

Introduction

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The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church dedicated the year 2022 to the importance of prayer in the life of Christians and to the commemoration of three renowned hesychast saints, St. Symeon the New Theologian, St. Gregory Palamas, and St. Paisius Velichkovsky of Neamț. In this context, the present special issue, *Hesychasm: Theology and Praxis from Late Byzantium to Modernity*, gathers contributions on topics related to hesychast prayer and the Hesychast Controversy of the fourteenth-century. The papers here included cover a wide range of themes, from the thirteenth-century debates on the *Filioque* to the practice of watchfulness, attention, and the Jesus Prayer in modern society. The authors are leading specialists in the fields of theology, philosophy, and history, both ecclesiastics and laymen.

Although the study of hesychasm is not limited to the late Byzantine period, since the tradition of stillness and hesychastic prayer stretches from late antiquity through the Kollyvades until today, the articles included in this special issue have as their starting point the inheritance of St. Gregory Palamas (ca. 1296–1357) and the debates that centered on his theological contributions. In recent years, the history of the Hesychast Controversy has quietly begun to be rewritten. Through the publication of previously unedited texts and the study of hitherto neglected authors, some of whom lived long before or after Palamas himself, our understanding of Hesychast theology, in its many dimensions, continues to be enriched and expanded. Many of the wider topics relevant to the Palamite controversy and Hesychast theology are reflected in this volume:

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hagiography, liturgy, monasticism, Trinitarian theology, spirituality, patristic theology and pseudepigrapha, Church history, logic, iconoclasm, anthropology, and many more. Far from focusing narrowly on the person and writings of St. Gregory Palamas alone, the present volume therefore touches on the theology of such figures as Nikephoros Blemmydes, Eustratios of Nicaea, Gregory of Cyprus, Thomas Magistros, Philotheos Kokkinos, Nicholas and Neilos Kabasilas, Kallistos and Ignatios Xanthopoulos, Kallistos Angelikoudes, Makarios Makres, and others. The tradition of hesychast prayer and the voices who contributed to its exposition and elaboration across many fields stretch far and wide across the rich landscape of Orthodox theology, from the late Byzantine period until today.

The editors are grateful to their eminences, Metropolitan Andrei Andreicuț and Bishop Benedict Vesa, for their prayers and unremitting support. Moreover, the editors would like to thank the editor-in-chief and the executive editor of the *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai Theologia Orthodoxa* for their invitation to act as guest editors for this special issue dedicated to hesychasm, and to our patient and proficient copy-editor, Cristina-Alina Vesa. The editors are especially grateful to the authors for their contributions, as well as to the anonymous reviewers for their insightful suggestions and feedback. Finally, a heartfelt thank you is due to Fr. Isaac of Lușa Monastery, whose prayers and graceful sketches embellish and enrich the present issue with visual intermissions intended to prompt contemplation and prayer.