

COMMUNIQUÉ

Patristic Colloquy

“For us and for our salvation” - Soteriology in East and West

In continuation of the former five Patristic Colloquies since 2001 under the auspices of the Vienna based foundation PRO ORIENTE, and three years after the last patristic colloquy in Thessaloniki 2009, a new conference took place in Esztergom, the former royal capital of Hungary.

The Conference was organized by Prof. Dr. Theresia Hainthaler (Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and Theology, Frankfurt am Main, Germany) in collaboration with His Excellency Bishop Atanáz Orosz of Miskolc, a member of the group of patristic colloquies, who invited the group to Hungary. Cardinal Erdő proposed the Conference Centre St Adalbert in Esztergom as place of our meeting.

Esztergom is the place where St Stephen, the first king of Hungary was crowned in 1000 and where he started the evangelization of Hungary. The primate of Hungary still is the archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest. The Basilica of Esztergom, *caput, mater et magistra ecclesiarum hungariorum*, holds also two icons sent by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios in 2000 as a gift to the Church of Hungary at the jubilee of its millennium.

Orthodox and catholic Patristic scholars from about 17 European countries (France, Romania, Ukraine, Germany, Great Britain, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Norway, Belarus, Greece, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Serbia) participated and 27 papers have been presented.

At the first day, the inauguration took place with greetings of Cardinal Koch of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and a greeting word sent by His Eminence Metropolitan Arsenios [Kardamakis] of Austria and Exarch of Hungary of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Metropolitan Arsenios underlined the great value of Patrology and shared his experience from the recent first Orthodox youth meeting that a lot of questions posed by us humans have stayed the same and that answers to these questions can be found in the texts of the Early Church Fathers. The Church Fathers gave their answers a long time ago and their answers still live and can and will be of use also for the youth today.

We had the honor of an address of His Eminence Cardinal Peter Erdő, archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest and primate of Hungary and a message of His Beatitude Béchara Pierre Raï, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East of the Maronites, in the presence of his delegation from Lebanon, an event which was communicated by TV Esztergom and TV Lebanon.

At the second day we had an excursion to Budapest. After a visit in the Cathedral St Stephen (with relics of the right hand of King St Stephen) we were greeted by His Excellency Dr. Zsolt Semjén, Deputy Prime Minister of Hungary, in the Parliament and we could visit the Parliament with the medieval crown of St Stephen. In Szentendre we were shown the Museum of the Serbian-Orthodox Bishop Lukijan of Buda and could visit his cathedral.

The topic „for us and for our salvation“ refers to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed (of 381) common to all Christians, The salvific plan of God for humankind was realized by the incarnation of the Son, his passion, cross and resurrection. The original salvific plan of God before the ages was thus realized. The concept of salvation (*soteria*) of the fathers of the Church was studied in the following papers.

Dr. Taras Khomych (Ukraine / Great Britain), “Soteriology in the Writings of the Apostolic Fathers”: The First Clement bears witness to the origins of Christian reflection on the theme of salvation. Combining imagery and phraseology of the Septuagint with early Christian traditions and other Hellenistic sources, the author presents the dynamics of salvation in a creative manner; he elaborates his views on salvation in the context of his reflections on the community life and emphasizes the continuity between Israel and the Church as the people of God and community of salvation.

The aim of the paper “«*Opus spiritus salus carnis*». Le salut de la chair selon Irénée de Lyon” of **DDr. Ysabel de Andia** (Paris, France) is to show that “the salvation of the flesh is the work of the Spirit”. Against the Gnostics who distinguish three human persons of three different substances, spiritual, psychic and fleshly or material, Irenaios affirms the unity of the human and the resurrection of the flesh. He demonstrates this in a philosophical manner by the distinction of nature and quality (the body did not change but took the quality of the Spirit in the resurrection), but also in an exegetical manner (giving another interpretation of 1 Cor 15,50 [“flesh cannot inherit the kingdom”] as the Gnostics: the flesh is inherited by the Spirit like the spouse is inherited by the husband).

Prof. Dr. Paul Mattei (Lyons, France), « ‘Dieu n’est pas mort’. Remarques sur la christologie et la sotériologie du *De Trinitate* de Novatien »): Novatian’s Christology and soteriology in *De Trinitate* seem to disconcert, at first glance. The study shows their richness. Christology and soteriology in Novatian can be understood only on the basis of his anthropology. The historical context of Novatian’s work is shown and his overall concept, and the fundamental exigencies of his theological “ethos”.

Prof. Dr. René Roux (Erfurt, Germany), “Soteriology of the *Liber Graduum*”: According to the *Liber Graduum*, a Syriac text of the first half of the fourth century, Jesus Christ realized the salvation of mankind through three actions: 1. Through his Incarnation, he revealed the nature of the perfect human according to the will of God; 2. Through his teaching and his example, he shows the path to follow in order to attain this perfection; 3. Through his blood and his death on the cross he has opened the way to perfection which had been closed since Adam’s sin. The *Liber Graduum* develops a really original hermeneutic of divine precepts in an anti-marcionite context in order to show the unity of the two Testaments as well as the responsibility of mankind and the necessity of God’s grace in view of salvation.

Prof. Dr. Franz Mali (Fribourg, Switzerland) was analyzing in his paper “Descendit ad inferos. Das Heil Christi für den verstorbenen ‘Adam’. Erlösung nach dem Nikodemus-Evangelium” the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus. As “King of the glory” Jesus Christ is descending in his death into the Hades, where he defeats Satan, liberates all the deceased, who are imprisoned, and finally he imposes forever his own dominion in the Hades.

Prof. Dr. Lenka Karfiková (Prague, Czech Lands), “*Semet ipsum exinanivit*. Logos der Heiland nach Marius Victorinus“: Marius Victorinus highlights the descending of God’s Logos into the matter as the very last level of reality (the medium of alterity) to enable the return of all things to God the Father – which is a very interesting attempt of Christianizing of the Neo-platonic (or Gnostic?) conception which was his source.

Dr. Gregor Emmenegger (Fribourg, Switzerland), “Heil und Heilung bei Basilius von Caesarea“: Medicinal metaphors are used in such a great number in the work of St Basil the Great and in ancient Christian literature in general, that the suggestion was made to call Christianity a “medical religion”. But medical healing is, according to Basil, always oriented to the salvation of the soul. God is the highest physician, but his goal is not a sane body but a saved soul.

The paper “Synergetic Aspects in St. Gregory of Nyssa's Teaching on the Salvation of Man” of **Prof. Dr. Ivan Christov (Sofia, Bulgaria)** introduces a specific Orthodox insight in the modern discussion on St. Gregory of Nyssa's teaching on synergy of man and God. It explores the interrelation between the Divine energies and the energies that constitute human being besides and in a certain aspect “beyond” the cooperation of salvific actions of God with the ascetic efforts of man. This approach contributes to a better distinction of the different kinds of synergy in the Nyssen's texts. The first of them, the *theognosia of natural contemplation*, leads to the restoration of the primordial nature of man as *an image of God*. The second, the *synergy of love*, aims at the realization of the pre-eternal plans of God concerning man. It leads the nature of man to perpetual transformation in its quest to union with God. This second form of synergy does not abolish the first one but transforms and adopts it. The *synergy of love* includes in itself the *theognosia*. It is precisely the recognition of human incapability to grasp God achieved through the highest form of apophatic theology following the *via superlativa (eminentiae)*, that gives an everlasting impetus to human *eros*. Therefore this highest form of synergy is not reducible to a cooperation of Divine energy and our virtual activities. The human energy is not just an action *ad extra*. It includes subtle mystical knowledge.

Rev. Dr. Daniel Buda (Geneva /Switzerland and Sibiu/ Romania), “Soteriological aspects of Incarnation in the anti-apollinarian polemic of Catechetical Homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia and of Baptismal Catechesis of St. John Chrysostom”: In spite of their common purpose to prepare the candidates for baptism, the two series of catechesis, which have been produced in the same time and in the same region of Antioch, are quite different. While the Catechetical homilies of Theodore concentrate on the explanation of the Confession of faith and contain many doctrinal references, the Baptismal catechesis of St John Chrysostom emphasizes the spiritual preparation of the candidates for baptism and contents almost no reference to doctrinal differences between different Christian groups.

Prof. Dr. Michel Stavrou (Paris, France), « Liberté et salut chez saint Augustin et saint Jean Cassien »: St Augustine considered his doctrine of salvation as the only possible response of the Church facing the Pelagian heresy. St John Cassian, refusing the polarization of the debate between Augustine and Pelagius, has preserved the Catholic doctrine of the union of liberum arbitrium and the divine grace in salvation. Through his doctrine of original sin and predestination, Augustine had been a real “innovator”, but these two teachings were rejected by John Cassian and the Christian Orient who underlined the universality of salvation in Christ and the necessity of man's conscious participation to his salvation.

Rev. Dr. Dominique Gonnat SJ, « Sacrifice et Salut chez Augustin » : The sacrifice is « l'acte pour lequel l'humanité ... passe du péché où elle se trouve à la consommation du salut » (Yves de Montcheuil). It is at the same time individual and personal, in the good actions which we do and also universal in the unique sacrifice of Christ, source of salvation for all.

Dr. Vít Hušek (Olomouc, Czech Republic), “Ambrosiaster and the Two Aspects of his Soteriology (Duplex Gratia)”, showed that Ambrosiaster's soteriology, portrayed in the broader context of three epochs of the history of mankind, emphasizes two aspects to Christ's work: remission of sins and redemption from the power of the Devil. It is remarkable that in his conception, remission of sins relates to God and is unrelated to Christ's death, whereas redemption pertains to the power of the Devil and the liberation of the souls of the deceased from his power. In addition, a great emphasis is placed on the justice of God's actions and their rational character.

Prof. Dr. Józef Naumowicz (Warsaw, Poland), “The Incarnation of God and the salvation of man. The golden rule of patristic soteriology”: “God became man so that man may *become God*” – the so-called golden rule of patristic soteriology in this form appears especially in Alexandrian and

Cappadocian authors. Irenaios preferred to say: “The Son of God became man so that man may *become son of God*”, Athanasius: “The word of God became man, so that man may *be deified*”. There were various forms of this golden rule, these all show the link between the Incarnation of God and the salvation of man.

The paper “Theodoret of Cyrus and Leo the Great: In Different Languages on the Same Salvation” by **Dr. Daria Morozova (Kyiv, Ukraine)** deals with the dialogue between Antiochian and Roman Churches on the eve of the Chalcedonian Council. The author compares Theodoret’s “mystical materialism” with the “empirical” approach to Christology of St. Leo, and Theodoret’s typological vision with St. Leo’s theory of the “spiritual seeing”. The union of these different features of thought, peculiar to very different cultures, was possibly due to great respect of both writers towards the Church canons, especially of the Nicene Council (325).

Prof. Dr. Theresia Hainthaler (Frankfurt, Germany) showed in her paper „Soteriologie in der Definition von Chalcedon und im Tomus Leonis. Konsequenzen für das Christusbild und Menschenbild“, that in the definition of Chalcedon a soteriological clause (“for us and for our salvation he [the Son] was born from the Virgin Mary”) is found, a formulation coming from symbols. The whole christological statement is only understandable (and was understood) from the soteriological background. This was demonstrated by a short analysis of the Tome of Leo.

Prof. Dr. Ioannis Kourempelis (Thessaloniki, Greece) in his presentation („Die Sündlosigkeit und das Leiden Christi in der Soteriologie des Romanos Melodos”) attempted to show the importance of sin in Romanos’ soteriological expression through clarifying the dual meaning of corruption in the work of the great poet. In the center of his presentation Prof. Kourempelis explained the transfer of the enhypostatic theology of the time of Romanos to his poetic language.

Dr. Alexey Fokin (Moscow, Russia) (“Doctrine of Deification in Western Fathers of the Church: Some Considerations”): We can find all basic elements of the classical Eastern doctrine of deification in Latin Patristics, such as a close connection between deification of man and incarnation of God, divinization of the human nature of Christ, adoption of human beings to God in Christ by means of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the ascension of humanity into heaven, participation in the divine nature. Some Latin Fathers were so inspired by the idea of deification that it resulted in a danger of the mankind’s pantheistic transformation and dissolution into the Godhead, as well as of the human nature of Christ into His divine nature. Instead of it, St Augustine proposed his own version of the doctrine of deification, characterized by the legal concepts of moral justification, external adoption and “equality to angels”. Due to the unquestionable authority of St Augustine in the West his understanding of the concept of deification began to prevail in the Western theological tradition, so that the classical patristic doctrine of deification, common to many Western Fathers of Church, has unfortunately been abandoned.

Prof. Dr. Torstein Tollefsen (Oslo, Norway) (“St Maximus the Confessor on Deification”): St Maximus teaches that there is a definite connection between creation and salvation. The incarnation of the Word is the condition of human salvation as deification. Deification means that man becomes a participant in God’s gracious activity (or energy). A telling metaphor for this condition is a sword of dull iron that becomes red-hot, glowing, by the presence of fire.

Dr. Ovidiu Ioan (Sibiu, Romania / Marburg, Germany), ““Sie schneiden die Hoffnung unserer Natur von der Erlösung ab ...’. Das soteriologische Argument bei Ischo’jahb III.”: For Ischo’jahb III the salvation is primarily an eschatological hope based on the promises of Christ (Resurrection, eternal life, etc.). It can also be understood as a process which begins with the true faith and is fulfilled by the

indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believers. The criteria for gaining salvation are the blameless creed and the belonging to the true Church of Christ. The most important issue of faith is the unity of the two natures and their hypostasis into one person of Christ, and the participation of the human nature and hypostasis to the sufferings and death of Christ. This is the theological fundament for the participation of the human nature to the Resurrection in Christ. The theological debate has as ultimate purpose the Salvation of the human being.

Dr. Alexey Muraviev (Moscow, Russia), “Individual ascetic progress and the soteriology in St Isaac of Nineveh”: The soteriological concern in St Isaac the Syrian was expressed threefold: as a mystical progress of the individual ascetic through the practice of singleness to the vision of the divine light; through the idea of Incarnation as a major event in the history of the mankind; through the eschatological vision of the love of God transcending the limits of formal justice.

The paper of **Prof. Dr. Mariyan Stoyadinov (Veliko Tarnovo University, Bulgaria)** on “The soteriological argument in the context of Iconoclastic Controversy” deals with the icon as a link between visual art and soteriology. A “link”, which has had a dramatic history, and still needs to be re-evaluated in a world in which visual arts have transgressed all boundaries.

Prof. Dr. G. Martzelos (Thessaloniki, Greece), „Ursünde und Erlösung in der Theologie der Kirchenväter des Ostens”, presenting the issue of the original sin and the salvation according to the Greek Fathers, pointed out the ontological presuppositions of the Greek Fathers that explain the difference of their soteriological understanding from that of the Latin Fathers who understand the soteriological event through Jesus Christ much more in a juridical than an ontological framework.

Rev. Dr. Cyril Hovorun (Kyiv, Ukraine / Yale), “Borders of Salvation: Reading the Fathers with Russian Theologians”: Eastern Fathers, unlike their western counterparts, never explicitly reflected on the issue of the ‘borders’ of the Church and salvation outside them. They preferred to deal with this issue only in the language of canon law. The first serious attempt to address the issue in the Orthodox world was undertaken by Russian theologians. In doing so, they tried to engage western Patristics.

Dr. Petr Mikhaylov (Moscow, Russia), “The Christian fact as a historical event: patristic and contemporary perspective”: One of the impressive paradoxes of Christian thought in its general history is its progressive development and permanent widening while the Christian fact (Incarnation of Christ and Redemption of the world) ever moves away in the depth of epochs with each new generation. The key theological topics of early Church Fathers (Ignatius of Antioch, Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus of Lyon) show this stable diffusion and improvement of Church theology as well as widening of space for Christian preaching in its intensive as well as in extensive directions: a simple assurance of Ignatius of the reality of evangelical history, worldwide significance of the Logos by Justin and the beginning of quite a new epoch in the world history commenced with Christ (recapitulatio). This process goes hand in hand with gradual maturing of historical consciousness of Christianity that ever has to receive, continue and participate in realizing of the Christian fact.

Prof. Dr. Vladimir Bashkirov (Minsk, Belarus) showed in his paper („Der Tod des Menschen im Heilsplan Gottes. Der metaphysische und sittliche Aspekt“): Death is an integral part of economy of our salvation. There are three main points in this process:

1. The metaphysical aspect of death
2. The moral aspect of death
3. Death has to prepare a human being for the eternal life both corporally and morally.

Rev. Dr. Demetrios Bathrellos (Athens, Greece), “Love Versus Justice?: The Question of the Forgiveness of Sins at the Council of Ferrara-Florence”: The paper explores the diverse ways by

which the Salvation of Christians who die before having a Christian perfection was understood by Latins and Greeks at the Council of Ferrara-Florence. The former believed that this was achieved by fiery purgatorial punishments that satisfy divine justice. The latter emphasized the love of God, which offers forgiveness either at the time of death or, for somewhat more serious sins, after a period of remorseful repentance, during which the souls are purified and made fit for the kingdom of God.

Prof. Dr. Daniel Munteanu (Targoviste, Romania / Bamberg, Germany) gave a lecture about “Theosis and Perichoresis in the Theologies of Gregor of Nazianzus and Maximus Confessor” that underlined the interdependence between theosis and perichoresis. Gregory of Nazianzus used for the first time the concept of theosis and Maximus Confessor the concept of perichoresis. Theosis constitutes the key concept of the Orthodox Spirituality and Soteriology and can be properly understood only in relation with perichoresis. This paper focuses also on the cosmic dimension of salvation and its meaning for a culture of difference and reconciliation.

The contributions of the colloquy will soon be gathered together in a volume, like the other five preceding colloquies, which gave material for the publication of five volumes in 2003 (“Christus bei den Vätern”), in 2005 (“Der Heilige Geist im Leben der Kirche”), in 2007 (“Gott, Vater und Schöpfer”), in 2009 (“Einheit und Katholizität der Kirche”) and in 2010 (“Heiligkeit und Apostolizität der Kirche”) in the series “Wiener Patristische Studien” of PRO ORIENTE printed at Tyrolia publishing house (Innsbruck,Vienna).

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