

“The most obvious Gospel paradigm for the theme “Evangelism and Culture” is the parable of the sower. The seed is the Word of God.... The Word of God as Scripture must be expressed in human language, and language is culture. The Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in human words, and words are culture. The presence of Christ must be conveyed, led manifested with signs, symbols, art, music, liturgical action, sacrament, and all this is culture. The truth, like the seed, needs soil in which to grow, and the soil is culture.”

Fr. Michael J. Oleksa

“According to Eliot, the central question is whether we can salvage our culture from the wreckage of secularization. He made clear his views on the importance of culture itself: culture is by nature intimately connected with religion. As Eliot noted, they may even be considered aspects of the same thing... Culture and cult share a common root... Eliot was convinced that, without cultural ends, which are by nature religious, our lives are, indeed, empty. If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes. Without Christianity, we are without civilization. If we allow our political and cultural elite to finally extinguish the ties between faith and culture, our culture will die.”

T. S. Eliot

“Transcendence” is a key concept in Jaspers’ theory of culture... Generally speaking, for Jaspers, man accomplishes this transcendence through acts of mental creation. Art, science and philosophy are grounded in man’s ability to transcend himself, to transcend the conditions of his own being at any given time and state. “Transcendence” is particularly tied to artistic creation, for through such creation man achieves a concrete vision of the possibilities of his existence.”

Karl Jaspers

“Culture is to know the best that has been said and thought in the world.”

Matthew Arnold

“Culture is the sum of all the forms of art, of love and of thought, which, in the course of centuries, have enabled man to be less enslaved.”

Andre Malraux

“Religion as ultimate concern is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion express itself. In abbreviation: religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion. Every religious act, not only in organized religion, but also in the most intimate movement of the soul, is culturally formed.”

Paul Tillich

“Judging means seeing both sides. The Church judges culture, including the Church’s own forms of life. For its forms are created by culture, as its religious substance makes culture possible. The Church and culture are within, not alongside, each other. And the Kingdom of God includes both while transcending both.”

Paul Tillich

“Since the land is comprised of living beings, most Native American cultures have a tradition of entering into relationships with the land. Relating to non-human beings is possible because, unlike Western categories which draw dichotomies between human and animal, animate and inanimate, natural and supernatural, most Native American traditions stress interrelatedness among all things. This relatedness is most often rooted in the perception of a shared spiritual reality that transcends physical differences. Some believe this common essence is the life breath, others refer to it as the presence of the Great Spirit.”

Emily Cousins



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PROGRAM

*The Sixteenth Ecumenical Theological
Symposium*

Cult and Culture: The Transcendental Roots of Human Civilization

Saturday, December 6, 2008
3:00 PM

at the Romanian General Consulate
200 E 38th Street
(3rd Ave. at 38th Street)
New York, NY 10016

George Alexe

Senior theologian of the Romanian Orthodox Church, member of the Union of Romanian Writers, director and founder of *Romanian Communion*; Chairman of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality:
Thracian Origin of the Byzantine and Romanian Sacred Music

Cristian Stefan, PhD

Professor of the History of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Northern University, Baia Mare, Romania:
Considerations on the Christological Way of Being in Christian Life

Richard Grallo, Ph.D.

Professor of Applied Psychology, Metropolitan College of New York:
Questioning as a Cognitive Process: Implications for Learning and Culture

Adrian Gh. Paul, PhD

Professor of Moral Theology and Orthodox Spirituality, Northern University, Baia Mare, Romania:
The Meaning of the Divine Word as an Orthodox Expression of the Culture of the Holy Spirit

Mircea Itu, PhD

Professor of Comparative Religions, Dean of the School of Journalism, Communications and Public Relations, Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania:
Mircea Eliade's Concept of History of Religions

Theodor Damian, Ph.D.

Professor of Philosophy and Ethics, Metropolitan College of New York; President of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality:
Cultural and Spiritual Signs of the Time: With or Without Post-Modernism?

George Robert Lazaroiu, PhD

Professor of Philosophy, School of Journalism, Communications and Public Relations, Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania:
Wittgenstein's Notion of the Factual Status of Religious Language

Livio Dumitriu, PhD

Founder and President of The Urban Studies and Architecture Institute, New York, Professor of Architecture, Pratt Institute, New York:
The Structure of the Cross: Tectonics of the Symbol

Paul J. LaChance, PhD

Theology Department, College of St. Elisabeth, New Jersey:
Eclipse of God. Voegelin and Lonergan on Constitutive Meaning

Alina Feld, PhD

Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Hofstra University:
Reflections on the Spiritual Renaissance in Post-Communist Romania

Viorica Colpacci

The Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, Artist, Director of "Spiritus" Art Gallery, New York:
The Aesthetic of the Sacred Art

GUEST OF HONOR:

His Eminence Dr. Nicolae Condrea, Archbishop, The Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

MODERATOR:

Victoria Malczanek

Ph.D. candidate, University of Bucharest,
Professor at Metropolitan College of New York and at Fairleigh-Dickinson University, New Jersey

DISCUSSANTS:

Bert Breiner, PhD

Professor of Religion, Hutner College, City University of New York, and Academic Affairs Administrator, Dept. of Applied Psychology, New York University

Daniel Damian

Ph.D. candidate, Long Island University, Professor at Metropolitan College of New York

If we examine the oldest moral canons, the commandments that prescribe human conduct and the rules of human coexistence, we find numerous essential similarities among them. It is often surprising to discover that virtually identical moral norms arise in different places and different times, largely independently of one other. Another important thing is that the moral foundations upon which different civilizations or cultures were built always had transcendental or metaphysical roots. It is scarcely possible to find a culture that does not derive from the conviction that a higher, mysterious order of the world exists beyond our reach, a higher intention that is the source of all things, a higher memory recording everything, a higher authority to which we are all accountable in one way or another. That order has had a thousand faces. Human history has known a vast array of gods and deities, religious and spiritual beliefs, rituals, and liturgies. Nevertheless, since time immemorial, the key to the existence of the human race, of nature, and of the universe, as well as the key to what is required of human responsibility, has always been found in what transcends humanity, in what stands above it. Humanity must respect that if the world is to survive. To this day, the point of departure has been present in all our archetypal notions and in our long-lost knowledge, despite the obvious estrangement from these values that modern civilization has brought with it. Yet, even as our respect for the mysteries of the world dwindles, we can see for ourselves again and again that such a lack of respect leads to ruin. All this clearly suggests where we should look for what united us: in an awareness of the transcendent.

Vaclav Havel

