

Conference in Seoul

The Seventh Annual Conference of the Asia-Pacific Early Christian Studies Society entitled, "Preaching and Ministry in the Early Christianity", was held on 5th–7th July 2012 in Seoul, South Korea. It was organized by the above mentioned society. The hosts of the conference were the Patristic Studies Society in Korea, Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, and Hoseo University. The conference was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea.

The theme of the conference was focused on preaching and ministry of the Church Fathers who were theologians and ministers of the Word and the Sacraments. They not only articulated theological concepts, but also preached, administered sacraments, composed liturgical hymns, and organized almsgiving to the poor. The conference concentrated on preaching and ministry which were two major areas of pastoral work of the Church Fathers. Scholars from Korea, Japan, Australia, United States, Germany, Lithuania, Philippines, Cambodia, Russia and South Africa presented papers which discussed these fields.

In his opening speech the President of the Patristic Studies Society in Korea Rev. Prof. Dr. Byoung-ha Cho said, "It is of great significance to hold the 7th conference of APECSS <...> in Korea where Christianity is growing fast and steadily. Scholarly discussions on preaching and ministry of Church Fathers in an atmosphere where the Church is alive and where conversions are in process will widen our visions and academic horizons".¹

The following are short summaries of select presentations to show a panoramic view of this very informative and enriching international conference.

Seyoon Kim (Fuller Theological Seminary, USA) in his paper "Paul as a Preacher and Pastor" discussed Paul's self-understanding, his pastoral aims, the way he preached the Gospel and his pastoral practice. The Apostle Paul was a pastor who worked to help his converts grow in faith and love. The speaker stressed that in his letters Paul explained in greater depth the Gospel that he had preached. In accordance with his preaching of the Gospel Paul thoroughly shaped his pastoral work as the *diakonia* of a servant or slave and as participating in the suffering and death of Jesus Christ through his sacrificial service. Paul sought to demonstrate the grace character of the Gospel in his ministry. He rejected diluting his Gospel preaching with any reliance on or boasting in the works of the law or the wisdom of the world.

Megumi Kitagawa (Sophia University, Japan) presented a discourse "The Significance of the *Musica* and the Memory in the Early Augustine". Augustine of Hippo defined *musica* as an indispensable discipline for the process of passing from the corporeal cognition to

the incorporeal one. While maintaining union of mind and body, he sought harmony between intellectual activities and virtue. The speaker suggested that the *musica* would lead to a happy life, and to the enjoyment of divine contemplation.

In her contribution “Aspects of Preaching and Ministry in East and West AD 400–600” Pauline Allen (Australian Catholic University, Australia) investigated the track-records of a number of Greek- and Latin-speaking preachers and ministers such as Synesius of Cyrene, Firmus of Caesarea, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Sidonius Apollinaris, Gelasius of Rome, etc. As well as their involvement in preaching, the speaker discussed their activities outside the church, such as their letter-writing networks and political involvement. The contribution also considered aspects of practical theology (church attendance, fasting, almsgiving, voluntary poverty) and the pastoral role of those late-antique bishops as managers of crises.

A paper “Preaching the Name of Jesus and the Experience of Emptiness by Diadochos of Photiki” by Romualdas Dulskis (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania) indicated that the search for intimacy with Jesus and the experience of internal emptiness intertwine closely in the teachings of Diadochos. The holy emptiness is the only place for an authentic and close unity between an individual and God.

Junghoo Kwon (Life University, Cambodia) presented a discourse “Pre-Nestorianism in the West: a Case of Vitalis and Constantius in Spain”. It was dedicated to so-called pre-Nestorianism in the West. The speaker argued that the Western Church held a strong *dyophysite* position in the fifth century.

Andrew Daunton-Fear (St. Andrew’s Theological Seminary, Philippines) in his contribution “Healing Miracles after the Age of the Apostles” discussed the Church’s healing ministry after the age of the apostles and stated that this ministry, in one form or other, was practiced by the Church throughout the second century and beyond.

In his presentation “The Missionary Character of Paul’s Stay on Malta (Acts 28:1–10) according to the Early Church” Ronald H. van der Bergh (University of Pretoria, South Africa) investigated the reception of Acts 28:1–10 in the writings of the Greek and Latin speaking Church of the first five centuries (Tertullian, Eusebius of Caesarea, Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan) to determine whether Paul’s behavior in Malta was considered to be missionary in character.

Seungmin Joo (Seoul Theological University, Korea) in his paper “A Study of Relationship between State and Christianity in the Roman Empire: Based on the Christian Understanding of State” discussed relationship between state and religion, and stated that neither the state should press the Church and dominate it nor has the Church a superior position to the state. Such direction between the two realities developed in the early centuries and because of it both Christianity and State could grow in every spectrum.

In his contribution “Eucharistic Exegesis as a Key to Diverging Spiritualities on the Eve of the Iconoclastic Controversy” Vladimir Baranov (Novosibirsk State University, Russia) explored the Stoic background of the three-fold division of doctrine within the anthropological paradigm that Evagrius of Pontus and Maximus the Confessor shared and raised wider issues of distinct spiritualities, presented by two monastic theologians, which became irreconcilable political agendas during the Iconoclastic Controversy.

A discourse “Ambrose as a Minister Managing the Church–State Tension” by Eunhye Lee (Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, Korea) analyzed the role of Ambrose as a bishop of Milan who managed the tensions between Church and State. The speaker highlighted that in late antiquity bishops at times were involved in managing the crisis in society.

Hanns Christof Brennecke (Erlangen University, Germany) his presentation “Preaching – the Office of Bishop in the Constantinian Age: The Example of Meletius of Antioch” dedicated to the case of Meletius who was an important exponent of the neo-Nicene Trinitarian position.

The conference proceeded in a very warm and friendly atmosphere. Informative and enriching presentations were completed and followed by in-depth discussions. The conference revealed that the Church Fathers had an integrated vision of Christian faith and everyday life. Their theology and Biblical exegeses emerged in the pastoral context and out of their pastoral concerns. The papers presented at the conference indicated that preaching and ministry were two major areas of pastoral work of the Church Fathers. The presenters discussed ministerial and homiletic activities, theological teachings and situations of the congregations at that time, as well as interactions between ministers and their people. The political and social contexts in which these ministers taught and worked were revealed.

Rev. Prof. Dr. *Romualdas Dulskis*

REFERENCES

- ¹ *Byoung-ha Cho*. Opening speech at the 7th conference of APECSS “Preaching and Ministry in the Early Christianity”. Seoul. 05 07 2012.