

The Fourth International Symposium of the Orthodox Dogmatist Theologians Association in Sofia (Bulgaria)

At Sofia from 22 to 25 September 2013, the Fourth International Symposium of the Association of Orthodox Dogmatist Theologians (IAODT) was held, addressing an issue of great complexity and current, i.e., the one related to Tradition and Dogma in Orthodox theology, its consequences for theological-dogmatic academic research, and the relevance of this issue for the thinking and the mission of the Orthodox Church. The exact theme of the Symposium was: *Nowadays Dogma and Terminology in the Orthodox Tradition*.

The Association of the Orthodox dogmatists theologians was established in Arad, on the occasion of the first International Symposium on Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, 6-8 June 2007 (Arad), which aimed to address the topic: *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: Highlights and Perspectives in the Mission of the Church in the Contemporary World*. On the occasion of that symposium the International Association of Orthodox Dogmatist Theologians was also formed. This association represents the international theological community of the teachers, scholars and researchers in the field of dogmatic theology. It intends to deepen the great themes of theology in the spirit of divine Revelation, Apostolic Tradition and the great Fathers of the Church, by highlighting the universal and unmistakable relevance of the content of the Church faith truths - dogmas - for today's world, on the one hand, but also for the life and mission of the Orthodox Church, on the other hand. The Association's way of manifestation is and will be organizing consultations, seminars, symposia and international conferences involving all members of the Association. The results of academic events will be published in the volumes and publications of the Association or of the various theological, cultural and ecclesial establishments represented

by theologians who take part at the meetings. Of particular importance will be the International Symposia that will be held every two years, preferably in different locations. Their results will be published every time. Until now, this was done through the efforts of the Faculty of Theology in Arad.

The Second International Symposium of the Association was also held at Arad, between 11 and 13 of June 2009 and was entitled: *Tradition and Dogma: What kind of Dogmatic Theology we propose for our time?* Both events were attended by Orthodox theologians from almost all local Orthodox Churches and their collaboration sent a message of fraternal communion and highlighted the values of Orthodoxy to the contemporary world. At this International Symposium other priorities of theological research were outlined too and the collaboration between different academic theological education and research centres was stimulated. Thus, Orthodoxy can get out of certain isolation. They also wanted to coordinate the different projects and to approach those issues for which there is not yet a sufficiently well articulated and elaborate answer. At the same time, strengthening the association, the voice of Orthodox theology will be more consistent and stronger, bearing universal dimensions.

We can see in the same context the works of the Third International Symposium on Orthodox Dogmatic Theology that took place from 23 to 26 June 2011 in Thessaloniki (Greece). The theme of this Symposium was: *The role and limits of reason in Dogmatic Theology*. As at the previous meetings, at Thessaloniki there were present over 30 Orthodox theologians representing the local Orthodox Churches. There was a certain theological polyphony, but at the same time, a communion of the Orthodox faith and feeling, which were brought to light on this occasion. For several reasons the meeting in Thessaloniki was a step forward in the development of Orthodox cooperation. First, the meeting was held for the first time in another country than where Association was founded - Romania. Secondly, at Thessaloniki the Orthodox dogmatist theologians showed the values of Orthodoxy, so they have received several requests to become members of the Association from other Orthodox theologians in Greece, UK, Romania, etc. This will make the Association more active in the life of the churches that have members represented in it, but also it will be a professing and living presence in the world today.

In Thessaloniki, there was made an analysis of the place and role of human reason in the act of knowing, in general, and in theology, in par-

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ticular. The participants highlighted how human reason is seen in the Holy Scriptures, but also showed how the Church Fathers (Cappadocians, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory Palamas and others) saw the role of reason in knowing God, the things and the world. Interesting discussions followed after each lecture, which covered the entire theme, showing the limits of reason in theology and knowledge in general.

One more time this symposium gave testimony about the presence, vigour and beauty in contemporary Orthodox theology, which must not only be known and loved, but also professed by the theologians and the Christian Orthodox communion. The theologians emphasized that Orthodox theology has a personal and communitarian local dimension, but at the same time a universal one.

The meeting in Sofia is a step forward in the development of this association, not only with regard to the fact that it took place in another Orthodox country, but also because there was an increasing interest shown from Orthodox theologians who wanted to be members and because of the importance of the topic brought into debate. After the conclusion of the meeting in Sofia we believe that the theological potential of Orthodoxy will be further highlighted, and also its beauty, richness and relevance to the mission of the Church and the deepening of Orthodox theology in our time.

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