

INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION

EASTERN ORTHODOXY AND THE
INTER-RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER
IN A SECULAR AGE



Programme
Abstracts & CVs

15 - 17 SEPTEMBER 2017

"Thessalia" Conference Center Volos, GREECE

Programme

Friday, September 15, 2017

17.00 - 17.15: Registrations

First Session

Moderator:

Dr. Pantelis Kalaitzidis

Director, Volos Academy for Theological Studies

17.30 - 17.50: Opening-Greetings

17.50 - 18.10: **Dr. Marko Vilotić**, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade (Serbia); Member of the Steering Committee, Center for Philosophy and Theology (Trebinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Prolegomena for an Affirmative Orthodox Theology of Religions

18.10 - 18.30: Discussion

18.30 - 19.00: Coffee-break

Second Session

Moderator:

Dr. Athanasios N. Papathanasiou

Lecturer, Hellenic Open University, Editor in Chief of *Synaxi*

19.00 - 19.20: **Dr. Petros Vassiliadis**, Professor Emeritus, University of Thessaloniki (Greece)

Eastern Orthodoxy and Inter-Faith Dialogue in a Secular Age

19.20 - 19.40: **Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis**, Archbishop Iakovos Professor of Orthodox Theology, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Boston, USA)

The Dynamics of Inter-Religious Dialogue

19.40 - 20.15: Discussion

20.30: Dinner, "Thessalia" Conference Center

Saturday, September 16, 2017

Third Session

Moderator:

Dr. Angeliki Ziaka

Associate Professor, University of Thessaloniki

09.30 - 09.50: **Dr. Brandon Gallaher**, Lecturer of Systematic and Comparative Theology, Exeter University (UK)

The Word, the Words and the Trinity: An Eastern Orthodox Theology of Religions

09.50 - 10.10: **Dr. Julia Konstantinovskiy**, Tutor, School of Theology, Oxford University (UK)

Christianity and 'religions': some Orthodox perspectives on dual belonging and inter-religious contacts

10.10 - 10.40: Discussion

10.40 - 11.00: Coffee - Break

Fourth Session

Moderator:

Dr. Marko Vilotić

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade

11.00 - 11.20: **Dr. Athanasios N. Papathanasiou**, Lecturer, Hellenic Open University, Editor in Chief of *Synaxi* (Athens, Greece)

Comparative Theology and the Orthodox: An inquiry into the tension between faith and the religious other, differences and dichotomies

11.20 - 11.40: **Rev. Dr. Andrew Louth**, Professor Emeritus of Patristic and Byzantine Studies, Durham University (UK), Honorary Fellow, Faculty of Theology, Vrije Universiteit (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Philip Sherrard: An Orthodox Approach to Christianity and the World Religions

11.40 - 12.10: Discussion

12.10 - 15.00: Lunch - free time

Fifth Session

Moderator: **Dr. Petros Vassiliadis**

Professor Emeritus, University of Thessaloniki

15.00 - 15.20: **Dr. Nikolaos Asproulis**, Deputy Director, Volos Academy for Theological Studies

World Ecclesiology: Towards an Orthodox Theology of Religions

15.20 - 15.40: **Dr. Paul Ladouceur**, Trinity College (University of Toronto), Montreal Institute of Orthodox Theology (Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses, Université Laval, Canada) (Skype presentation)

Religious Diversity in Modern Orthodox Thought

15.40 - 16.00: Discussion

16.00 - 16.30: Coffee break

Sixth Session

Moderator: **Dr. Brandon Gallaher**

Lecturer of Systematic and Comparative Theology, Exeter University (UK)

16.30 - 16.50: **Dr. Angeliki Ziaka**, Associate Professor, University of Thessaloniki (Greece)

Interreligious Dialogue in times of adversity: Christian and Muslim responsibility

16.50 - 17.10: **Dr. Christine Mangala Frost**, Lecturer and Research Associate, Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies (Cambridge, UK) (*in absentia* – video presentation)

A Reflection on the Challenges and Problems of Interfaith Dialogue as exemplified by translations of The Lord's Prayer into Sanskrit

17.10 - 17.30: **Rev. Tikhon Vasylev**, PhD Candidate, Wolfson College, Oxford University (UK)

Christian dialogue with Taoism in the works of Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, Father Alexander Men and Hieromonk Damascene

17.30 - 18.15: Discussion

19.00: Dinner/ Local restaurant

Free Evening

Sunday, September 17, 2017

7.30 - 10.30: Matins and Divine Liturgy

Departures

Abstracts & CVs

Dr. Marko Vilotic,

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade (Serbia); Member of the Steering Committee, Center for Philosophy and Theology (Trebinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Prolegomena for an Affirmative Orthodox Theology of Religions

The author starts from the assumption that there still is no such thing as a universally known and accepted Orthodox theology of religion. Therefore, the paper aims at identifying and (at least partially) answering the crucial questions that need be resolved in order to get a clearer picture of the extent to which an open, affirmative Orthodox theology of religions is possible. Firstly, it must be precisely defined what is meant by the idiom “affirmative Orthodox theology of religions”. Secondly, crucial theological arguments (including some relevant references from the Scripture and the Fathers) will be named which are supposed to motivate Orthodox theologians to engage themselves in developing an (affirmative) theology of religions. Given that theology of religions is much more developed among Western Christians, an Orthodox ‘counterpart’ should not start from scratch, but make use of all the experience and fruits brought about by the discussions led in the West in the past decades. Therefore, a brief account of the most relevant models will be given and evaluated from the Orthodox perspective, so that we might place ourselves at the spot most suitable for the further development of an Orthodox position. Finally, the paper will try to determine to what extent the current position of the Orthodox Church regarding other religions and the inter-religious dialogue (reflected in the recently issued documents) is in accordance with the conclusions of the conducted analysis. Accordingly, some hopefully useful remarks will be given regarding the future dialogue.

Marko Vilotic (1985) graduated from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, Serbia in 2009. At the same school he obtained his PhD in 2015, with the thesis “Theology as Transcendental Anthropology in the Writings of Karl Rahner”. With the support of German Bishops’ Conference he spent the summers of 2013 and 2016 as a guest scholar at the Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Münster, Germany. Since 2010 he has been working at the Department of Christian Philosophy and Religious Studies at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade, first as teaching assistant and (since 2016) as assistant professor.

Dr. Petros Vassiliadis,

Professor Emeritus, University of Thessaloniki (Greece)

Eastern Orthodoxy and Inter-Faith Dialogue in a Secular Age

A brief reference to the contrast and the successive stages of pre-modernity, modernity and post-modernity - the need for the Orthodox Church to somehow come to terms with modernity, so that meaningfully and effectively exercise her mission in today's pluralistic world – the positive assessment of modernity in World Christianity, even within the World Christian mission – Inter-faith dialogue and encounter in the New WCC Mission Statement and the decisions of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church – The shortcomings of the Orthodox Mission Statement and the recommendation of Orthodox missiologists to theologically substantiate the inter-faith dialogue -The theological arguments of the Orthodox within the missiological discussions in world Christianity – The purpose of interfaith dialogue from a Christians perspective is to *build upon what is left unfinished in modernity by the so-called “secular condition”* – the human right, one of the pillars of modernity, are awfully ineffective, if they are not accompanied by “human responsibilities” – The contribution of 5 projects (two Orthodox, two ecumenical, and one inter-religious) to a better understanding of inter-faith activities, without undermining the importance of Christian witness.

Dr. Petros Vassiliadis is Professor Emeritus of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He taught at the Department of Theology New Testament and Interfaith Dialogue. He is the President of the Center of Ecumenical, Missiological and Environmental Studies .Metropolitan Panteleimon Papageorgiou. (CEMES), and of the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions (WOCATI). He served in the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of WCC, and in the Synodical Commissions of Inter-Orthodox and Inter-Christian Relations, and Liturgical Renewal of the Church of Greece. His major works are: *The Q-Document Hypothesis* (doctoral dissertation), 1977, *Cross and Salvation. The Soteriological Background of the Pauline Teaching of the Cross*, 1983, *Eucharist and Witness. Orthodox Perspectives on Unity and Mission of the Church*, 1998, *Y. Studies in Q*, 1999, *Paul. Trajectories into his Theology*, 2005, *Unity and Witness. Handbook on Inter-Religious Dialogue*, 2007. More in scademia.edu/PetrosVassiliadis

Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Clapsis,

Archbishop Iakovos Professor of Orthodox Theology, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Boston, USA)

The Dynamics of Inter-Religious Dialogue

Fr. **Emmanuel Clapsis** has taught at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology since 1985 specializing in Dogmatic Theology and also teaching courses that relate Orthodox theology to modern and post modern sensibilities. He became tenured professor of Systematic Theology in 2003 and was appointed the Archbishop Iakovos Professor of Orthodox Theology in 2010.

His main academic interests include Ecclesiology, Ecumenism, the public presence and witness of Orthodoxy in pluralistic world, Globalization and Religion, Pneumatology, Anthropology, Suffering and Hope, Spiritual life and Prophetic witness. His theological interests are reflected in his published book: *Orthodoxy in the New World* (Thessaloniki: Pournaras); *Orthodoxy in Conversation: Orthodox Ecumenical Engagements* (Holy Cross Press/WCC Publications, 2000) and the books that he edited: *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World* (WCC Publications, 2004) and *Violence and Christian Spirituality* (WCC Publications, 2007). He has published numerous articles on his academic interests and some of them have been translated in French, German, Russian, and Italian and Greek. Currently, He is writing a book on the Holy Spirit focusing on its universal presence. Fr. Clapsis has served as the Vice Moderator of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (1991-1998) and commissioner of Faith and Order Commission of the U.S. National Council of Churches (1985-1991). He has also participated in the theological dialogues of Orthodox Church with the Evangelical Lutheran Church (USA) and the Roman Catholic Church. The Ecumenical Patriarchate has appointed him in his formal delegation to the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Assemblies of WCC in Canberra, Australia (1991), in Harare Zimbabwe (1998) and Porto Alegre, Brazil (2005). Currently, he is a member of the Reference Group that informs and accompanies the work of the World Council of Churches During the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV: 2001-2010).

Dr. Brandon Gallaher,

Lecturer of Systematic and Comparative Theology, Exeter University (UK)

The Word, the Words and the Trinity: An Eastern Orthodox Theology of Religions

Eastern Orthodoxy, despite a few pioneering thinkers, has come rather late to the academic disciplines of the theology of the religions and comparative theology. In this paper, I will present a preliminary Orthodox theology of religions drawing on the work of both Raimon Panikkar and Maximus the Confessor. Particular attention will be shown to the *logoi spermatikoi* tradition in Patristic thinking and the notion (found in Panikkar, S. Mark Heim and Donald W. Mitchell) that religious plurality and the different world religions can be mapped on to the Trinitarian relations.

Brandon Gallaher is a lecturer of systematic and comparative theology at the Department of Theology and Religion, University of Exeter. Previously, he was a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford. During the spring of 2014, he was a fellow of the University of Notre Dame's Institute for Advanced Study, where his research focused on secularism, politics, and the episcopate in modern Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. He is the author of *Freedom and Necessity in Modern Trinitarian Theology* (2016); he is also co-editing *The Patristic Witness of Georges Florovsky: Essential Writings* (forthcoming 2017). Gallaher holds an M.A. from McGill University, M.Div. from St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, and M.St. and D.Phil. from Oxford University.

Dr. Julia Konstantinovsky,

Tutor, School of Theology, Oxford University (UK)

Christianity and 'religions': some Orthodox perspectives on dual belonging and inter-religious contacts

Is it possible for Christians to relate meaningfully to non-Christian 'religions'? Can Christianity learn from and enrich itself with 'spiritual experiences' and 'spiritual practices' of 'religions'? Can one belong at once to 'Christianity' and another 'religion'? Finally, what is an optimal way for Christians to relate to 'religions'?

This paper attempts to open up some of these issues by sharing reflections on dual belonging and difficulties of inter-religious contacts. Exploring to a certain slight degree perspectives of dual belonging, the paper finds them both unconvincing and problematic. Drawing on the ascetic theology of the traditional Christianity, the paper goes on to argue that the approach of the Church to different 'religions' and their adherents is the true and fruitful one. Citing the *Message* of the Holy Great Council of Crete, this approach 'never implies a compromise in matters of faith' but is based on love and compassion.

Sr Seraphima (Konstantinovsky) is a Tutor in Theology for the Faculty of Theology, University of Oxford. She has held posts at Christ Church and Wolfson College, Oxford as well as the University of Warwick. She is a Nun of The Monastery of St John the Baptist in Tolleshunt Knights, Essex which was founded by the renowned elder and theologian Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) and is a Stavropegic (under direct obedience) Monastery of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Sr Seraphima is a specialist in hesychastic spirituality and the Greek Patristics, notably, the writings of Evagrius Ponticus (344-399) who is a central writer in the *Philokalia* (*Evagrius Ponticus: The Making of a Gnostic* (London: Routledge, 2009).

Dr. Athanasios N. Papathanasiou,

Lecturer, Hellenic Open University, Editor in Chief of *Synaxi* (Athens, Greece)

Comparative Theology and the Orthodox: An inquiry into the tension between faith and the religious other, differences and dichotomies

Orthodox theology needs to have a substantive encounter with the nature and the presuppositions of Comparative Theology. This paper discusses whether Comparative Theology is an alternative to the theologies of religions, or, on the contrary, a necessary supplement to them. We note that comparative work exalts the significance of faith and acknowledges it not as an adversary, but as the host of the religious other. At the end, the quest for truth emerges as an important tool for humans in their endeavor to find meaningful answers and discern which differences can be overcome and which dichotomies cannot be bridged.

Athanasios N. Papathanasiou is an Orthodox lay theologian and lives in Athens, Greece. He holds a doctorate in Missiology (1991) and degrees in Theology (1986) and Law (1982). He teaches at the post-graduate Theological program of the Hellenic Open University as well as at a secondary school. For eight years (2000-2008) he taught missiology and history of religions at the Higher Ecclesiastical School in Athens / Highest Ecclesiastical Academy in Athens. Since 1998 he has been editor-in-chief of the Greek theological quarterly *Synaxis* and since 2007 a member of the Advisory Board of the *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*. He is also member of *The European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies* (ESITIS). He obtained first-hand experience in short term missionary work in Kenya (1995), Nigeria (2000) and Tanzania (2004).

Rev. Dr. Andrew Louth,

Professor Emeritus of Patristic and Byzantine Studies at Durham University (UK), Honorary Fellow, Faculty of Theology, Vrije Universiteit (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

Philip Sherrard: An Orthodox Approach to Christianity and the World Religions

Philip Sherrard (1922–1995) is well known in various contexts—20th-century Greek Poetry and Culture, staunch defender of Orthodoxy against the West, a prophetic voice about ecology, an advocate of the importance of cherishing and learning from the sacred traditions of the different world religions—though to many, I expect, well known for only one or other of these interests. Sherrard became Orthodox as a result of reading some of the early poems of George Seferis: a consequence that alarmed Seferis himself. He was converted to Greek Orthodoxy, not to some abstract conception of Orthodoxy, and this, I argue, is the key to his approach to other world religions, and indeed to his other intellectual interests. His concern for the sacred traditions of the world led to, and was fostered by, his involvement in *Temenos*, the journal and more generally project, of which he was fellow-founder, along with the poet Kathleen Raine, and Keith Critchlow and Brian Keeble. This lecture will look at the principles Sherrard embraced, and the dangers he saw and sought to avoid, in his advocating drawing on the resources of the world religions, including Christianity.

Fr. **Andrew Louth** is Professor Emeritus of Patristic and Byzantine Studies at Durham University (UK) and also Honorary Fellow of the Faculty of Theology at Vrije Universiteit (Amsterdam, The Netherlands). He is also a priest of the Russian Orthodox Diocese of Souroz (Moscow Patriarchate), serving the parish in Durham. He holds degrees from the University of Cambridge (MA), the University of Edinburgh (M.Th.) and the University of Oxford (D.D.) Before teaching at Durham, he taught at the University of Oxford and at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He is the author of several books, including *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: 2007), *Greek East And Latin West: The Church AD 681-1071* (St Vladimirs Seminary Press: 2007), *Maximus the Confessor* (Routledge: 1996), *St John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford: 2005), *Denys the Areopagite* (Continuum: 2002); *Introducing Eastern Orthodox Theology* (SPCK: 2013); *Modern Orthodox Thinkers. From Philokalia to the present* (SPCK: 2015), etc. He also serves as the editor of *Sobornost*.

Dr. Nikolaos Asproulis, Deputy Director, Volos Academy for Theological Studies

World Ecclesiology: Towards an Orthodox Theology of Religions

Living at the beginning of the new millennium, humanity all over the globe is confronted with a desperate and unpleasant situation. Religious but also political, national, ideological and many other kinds of divisions occupy a central place in the daily news reports. To some degree, this reality stress the fact that human beings in our age do not tolerate dialogue or the variety of diversities and pluralities in terms of ideas, cultures and religions, due to a fear of abolishing one's individual identity within the context of the prevailing globalization and secularization. In this regards, world religions often become, even though paradoxically, the driving force that leads to the growth of radicalism and extremism, as well as of all kinds of brutal violence. Christian Churches on their part, Orthodoxy included, consciously or not, often served various expressions of the spirit of this world, to such a degree that they were often identified with unfree, oppressive and totally destructive structures, powers and actions. At the same time, however, there were many voices of eminent individual representatives of the Churches who often made a decisive contribution with their example and work (academic, pastoral and missionary) to the expression of another *ethos*, another way of being concerning the very constitution of the human being and one's relations with fellow humans and the whole creation of God. With regards to Orthodoxy, the recently convened Panorthodox Synod by reflecting on this hazardous reality, it made a plea for the great importance that inter-religious dialogue has for the promotion of "mutual trust, peace and reconciliation" (Message, 4) in the light of the respect for the "identity and culture of different people," referring especially to critical situation of the M. East conflicts and the persecutions against Christians. At the same time the Synod boldly denounced secularization process due to the autonomy the latter seeks of man from Christ and the Church" (Message, 5), as a form of the prevailing evil ("The Mission of the Orthodox Church," 2). An interwoven link between religious plurality and secularism is clearly evident in the official documents of the Synod, a reality that further obscures the understanding of the relationship between Eastern Orthodoxy and the world religions. By "World Ecclesiology" the paper suggests an alternative model of an open and inclusive theological imagination of the identity of the Church, based on concepts (e.g. divine providence) and realities (e.g. spirituality) more or less common in humanity in its entirety and in the main religious traditions. Without abandoning or minimizing its Christian premises (Trinitarian theology, Christology and Pneumatology) and by using a moderate version of the method of correlation (P. Tillich) "World Ecclesiology" searches for the possible "secular" foundations upon which a positive mutual reception and exchange between Christianity and world religions is possible in the context of the increasing secularization and more compatible to religious plurality.

Nikolaos Asproulis is currently Deputy Director of the Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Volos, Greece, where he worked full-time as academic associate since 2008. He graduated in Theology (University of Athens, 1997). He obtained MTh (2007) and PhD degrees (2016) in Theology at Hellenic Open University. His research focuses on the history and development of contemporary Orthodox theology (20th – 21st century), a field in which he approached several research avenues: dogmatics, ecclesiology, history, methodology, hermeneutics, ecumenism, political theology etc. During his doctoral research, he specialized in the study of contemporary Orthodox theology with a special focus on the neo-patristic movement and its main figures (Florovsky and Zizioulas). His dissertation was entitled "Creation, History and *Eschaton* in Contemporary Orthodox Theological Hermeneutics: From Georges Florovsky to John D. Zizioulas," currently under publication in Greek by Sebastian Press. He published articles in peer-reviewed journals like the *Review of Ecumenical Studies*, *Communio Viatorum*, *Participatio*. In addition, he cooperated to a number of articles in various specific areas of his expertise with some of the most renowned Orthodox scholars of our time (like Pantelis Kalaitzidis and Aristotle Papanikolaou). In recent years he was also entrusted with the editorship of three important collective volumes, among which the *Orthodox Handbook for Ecumenism. Resources for Theological Education*, published in cooperation with the World Council of Churches as a unique handbook of its kind. He published important research findings on the two important Orthodox theologians, Zizioulas and Florovsky, but also on other important (not only) Orthodox theologians, such as Trembelas, Nissiotis, Bulgakov or T.F. Torrance. He was also an academic associate of the official scholarly theological journal of the Orthodox Church of Greece, *Theologia* (2009-2016). He is currently also Coordinator of the Network of Ecumenical Learning in Eastern and Central Europe (Nelcee – <http://www.nelcee.org/>) and representative of the Church of Greece at the CEC Reference Group on Economic and Ecological Justice.

Dr. Paul Ladouceur,

Trinity College (University of Toronto), Montreal Institute of Orthodox Theology (Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses, Université Laval, Canada) (Skype presentation)

Religious Diversity in Modern Orthodox Thought

This paper explores different approaches to non-Christian religions in modern Orthodox thought. It presents an overview of the approaches of non-Christian religions of 12 leading modern Orthodox theologians from the perspective of the threefold soteriological typology of inclusivism, exclusivism and religious pluralism and the more recent models of theological approaches to religious diversity known as particularism and comparative theology. Despite the absence of formal Orthodox declarations concerning religious diversity, Orthodox thought on religious diversity since World War II converges around the notions of inclusivism and comparative theology, considering that non-Christian religions contain elements of truth as found in Christianity, that they are mysteriously “included” in the missions of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the world, and that there are both major points of convergence and of divergence between major tenets of Orthodoxy and world religions.

Dr **Paul Ladouceur** is an Orthodox theologian and writer living in Rawdon, Quebec, Canada. He teaches at the Orthodox School of Theology at Trinity College (University of Toronto) and at the Montreal Institute of Orthodox Theology (in collaboration with Université Laval). His general areas of research, teaching and writing are modern Orthodox theology and Orthodox spirituality since the eighteenth century. He has published numerous articles, review articles and book reviews in periodicals in Canada, the United States (especially in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*), France (especially in *Contacts, Revue française de l'Orthodoxie*) and Great Britain. He has edited a number of books, including books of French translations of writings of St Maria of Paris and of Fr Lev Gillet, and the proceedings of Orthodox theological colloquia in Montreal. In 1996 he published a book entitled *Sacred Words: A Selection of Spiritual Writings of All Ages*, which contains key texts of the world's most important religious traditions. Together with Dr Brandon Gallaher, he is currently preparing book containing the most significant writings of Fr Georges Florovsky. He is also completing a study of modern Orthodox theology, covering especially the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century. Both books will be published in 2018. Dr Ladouceur is responsible for the French-language website “Pages orthodoxes la Transfiguration” (www.pagesorthodoxes.net), and he is a member of the Commission on Faith and Witness of the Canadian Council of Churches. Academic webpage: <https://utoronto.academia.edu/PaulLadouceur>.

Dr. Angeliki Ziaka,

Associate Professor, University of Thessaloniki (Greece)

Interreligious Dialogue in times of adversity: Christian and Muslim responsibility

Angeliki Ziaka, who came to the Department of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in the spring of 2006 as a Lecturer, and in the spring of 2011 was elected Assistant Professor, was trained at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece) and the Marc Bloch University of Strasbourg (France), where she received her D.E.A. (1994) and Ph.D. (2002) in the History of Religions. She also made post graduate (master) studies at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome (1994-1995) and in the History Department of the University of Amman (Jordan, 1995-1996). She started in 1997-2006, to teach full time as an Instructor at the Secondary Education (Thessaloniki, Greece); from 2003 to 2007 she taught, as a lecturer, at the Department of History and Ethnology of the Democritus University of Thrace (Greece) and from 2009 onward she is also teaching at the Department of Political Sciences of Aristotle University. Her academic interests are on the history of Religions, the study of Islam and the Arabic-Islamic civilization, the great world religions, and topics of interreligious dialogue. Her research interests focus on Muslim theology and history, the byzantine and post-byzantine literature about Islam, as well as the social, religious, and political dimensions of Islam in the Middle East and especially the Shi‘a Islam. She is also interested in Minorities issues and especially Muslim minorities in South-East Europe as well as issues concerning Religion and Conflict. Dr. Ziaka was a member of the steering committee of the European Network TRES: Teaching Religion in a Multicultural Society and head of the network’s “Religion and conflict” group (2006-2008). She is one of the General Editors of the Collective European Manual on Religion and Conflict. Essays on the origins of religious conflicts and Resolution Approaches (London, 2011). A founding member of the Greek Society for the Study of Culture & Religion (GSSCR), the Greek Scientific Society of Middle East Studies, and the Scientific Association for Ibadhism and Ibadhi Studies. She was also the coordinator of the research project (2008-2009) of the Aristotle University’s Research Commission, entitled “The countries of the Arab Gulf and Europe. For the support of research being carried out in the Sultanate of Oman”; the organizer of the International Conference on Ibadhism and the Sultanate of Oman (November, 9-10, 2009); the academic responsible between Aristotle University and the Institute of Shari’a Sciences of the Sultanate of Oman (2011-2014).

Dr. Christine Mangala Frost,

Lecturer and Research Associate, Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies (Cambridge, UK)
(*in absentia*)

A Reflection on the Challenges and Problems of Interfaith Dialogue as exemplified by translations of The Lord's Prayer into Sanskrit

Christine Mangala Frost, B.A.Hons. (Delhi), MA (Osmania), PhD (Cantab), is a Research Associate and guest lecturer for the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge (IOCS). A member and former Director of the IOCS, she has served on the organizing committee of *The Way*, as contributor and editor of the box-set of videos and DVDs of this internationally adopted programme for teaching the Orthodox faith. A convert from Hinduism, her writings, lectures and broadcasts explore inter-faith issues. Her recently published book entitled, *The Human Icon: a Comparative Study of Hindu and Orthodox Christian Studies* (James Clarke, Cambridge, 2017) is a pioneering study of Hindu religious beliefs from an Orthodox Christian perspective; it is written with a view to promoting better understanding of both faiths and offering guidelines for both theological dialogue and for pastoral work between the two faiths. As **Christine Mangala**, she has published three novels, *The Firewalkers* (shortlisted for the *Deo-Gloria Award* and the *Commonwealth First Book prize* 1992); *Transcendental Pastimes* (1999) and *Looking for a Kingdom* (2014). These novels explore what religious beliefs mean in human terms. The fourth novel *Shalimar Gardensi* (exploring the impact of Hindu-Muslim political terrorism on an Indian city) is awaiting publication, and, she is currently working on a novel entitled *The Icon Trail*, which is set in the Orthodox Christian world in the diaspora.

Rev. Tikhon Vasylev,

PhD Candidate, Wolfson College, Oxford University (UK)

Christian dialogue with Taoism in the works of Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich, Father Alexander Men and Hieromonk Damascene

There are a number of publications in which non-Orthodox Christian authors engage with Taoist concepts and practices. However, only few Orthodox theologians dedicated their work to the analysis of the Chinese religion.

This paper deals with the works by famous Orthodox Christian authors and missionaries St Nikolai Velimirovich and Father Alexander Men and focuses on their approach to Taoism. It also touches one of the most recent publications on this topic by an Orthodox author, *Christ the Eternal Tao* (1999) by Hieromonk Damascene, whose work raises the following questions:

What are there the limitations to missionary projects and how far one can go on engaging with foreign to Christianity sources of thought and tradition? Is there any danger that this approach can be counter-productive and instead of bringing people to the Church it will lead them outside Her boundaries?

These questions are taken as the guiding lines for our approach to the thought of Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich and Father Alexander Men.

This paper argues that a careful historic approach to Taoism exemplified by Father Alexander Men is more justified than Father Damascene's bold missionary project. It also argues that St Nikolai Velimirovich articulates certain important criteria which Orthodox Christians should bear in mind when engaging with other world religions. St Nikolai applies those criteria to his own creative engagement with different world religions, and in particular with Taoism.

Tikhon Vasylev was born in St Petersburg in 1977. Being educated first in Economics, he received his second degree in Theology from St Petersburg Institute of Theology and Philosophy. In 2005 he took monastic vows in the Orthodox tradition with the name Tikhon, and in 2007 he became a priest at the Holy Dormition Monastery near Donetsk, Ukraine. After receiving Master's degree from the Postgraduate School of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow, he was admitted to do another Postgraduate degree at Oxford. He is at present in his final year of DPhil research at the Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Oxford, working on the theology of angels in the writings of Sergius Bulgakov. Since 2013 he has been the Assistant Director of St Theosevia Centre for Christian Spirituality in Oxford. In 2016 elected as a Member of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies (Cambridge).

Dr. Brandon Gallaher
(Exeter University)

The Word, the Words and the Trinity: An Eastern Orthodox Theology of Religions.

Eastern Orthodoxy, despite a few pioneering thinkers, has come rather late to the academic disciplines of the theology of the religions and comparative theology. In this paper, I will present a preliminary Orthodox theology of religions drawing on the work of both Raimon Panikkar and Maximus the Confessor. Particular attention will be shown to the *logoi spermatikoi* tradition in Patristic thinking and the notion (found in Panikkar, S. Mark Heim and Donald W. Mitchell) that religious plurality and the different world religions can be mapped on to the Trinitarian relations.

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Notes



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