12/06/2024

Annual Meeting of the Orthodox Theological Society in America (OTSA)



This past week, from June 6-8, the Orthodox Theological Society in America (OTSA) held its annual meeting. Conference attendees gathered in the Maliotis Cultural Center of Hellenic College Holy Cross for a rich program of individual and panel presentations.

OTSA was founded in 1966 with the blessing of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas, and, among other things, works to "promote the study and development of Orthodox theology, [to] coordinate the work of Orthodox theologians in North America," and to bring "Orthodox scholars from all jurisdictions together for dialogue and to promote the collaboration of the Orthodox churches in North America."1 OTSA is now an affiliated professional association of the Assembly of Bishops.

This year's meeting theme was "Who am I? Who are we? Orthodox Christian Tradition and Questions of Identity," and presenters approached these questions from a variety of scholarly and pastoral perspectives. After opening with vespers in the beautiful Holy Cross Chapel, attendees gathered for a panel discussion entitled "Intersecting Worlds: Self, Academy, Church," in which Rachel Contos, PhD candidate (Fordham University), Claire Koen, PhD candidate (Fordham University), and Dr. Ashley Purpura (Purdue University) each spoke about the joys and

challenges of navigating identity amidst their respective intellectual and religious commitments.

Friday's program began with morning prayers in the Maliotis Center, followed by paper sessions including "Identity and Liturgical Ethos," (in which Holy Cross's own Fr. Philip Zymaris, ThD, participated), "Personal and Communal Identities," and "Cultural and Ecclesial Identity: Church Governance." The evening concluded with the much-anticipated Florovsky Forum, moderated by Dr. Teva Regule (OTSA President) and composed of four pillars of the Orthodox theological world, all of whom are esteemed professors emeritus of HCHC: Rev. Dr. Alkiviadis Calivas (Professor Emeritus of Liturgics), Rev. Dr. George Papademetriou (Professor Emeritus of Dogmatics), Dr. Lewis Patsavos (Professor Emeritus of Canon Law), and Rev. Dr. Theodore Stylianopoulos (Professor Emeritus of New Testament). These four professors were instrumental not only in the foundation and continuance of the Orthodox Theological Society in America, but also in establishing HCHC as a major center of Orthodox theological thought and conversation.

The conference concluded on Saturday morning with panels on "Orthodox Identity and the Marketplace" and "Orthodoxy and Judaism in Dialogue" as well as a presentation and workshop entitled "Mixed Marriages in the Orthodox Church." Axia Women, a non-profit organization working to uplift the stories of Orthodox women worldwide, also hosted a special gathering in honor of the female attendees on Saturday. OTSA 2024 attendees included professors of theology, church history, and biblical studies from across North America; priest-scholars, several of whom teach at Holy Cross; and graduate students of theology from Harvard, Fordham, Holy Cross, and the Antiochian House of Studies. Conference participants engaged in a holistic program of worship, respectful scholarly debate, and relationship-building.

1 The Orthodox Theological Society in America, www.otsamerica.net.

Photos courtesy of the Maliotis Cultural Center.

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