

St Andrew's College held its third biennial Theology Symposium



With the blessing of the new College Dean, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, St Andrew's College held its third biennial Theology Symposium on 20-21 September, 2019. The theme of this year's Symposium was: *'The Importance of Christology for the 21st Century'* and the two keynote speakers were, the Very Reverend Professors Demetrios Barthrellos and Gerald O'Collins. It goes without saying that Christology, namely the Church's teaching on the person and saving work of Christ, constitutes the central and defining groundwork of all Christian faith, and therefore of theology, more broadly. For this reason, the Symposium provided a wonderful opportunity for serious reflection and worthwhile dialogue on this central tenet of the Christian faith. The hope of the College, namely that the proceedings over the two days, might make a viable and constructive contribution to theological scholarship, were most certainly realised, and for this, the College gives thanks to God for this wonderful initiative and opportunity.

Whilst His Eminence Archbishop Makarios was not able to be present, due to prior overseas commitments, he asked that a warm and cordial welcome be conveyed on his behalf to all present, together with his delight that the College symposia are able to reach out and seek to dialogue, in a spirit of shared witness to Christ, with scholars from different Christian Churches. Amongst other things, the Dean's welcome, read by the Revd Anastasios Bozikis, Lecturer in Church History, noted: "I

am particularly delighted with the main theme of this Symposium, as reflection on the person and work of Jesus Christ constitutes the starting-point and end-point of all theological discourse, it is the “Alpha and the Omega” (Rev 1:8) of all authentic theology. Not only can there be no Christian doctrine without Christology, since this is *the* central and defining teaching of Christian theology, but there can be no future for the Church without continued and constructive theological consideration to the risen and crucified Christ. We too are called to respond to the question asked by Christ on his way to Caesarea Philippi: “But who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15).”

Before the first keynote address on the Friday night, the Symposium was officially opened with prayer by His Eminence Metropolitan Basilios, from the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines, who is also Lecturer in Christian Spirituality at St Andrew’s. Following this, the first keynote speaker, the Very Reverend Professor Demetrios Barthellos, who teaches at the Greek Open University in Patra and the Cambridge Institute of Orthodox Christian Studies, delivered his keynote address entitled, “The Sinlessness of Christ: an Ancient Dogma and its Contemporary Significance” to the eighty strong participants present. After presenting some of the recent scholarship which has challenged this traditional claim of the ancient Christian Church, Fr Demetrios proceeded to systematically present the teachings of the Scriptures and some of the fathers of the Church, highlighting not only their unanimity on the question of the sinlessness of Christ, but also their richness and ongoing significance for the 21st century.

The Very Reverend Professor Gerald O’Collins SJ AC, Research Professor and Writer-in-Residence at the Jesuit Theological College, University of Divinity, was the second keynote speaker. The title of his paper, “New Testament Scholarship Supports Christology” focused on presenting the New Testament evidence, which identifies Christ not only as being truly human, but also, and equally importantly, truly divine. Fr Gerald reminded the audience that the Scriptures are unequivocally clear in showing, amongst other things, that Jesus was attributed with the divine title of Lord putting Christ on par with God the Father; that He worked miracles; taught in his own name; and as Son of Man was decisive for the final salvation of the world.

The names of the remaining presenters were: *Chris Baghos* (PhD cand.) (University of Sydney); *Dr Mario Baghos* (Charles Sturt University); *Sr Dr Margaret Beirne* (St Andrew’s Greek Orthodox Theological College); *William Chami* (University of Notre Dame); *Revd Dr Daniel Fanous* (St Cyril’s Coptic Orthodox Theological College); *Dr Deborah Guess*

(Pilgrim Theological College, University of Divinity); *Prof. Jim Harrison* (Sydney College of Divinity); *Michael Ibrahim* (St Cyril's Coptic Orthodox Theological College); *Dr Philip Kariatlis* (St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College); *Dr Jin Heung Kim* (SCD Korean School of Theology); *Dr Jason Tsz-Shun Lam* (Melbourne School of Theology); *Dr Greg Liston* (Laidlaw College, Auckland, New Zealand); *Dr Andrew Mellas* (St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College); *Dr Joe Mock* (Australian College of Theology); *Dr Vicki Petrakis* (Macquarie University); *Josfin Raj* (New Life Biblical Seminary, India); *Grahame Rosolen* (PhD cand.) (School of Theology, Charles Sturt University); *Martin Samson* PhD (cand.) (Flinders University: Humanities and Social Sciences; Theology) and *Prof. Keith Thompson* (University of Notre Dame, Australia).

All papers provided an opportunity to reflect on this foundational teaching of the Christian faith, doing so in such a way which identified implications for the world today. Beyond the diversity of presentations, an underlying theme was the foundational Christological teaching that Christ is Lord and Saviour of the world. In this way, the Symposium was an overall success with participants leaving, having been enriched and challenged at the opportunity given to reflect on the person and saving work of Jesus Christ in such an intense and meaningful manner.

Perhaps it is fitting to end with the *Apolytikion* of the Annunciation which clearly connects Christ to salvation, indeed to God's pre-eternal plan to unite his only begotten Son with humanity even before, and irrespective of, the fall:

" today is the crowning moment of our salvation, and the revealing of the *eternal* mystery, the Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin..."

" Σήμερον τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν τὸ κεφάλαιον, καὶ τοῦ ἀπ' αἰῶνος μυστηρίου ἡ φανέρωσις, ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, Υἱὸς τῆς Παρθένου γίνεται..."

- Source: sagotc.edu.au