

Greetings  
Of His Beatitude the Archbishop of Athens  
and All Greece Mr. Hieronymos

Your Excellency, Madame President of the Republic,  
Your All-Holiness,  
Your Beatitudes,  
Your Eminences and Most Learned Representatives of the Churches,  
Most Reverend Prelates of the Church of Greece;

I am deeply moved and honored because, on the occasion of the Conference for the 100th anniversary of the journal *Theologia*, we have gathered here from the ends of the earth. And not by chance in a temple: for us, Theology is inextricably linked to Worship; a Worship full of symbols that point to something beyond themselves.

Today, in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens, through their Prelates and their Representatives, the following Churches are present: Constantinople, Alexandria, Cyprus, Albania, Antioch, Jerusalem, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Poland, the Autonomous Churches of Finland and Estonia and the semi-autonomous Church of Crete – Churches, which have their own significant contribution, but also have their own course on the cross through time, just like Christ who founded them.

Our gathering today, apart from its eschatological meaning, is deeply symbolic; this is justified by the content of the Conference: Firstly, it reiterates and reminds us of the importance of society in the modern world of virtual reality, where everything is done almost anonymously, impersonally and incorporeally through machines. We've been met here in person, coming from different places.

Technology has indeed made it easier for us to move around. We used it as a means, without letting it dictate our end. And our purpose was to gather here; to be physically present; and to communicate face to face. This is how future societies were envisioned by the writers who, early on, had warned of the reckless technological developments' dangers: technology should be at the service of man; man should not be at the service of technology.

Unfortunately, they've been ignored at their time. But even if they had been taken seriously, it is not certain that they would have been truly effective. Things had already taken a specific course: Further and further away from God; deeper and deeper into the world. As soon as he began to interpret the mysteries of the universe, man believed that he alone, through science and research, could reach the truth. And that the time had finally come for him to make his own heaven on earth. Here and now. Not waiting for the Last Days.

This development was nothing but unpredictable. For many centuries, especially in the West, God had been the exclusive point of reference, but in an exaggerated and asymmetrical way: On the one hand, an introversion, a quasi-spirituality that left out the world and materiality, was cultivated; on the other hand, the secular spirit was strengthened even within the Church, so that everything was attributed to the will of God – wars, inequalities, oppression. It was therefore to be expected that man would at some point oppose this state of things. But he ended up to the other extreme, like a pendulum. The center of gravity shifted to man. And God was slowly sidelined to the margins. He was confined to the private sphere.

Man has taken the reins of his and the world's destiny into his own hands. He formulated new theories of ideal societies – equal, free, peaceful and fraternal. Of course, these societies were to come about at some time in the future – but that time has not yet come, and most probably it never will.

For in the name of this future humanity has destroyed, and is continuing to destroy, the planet. From the 18th century onwards, a secular eschatology was thus developed, arguing that human history is evolving towards the ideal society. But that remained an unfulfilled

promise. Since then, a great transitory period has begun. New systems are constantly being tested – political, economic, ideological. And they are constantly being reformed and reshaped.

It is said that we are live in a liquid age. But this has not happened for the first time in human history. Liquidity was also existed in the late 19th century; and in the period between the two World Wars. Because of the search for a stable ground – an attempt for the asymmetry in man's position in relation to God and creation to be healed.

The Church can provide answers to these questions; its answers do not come from within history, but from the Last Days. The whole liturgical wealth of the Church projects this vision and the hope of salvation.

It is no coincidence that we have decided to organize a Conference on such a topical and living issue. We hope that, through it, a broader dialogue on the current problems will be established. Once again, the Church is called through its theology to say that the world was created in order to live and not to be destroyed. This attitude to life created civilization. Regarding civilization, the Greeks all over the world have been at the forefront. Even in our own liquid and transitional age, I believe there is enough yeast to give meaning to a world that does not simply seek it, but imperceptibly dreams of it.

I hope that our gathering today, as well as the Conference, which starts tonight, will be the beginning of this process.

I would like to thank the Heads and the Representatives of the Churches, as well as the distinguished speakers from all over the world, who eagerly responded to our invitation. And also, to exalt the contribution of the State, especially the President of the Republic, and all those who have contributed to our being here tonight.