

Introductory Note

The Pioneering Orthodox Churches

It is with great pleasure that we deliver to the readers the first of the three issues containing the Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference for the 100th anniversary of the journal *Theologia*, organized in last October by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece. Thus, a tradition whose roots are dated to the ancient Church is now being updated: the bishops are those who are primarily bearing the burden of theology, since it is they who basically constitute the local and Ecumenical Synods. The bishop is the “head of the body, the church” («ἐν πᾶσι πρωτεύων»)¹, the one “who correctly hands the word of truth”.

It is no accident that the official opening of the Conference took place at the Metropolitan Church of Athens. The presence of Prelates and Representatives of the Orthodox Churches, the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece and many lay people gave to the event the character of a glorious celebration and gathering. It took place in the Metropolitan Church of Athens, with the aim of highlighting the direct identification of theology with the Church’s worship and liturgical experience.

The unexpectedly large number of the participants in the three-day proceedings of the Conference, leads us to conclude that the Conference is the first attempt ever made by an Orthodox Church, which was embraced by almost all other Orthodox Churches, to provoke scientific discussion and fermentation, and to formulate the theological discourse of the Church in an era when, despite its materialistic direction, the “intangible reality” reigns supreme. A direct consequence of the technology’s advancement is that the intangible reality has taken precedence over materiality and corporeality. By choosing to participate, the Orthodox Churches have understood that the “intangible reality”, as promoted by digital technology, ultimately undermines the essence of the doctrine of Creation and the

1. *Col.* 1, 18.

Incarnation, crucially affecting the identity and future of the Churches, while at the same time it deviously and fraudulently undermines the future of all humanity.

The presence in a spirit of unity of most of the Orthodox Churches – whether through their Heads or their Delegations– at this historic event, as it has been subsequently proved to be, reveals the Church’s ability to lead the way, despite any individual differences and human imperfections. The words of Archbishop Hieronymos of Athens and All Greece: “A century! 100 years! Let’s celebrate them!” proved to be somehow prophetic, because the issue of technology and its consequences are most intensely coming to the surface, day upon day. Thus, this Congress truly represents a milestone.

The participation of a large part of the international academic –not exclusively theological– community in the Conference reflected the great interest to all concerned in the side effects of the technological explosion we are currently experiencing. Of course, the issue of technology is an old one; still, it had always remained within a fixed and controllable context, even though man’s longing was to conquer nature, as Aristotle first put it: “*We by skill gain mastery over things in which we are conquered by nature*” («τέχνη γὰρ κρατοῦμεν, ὃν φύσει νικώμεθα»)². It was an extraordinary coincidence that academics and researchers from different disciplines and various subjects were involved –in addition to those treated by theology–, in order to study the new emerging situation in an interdisciplinary –and consequently more comprehensive– manner; to understand the nature and spirit of technology and to provide a basis for further scientific study and a coherent formulation of theological ecclesiastical discourse in the face of current and future digital challenges.

The members of the Organizing Committee, as well as the professors of the Scientific Committee decisively contributed to the successful outcome of the Conference; they provided institutional support for the Conference as Deans and Presidents of the Faculties of Theology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Aristotle

2. Aristotle, *Mechanical Problems* 847a, 21-22.

University of Thessaloniki. The same goes for all those who supported it with their presence, the State and the sponsors.

Finally, we would like to thank all the respected speakers who participated in the Conference, so that we can kindly hand over the first issue of the Proceedings to the international scientific community.

God willing, from 18 to 20 September 2025, is scheduled to be taking place in Thessaloniki the “Second International Scientific Conference for the 100th Anniversary of the Journal *Θεολογία/Theologia*. Its Contribution to Theological Studies and the Future of Orthodox Theology”.

The second issue 95, 2 (2024) of the *Proceedings* is due to be published next September; this will be completed with issue 95, 3 (2024) next December. Thereafter, three successive issues of the journal *Θεολογία/Theologia* will be published with various contents.

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