



# OTSA ANNUAL MEETING 2017

## ORTHODOXY AND POLITICS

### ST. VLADIMIR'S ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Rangos Building, Metropolitan Philip Auditorium  
An online schedule is available at: <http://otsamerica.net>

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26**

**FROM 2:00 PM - REGISTRATION**

**2:45-3:00 PM Welcome and Comments: Will Cohen (University of Scranton), President of OTSA**

**3:00-3:30 PM Fr. John Jones (Marquette University) "Compassion and the Claims of Justice"**

Is compassion at all connected with justice? Yes and no. I'll give a nod to the 'no'; but I'll focus on the 'yes.' In light of a fundamental contrast between compassion and pity, I want to present an understanding of compassion as a holistic disposition of radical non-judgmental openness to others oriented to acting with and for their sake, I want to show that

- 1) Compassion provides a 'lived' reinforcement and validation of a fundamental claim of justice: that all people are to be afforded equal dignity, respect and equality of honor (*homotimos*).
- 2) Compassion plays a central role in the search for restorative justice and social justice since it serves to challenge and undermine the many invidious distinctions which can illegitimately marginalize people and groups in a social world.

Compassion, then, extends beyond "personal charity" by providing a fundamental guiding orientation to human life in its political and social dimension.

**3:30-4:45 PM Panel: Politics in the Seminary and the Parish**

**Fr. Nick Belcher (Antiochian Archdiocese), Peter Bouteneff (SVOTS), Fr. Timothy Creemens (Dean, Holy Resurrection Orthodox Cathedral, Wilkes-Barre, PA), Fr. Sergius Halvorsen (SVOTS), Fr. Chad Hatfield (President, SVOTS)**

**5:00 PM Akathistos in honor of St. Vladimir— Three Hierarchs Chapel**

**5:40-6:40 PM Dinner – Refectory**

**6:45-7:15 PM Ezekiel Olagoke (Waynesburg University), "Ecumenism of Blood as a Form of Eucharistic Hospitality to Victims of Boko Haram Terror in Nigeria"**

Over the last few years, there have been various accounts in Libya and more recently in Egypt and the Middle East of nameless victims of terrorisms. This paper examines the nature of persecution in North-eastern part

of Nigeria especially Christians and non-Christians who have felt the pangs and pains of death, destruction and devastation visited on them by Boko Haram terrorist group. Ecumenism of blood in this regard examines the nature of martyrdom as a theological source in defining ecumenism. It is a humanitarian crisis that requires Christian response.

This paper will address the issue at three levels. First, is the affinity and allegiance of those who in the face of death choose to lose their lives for Christ's sake in order to gain it. There are scriptural, historical and theological examples to underscore this as this paper will attest. Second is the Christian obligation and challenge in a sociological sense to be in solidarity with "others" in poverty-stricken countries who do not even register in current dialog or discourse in social research. Third, is the need to make comparative cultural distinctions between "Catholic orientalism" and Catholic Occidentalism" – basically on one hand looking how Christianity, Catholic or Protestant has taken roots at phenomenal rate, even in Muslim dominated parts of Nigeria. On the other hand, is the need to avoid the temptation to see aspects of Nigerian cultures as museum of exotic, pre-modern or anti-modern Christianity. In this global age, the significance of this three-prong approach cannot be overstated.

**7:15 – 8:30 PM Panel: Teaching and Religious Freedom**

**Edith M. Humphrey (Pittsburgh Theological Seminary), "Liberty, the Orthodox Christian and Title Nine"**

I will sketch the treatment of liberty in the Scriptures, as modelled by both Jesus and St. Paul. The apostle reminds us that "Jesus did not please himself" but also insists upon due process when arrested; our Lord paid the tax and reminded His disciples that He could have called legions of angels to his support. This paradoxical attitude is enshrined in the interplay of humility and forthrightness that appears to be a hallmark of Orthodox Christianity, where even God is not understood as compelling belief or obedience, but inviting willing human participation. However, a double ethos that values both liberty and self-abnegation faces particular challenges in our day, particularly for Orthodox Christians who teach in the public sphere, and must contend both with rigors of a well-meaning regulation, Title Nine.

**Discussion: Vigen Guroian (Independent Scholar), Fr. Philip LeMasters (McMurry University and St. Luke Antiochian Orthodox Church, Abilene, TX), Alex Pavuk (Morgan State)**

**8:30-9:30 PM: Social Hour**

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**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27**

**7:30-8:00 LECTIO DIVINA (Three Hierarchs Chapel)**

**8:15-8:45 AM continental breakfast at Rangos Building**

**8:50-9:00 AM Trisagion prayers in meeting room**

**9:00-9:30 AM Fr. Nicolas Kazarian (Fordham University), “Orthodox Fascination with Politics”**

The political reality of the Orthodox Church is not only complex and plural, it is also changing rapidly. The adaptive capacity of Eastern Christianity, from survival under an atheistic political system to a symbiotic relationship with politics, has made the emergence of a unified theological discourse difficult and has increased the disconnect between the spirit of independence claimed by the Church and the subjective reflex and fascination with politics. This paper proposes to analyze the Church/State power dynamic comparing Orthodox majority (traditional) countries and the Diaspora. The reality of democratic – and secularized – countries has created a new relationship paradigm and theological discourse between God and Caesar that remains to be addressed.

**9:30-10:00 AM Will Cohen (University of Scranton), “Ecclesiology and Political Engagement”**

The paper will begin with brief reflection on how different it is to speak of "political engagement" on the part of Christians in the context of Christian empire versus liberal democracy. In the latter, because the state does not claim to sanction a particular theology, an important *political* task of the church is to keep the state honest and committed to the latter's penultimacy. The church will desire, meanwhile, to see her own ultimate values of the kingdom of God embodied in civil law, but not indiscriminately or without discernment, since the truth and beauty of Christ cannot be realized primarily through legislation; indeed, a zealous Christian theocratic impulse in a pluralistic situation cannot well serve authentic evangelization. The alternative, however, is not for the church to leave secular politics to itself, and at most encourage her members to exercise their Christian conscience *individually* as they vote, support or oppose proposed policies, serve in public office, etc. This paper argues that, beyond the political engagement of Christians individually, parishes and dioceses themselves must continually seek to work out what is the mind of the church in relation to concrete social, political, and economic issues. Examples (local and national) will be offered to explore how and when ecclesially sponsored reflection on them, which may give rise to ecclesial statements and advocacy, are appropriate and important. The paper concludes by highlighting the paradox that through a patient, Christ-centered form of political engagement the Church can uniquely depoliticize the issues that polarize us.

**10:00-10:15 AM Coffee break**

**10:15-11:45 AM Primacy & Politics Session (Moderator, George Demacopoulos, Fordham University)**

**10:15-10:40 AM Fr. Anthony Roeber (SVOTS), “Chalcedon’s Canon 28: Politics, Administration, and Primacies”**

This paper argues that the purpose, context, and content of this canon correctly, proves that it emerged from the political and administrative anxiety of the Empire in the mid fifth-century. The canon put into the hands of ecclesiastical authority in the imperial capital future control over policies that touched upon the Empire’s security, especially with non-Roman peoples within and beyond imperial borders. The canon had nothing to do about the question of the “primacy” of the bishop of Rome or the possibility of appeals to the papal court by the other Patriarchs of the emerging “Pentarchy.” The paper turns to present-day issues, asking what role the Ecumenical Patriarchate would play in a Church in which the Petrine ministry of Rome was restored to the Orthodox Communion. The paper suggests how, rather than ignoring the Canon, Orthodox and Catholic participants in ecumenical discussions must undertake the task of examining how the Patriarch of Constantinople will, in the modern global context, serve the Church as the *servus servorum Dei ad*

*extra*. Neither the present claims of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for a solitary role in addressing the emergence of new autocephalous churches, nor the denial of a role for a personal primacy on the part of Russian Orthodox writers can be reconciled with the correct reading of Canon 28.

**10:40-11:05 AM Edward Siecienski (Stockton University), “Translation, Promotion, Apostolicity, or Accident of History: How Constantinople Achieved the Primacy”**

Today, Constantinople’s primacy among the Orthodox is (more or less) universally accepted, yet over the centuries the arguments used to support it have shifted and changed. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, as the relationship between Rome and Constantinople deteriorated, polemicists and theologians began to challenge the Roman primacy, bringing forward a series of arguments to claim that the primacy actually resided in Constantinople. Their first was the *translatio imperii* theory, which claimed that primacy in the Church was moved from Rome to Constantinople in the 4<sup>th</sup> century because wherever the emperor went so too did the primacy. The second was the promotion theory, which claimed that Rome’s lapse into heresy (because of the *filioque* and azymes) had essentially promoted the imperial capital to “the first *orthodox* see.” The third, which emerged in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, was the position that if Rome claimed primacy because of Peter, Constantinople should be first because it was founded by his brother Andrew, who not only came to Christ before Peter, but also preached in Byzantium before Peter went to Rome. The fourth, and this is the argument of certain historians rather than the Byzantines themselves, is that Constantinople became the first see in the East simply by virtue of being the only one of the four Eastern patriarchates not under Muslim rule. It was powerful because it was free.

Two things should be noted about these arguments. The first is that many of them would later be used to justify the importance of Moscow and its role as “Third Rome.” Russia was, after all, the residence of the Orthodox czar, and unlike Constantinople had fallen neither to heresy (i.e., the Florentine union) nor the infidel. Second, while modern Catholic-Orthodox dialogue presumes the promotion theory, this was not the majority view during the first centuries of the schism, and only became such after 1453 when there was no longer an emperor to justify Constantinople’s rank.

**11:05-11:30 AM Fr. Cyril Hovorun (Prof at Loyola Marymount University; Acting director of Huffington Ecumenical Institute), “Primacy and Power in the Light of ‘Ontotheology’”**

Primacy in the church is a tip of the iceberg, which is called structures of power. This iceberg can be a threat to the ship of the church, when hierarchical structures, including primacy, are regarded as an intrinsic part of the church’s nature – ecclesial “onta,” things. I call this perception “ontotheology.” Ontotheology can be dangerous regarding not only administrative structures of the church. It underpins racism, sexism, and other discriminative attitudes common in the modern Orthodox church. I try to deconstruct it and to offer a viable alternative to it.

**Discussion 11:30-11:45 AM**

**11:45-12:40 PM Lunch**

**12:45-2:00 PM Business Meeting**

**2:00-2:30 PM George Demacopoulos (Fordham University) “‘Traditional Orthodoxy’ as a Postcolonial Movement”**

This essay argues that the emergence of “traditional Orthodoxy” as a distinctive and constitutive marker of authentic Orthodox identity during the twentieth century should be understood as the byproduct of an inner-community struggle for meaning and relevance in the wake of centuries of theological dependence/resistance to Western Christianity. While the slogan was first invoked in the context of calendar reform, it has since been coopted by a broader, more loosely-organized but similarly aimed subgroup within the Orthodox Church whose animating spirit is resistance to the perceived threats that the “West” and “modernity” pose to Orthodox teaching and practice.

**2:30-3:00 PM Fr. Philip LeMasters (McMurry University; St. Luke Antiochian Orthodox Church, Abilene, TX), “The Political Witness of the Eucharistic Community”**

This paper argues that the Eucharistic worship of the Orthodox Church manifests both the life of a distinctive community, i.e., the Church, and a prophetic vision that extends to the entire creation. In this sense, the Eucharistic vision of the Church is both communitarian and universal. Especially drawing on the writings of St. Maria Skobstova, the paper challenges the assumption that a Eucharistic social ethic necessarily entails, even lends itself to, withdrawal from the practical challenges facing the larger society in which Orthodox Christians live. Regardless of the particulars of the circumstances, the celebration of the Divine Liturgy envisions the salvation of the entire world. The community which celebrates the Eucharist may not be indifferent to any dimension of the common life of humanity that falls short of the fullness of God’s purposes.

**3:00-3:30 PM Paul Ladouceur (Orthodox School of Theology at Trinity College, University of Toronto; Université Lavale), “The Political Theology of Love in St. Maria of Paris”**

Mother Maria Skobstova (St. Maria of Paris) (1892-1945) is known mainly for her charitable undertakings among Russian exiles in France and for her support for Jews during World War II, which eventually led to her death in a German concentration camp. Less known is her social and political thought, grounded in evangelical precepts, the Fathers of the Church and leading modern Orthodox thinkers, especially her friends and associates, Fr. Sergius Bulgakov and Nicolas Berdyaev. Her interest in politics was far from an intellectual exercise: she herself was politically active during the Russian revolution, at both the national level, within the Social Democratic Party (Mensheviks), and at the local level, as mayor in 1918 of Anapa, the Black Sea town where she lived. During the 1930s, both before and after becoming a nun, she wrote on social and political subjects in several different media, including essays, newspaper articles, poetry and plays. This paper explores the theological foundations of her political and social perspective: what it means to be Christian in a complex industrial society, especially in the light of anti-Christian movements such as communism and Nazism, and of secular Western democracy. She provides valuable insights for contemporary Orthodox political theology.

**3:30-3:45 PM Coffee Break**

**3:45-4:15 PM Gayle E. Woloschak “Science-Religion Interface: Agreements and Tensions” (Northwestern University School of Medicine; Lutheran School of Theology, Zygon Center for Religion and Science; SVOTS)**

The goal of this work is to address issues of science and religion including areas of agreement and areas of conflict for the Orthodox Church. The Church Fathers as well as modern scholars have discussed the consistency that should exist between the truth of nature and the universal Truth that one finds in the Church. Those dialogues that require a choice between science and religion are based in an inappropriate understanding of both the faith and the science based more on culture wars than on reality. Discoveries made in science have already had a strong influence on religion, impacting thinking about human origins, the relationship of humanity with other species, human personhood, and others. As science and technology continue to expand their knowledge base and capabilities, the Church must be prepared to step forward with perspectives that can be helpful in guiding the faithful for correct decision-making; technology is drastically changing the number of decision points in people’s lives, and too often the Church’s response is delayed, inappropriate, and/or without impact.

**4:15-4:45 PM Christina M. Gschwandtner (Fordham University), “Ecological Action and Orthodox Liturgical Praxis: Opportunities and Challenges”**

This presentation will address the potential of drawing on liturgical praxis for ecologically oriented action in three components: The opening section will consider how contemporary liturgical praxis intersects with pressing ecological issues (such as climate change) and explore why liturgy matters as a topic of engagement for Christian Orthodox theology and ecology. Then the paper will consider how liturgy as a living tradition can function as a resource for Christian theology and praxis (paralleling the ways in which Scripture can function as such a resource), drawing out the potential for retrieving or reinterpreting liturgical symbols,

practices, and frameworks for living in the world in environmentally friendly fashion. The final part of the paper will point to some of the difficulties and dangers in drawing on liturgy for an ecological agenda. Thus, both challenges and potential of liturgical praxis for ecological action will be explored.

**5:00 PM Akathistos in honor of St. Vladimir, Three Hierarchs Chapel**

**5:30-7:00 PM Dinner - Refectory**

**7:30 PM Annual Florovsky Lecture: Very Rev. John H. Erickson,  
“Orthodoxy, 1917-2017: Searching for a ‘Usable Past’”**

**8:30 PM Reception**

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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28**

**Breakfast at hotel or on your own**

**Coffee and Muffins available at Rangos from 8:15 AM**

**8:30-8:45 AM Morning Prayer in Meeting Room**

**8:45-9:15 AM Tracy Gustilo (SVOTS), “An Orthodox Reflection on Some Key Concepts in Giorgio Agamben’s Theological Politics”**

Giorgio Agamben, an Italian philosopher who works across the boundaries of political thought, aesthetics, the theory of language, and increasingly in recent years also theology — especially in his well-known and widely discussed “Homo sacer” project — has made an explicit call to the Church to take up once again its messianic mission. I will briefly introduce some of the key themes of Agamben’s work (such as law, bare life, spectacle, gesture, and play) and try to show their basic logic, the connections between them, and where possible their direct ties to Agamben’s strong readings of St. Paul, forms of Christian life, and liturgy. Agamben’s unique insights into our contemporary human situation, combined with his wide-ranging forays into theological politics, offer significant resources for the Church to consider as it takes up its Christian mission in today's world.

**9:15-9:45 AM Paul Gavrilyuk (University of St. Thomas), “Patriarch Kirill’s Ideology of Russkii Mir and the Geopolitics of the Council of Crete”**

The paper analyzes the teaching of Patriarch Kirill regarding the so-called Russkii Mir (“Russian World”). According to this teaching, the influence of the Russian patriarch extends beyond the limits of the Russian Federation unto the “spiritual space” of any other country with Russian speakers, including most notably Ukraine and Belarus. The ideology of the Russkii Mir is a post-Eurasian and post-Soviet construct, which subordinates the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church to the interests (both nationalist and imperialist) of the Russian state. I subsequently argue that the failure of the delegations of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Georgian Orthodox Church, and Russian Orthodox Church to attend the council demonstrated quasi-imperial tensions between the “Hellenic world,” led by Patriarch Bartholomew and the “Russian world,” led by Patriarch Kirill. While the “Hellenic world” has historically functioned as a colonizer, at present, it lacks the resources and the political muscle to realize its colonialist ambitions. More generally, the Council of Crete exhibited a contentious interplay between the centrifugal forces of localism (with associated nationalism) and the centripetal forces of globalism. This interplay could be found not only at the international, inter-Orthodox level, but also at the level of individual autocephalous churches and their respective state governments. For the future of Orthodoxy, it would be important to articulate a vision of conciliarity, which could properly

integrate and transform both localist and globalist impulses. I propose that a strong international organization is required in order to secure Orthodoxy's conciliar future.

**9:45-10:00 AM Coffee Break**

**10:00-10:30 AM Chris Humphrey (Vision for Life; The WORD Antiochian Magazine), "Will Christian Help for Pregnant Women 'Win' the Fight Over Abortion?"**

Abortion is relatively simple, morally, involving, as it does, a choice between killing or letting live. This simplicity, however, does not translate well into the political sphere, concerned as it is with adversarial relations: however necessary, the pro-life language of *rights* makes the profoundly alien, and alienating, assumption that mothers and babies need protection from one another. Further, the recurring anomalous relation of one person inside another person does not compare easily with slavery, or civil rights, for which laws changed human relations going forward. The passions inflamed by the violence of abortion, and the either-or character of the laws, incline well-meaning people to eschatological finality: so through legal reform we can and should "*end* abortion," or "*abolish* abortion." Historically in America, abortion numbers have been greatly reduced, but abortion never entirely stopped, largely through maternity homes and similar work, and only secondarily through legal reforms (Marvin Olasky, *Abortion Rites: A Social History of Abortion in America*). This realistic, practical orientation coheres very well with the Orthodox ethos.

**10:30-11:00 AM Dan Wright (University of Virginia; Holy Cross School of Theology), "Towards a Publican Theology: The Eucharist and Political Theology"**

Two of the most significant theological trends to emerge in the last century were Eucharistic ecclesiology and political theology, yet the relationship between the Church's sacramental existence *ad intra* and its ethico-political identity *ad extra* remains unclear. Eucharistic ecclesiology prioritizes the eschatological dimension of the Church made manifest in the "sacrament of sacraments" while political theology prioritizes the historical dimension. In this paper, I discuss the different ways in which Metropolitan John Zizioulas and William Cavanaugh attempt to reconcile the eschatological and historical dimensions of the Eucharist and why neither is ultimately successful. But despite their differences, Zizioulas and Cavanaugh agree that the best human efforts to imitate Christ involve struggling against sin rather than overcoming it. On this basis, I argue that Zizioulas and Cavanaugh lead us to understand political theology as pertaining to the Church's penitential action in the world, which is both from and for the Eucharistic event. In short, Eucharistic ecclesiology requires a political theology in the same way that the Eucharist requires repentance.

**11:00 AM -12:00 PM Discussion of Florovsky Lecture and overall reflection on conference papers and themes (Fr. John Erickson and others)**

**12:00 PM Lunch available for those who wish in Refectory**

**Departure: Safe Travels!**