

## International conference on “Concepts of «Human Dignity» in the Patristic Tradition and their Traces in Eastern and Western Christianity”,

Nijmegen, Holland, 14-17 October 2014

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The Institute for Eastern Christianity (Radboud University, Nijmegen) and St. Tikhon's Orthodox University Moscow in cooperation with Free University Amsterdam and Protestant University Amsterdam organized between 14-17 October in Nijmegen, Holland, an international conference on “Concepts of «human dignity» in the Patristic tradition and their traces in Eastern and Western Christianity.” The organizers started from the reality that “human dignity” is a key term in the contemporary conception of human rights, however it became a controversial issue between East and West and even in inner-Western discourse. This conference addressed “human dignity” mainly from the perspective of patristic anthropology, reflecting especially on:

- The notion of “human dignity” in the patristic, ancient tradition of both Eastern and Western theology (as e.g. Augustine, Ambrosius of Milan, the Cappadocians, Maximus Confessor etc.);

- Alternative concepts of “human dignity” (based on the patristic tradition, and differing from the individualistic approach) in both Eastern and Western tradition of the “Middle Ages”.

- Western Enlightenment (including “religious enlightenment”) and its reception within Orthodox Russia (as e.g. Metropolitan Platon (Levshin) of Moscow, Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) of Moscow, Metropolitan Evgenii (Bolkhovitinov) of Kiev, etc.);

- Approaches of “human dignity” among protagonists of the so-called “neo-patristic movement” of Orthodox theology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (G. Florovsky, V. Lossky, Dumitru Staniloae).

It participated theologians who presented the following papers: Petr Mikhailov (St. Tikhon Orthodox University, Moscow), *Theological implications of arête in Patristic Tradition*; Dmitri Bumazhnov (University of Göttingen), *Human Hypostasis and Human Nature in St. Isaac of Niniveh*; Victor Lega (St. Tikhon Orthodox University, Moscow), *Plotinus on the divine*

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*dignity of man*; Evgenii Shilov (St. Tikhon Orthodox University, Moscow), *Byzantine Hesychasm vs. Western Humanism: St. Nicholas Kabasilas about the true dignity of man*; Alfons Brüning (Institute for Eastern Christianity Nijmegen and Free University Amsterdam), *Moral implications in "human rights" and "theosis" – Crossovers and dead ends*; Daniel Buda (University of Sibiu and World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order), *Reflections on possible directions of Orthodox Anthropology in 21<sup>st</sup> Century*; Matthias Smalbrugge (Free University Amsterdam), *St. Augustine and the deification*; Daniel Munteanu (University of Bamberg), *Human Dignity and deification in the Theology of St. Maximus the Confessor*; Konstantin Antonov (St. Tikhon Orthodox University, Moscow), *"The right to a dignified human existence": The Russian school of natural law and the concept of the neo-patristic synthesis in Orthodox theology of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*; Stefan Iloaie (University Babes-Bolyai, Cluj Napoca), *The concept of Person in Theology of Father Dumitru Staniloae. The Relevance of the Person for the determination of the Christian perspective on human dignity*; Heleen Zorgdrager (Protestant Theological University), *Alternative concepts of human dignity and deification in the works of Mother Maria Skobtsova, Wendy Farley and Sarah Coakley*; Gabriel-Viorel Gardan (University Babes-Bolyai, Cluj Napoca), *I am the image of your ineffable glory, though I bear the scars of sin" – The divine image as fundament of human dignity in some Orthodox liturgical texts.* At the very end, a round table under the title *Human dignity and theosis – Two irreconcilable principles? Results and perspectives for further consultation* concluded the conference.

The main conclusions of the conference were that Orthodox anthropology in 21<sup>st</sup> Century should not operate with any sectarian division between East and West or between theology and other sciences. Only a holistic approach could achieve Anthropology able to respond to the complex challenges of our times.