspective from which the sacramental nature of marriage is revealed as the union of man and woman, who together make up one body in Christ, excluding any other form of so-called “marital relationship”.

With the advent of postmodernity and the digital and technological revolutions of recent decades, types of anthropology emerged that risk deconstructing human nature while portraying the human being as a “creation of his/her own will”. These tendencies result in idolatrous worldviews.

Contemporary challenges, as they emerge from modern research in the fields of physics, biology and other relevant sciences, should not threaten the theology of the Church regarding the creational relationship between God and the cosmos, given that they do not touch on the most basic premises of Orthodox anthropology, insofar as creation depends on the Life-Giving Divine Energy of the One Holy Trinity. Of course, dealing with each of these problems causes difficulties for contemporary humanity, and they should be considered by theology, not because they impact the *imago Dei* but as a contribution to the ecclesial becoming of society and the entire creation. During the discussions, views and contributions of 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians (St Justin Popovich, Metropolitan John Zizioulas, Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, Fr. Georges Florovsky, Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, Vladimir Lossky, Fr. John Romanides, Fr. André Scrima, and others) served as the ground for fruitful reflection and analysis of issues concerning human nature, relations between the sexes and human communication.

Closing the Symposium, all participants expressed their solidarity with the people of Cyprus who continue to suffer in the face of the occupation of their homeland, and their hope for His Eminence Metropolitan Vasilios

of Constantia and Ammochostos to return, by the help of the Almighty, to the see of his predecessor St. Epiphanius of Salamis.

**The Board of the  
International Association of Orthodox Dogmatic Theologians**

**President**

Rev. Prof. Porphyrios Georgi

**Vice Presidents**

Rev. Prof. Ștefan Buchiu

Prof. Marina Kolovopoulou

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