

HOLY MOUNTAINS, HOLY MEN

The Spirituality of Mount Athos

11 – 13 OCTOBER 2024

Madingley Hall, Cambridge



**THE FRIENDS
OF MOUNT
ATHOS**

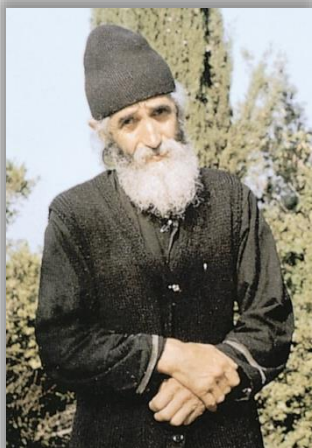
The Friends of Mount Athos

Biennial Residential Conference

This year's conference is devoted to the spirituality of Mount Athos. Athos is often referred to as the centre of Orthodox spirituality, and so it has been for over a thousand years. Our very first conference, back in 2003, was also devoted to this theme. It was highly successful as we hope this one will be too.

Each talk focuses on a turning point in the spiritual history of the Mountain. Some of the names mentioned may be unfamiliar, but that is because monks do not seek to publicize their activities. They are humble men who devote themselves to prayer. And yet their influence is often immense with repercussions that impact the whole of Christendom. Such is the significance of Mount Athos for the world.

As usual, there will be seven sessions. Summaries of the talks are given below together with brief notes on each of the speakers. Each talk will last for approximately 40 minutes and will be followed by time for discussion. A booking form is attached at the end of this paper.



“Our goal should be to take all that comes our way and make the best out of it for the sake of the spiritual struggle in which we are engaged”

St Paisios of Mount Athos

PROGRAMME

(subject to possible change)

1. ‘Links in the Spiritual Chain’: The Holy Mountains of Asia Minor and Early Monasticism on Mount Athos

by Rosemary Morris

The concept of the mountain as a holy place was implanted in Hellenic consciousness long before the coming of Christianity. But St Antony’s retreat into the Egyptian desert was the specific model for many later Byzantine monastic founders. This tradition flourished in the mountainous regions of western Asia Minor from the seventh century onwards, where a form of ‘hybrid monasticism’ developed, combining elements of the cenobitic and semi-eremitic traditions. The personal and institutional connections between the Bithynian ‘holy mountains’ and Mount Athos will be the subject of this talk.

Rosemary Morris taught medieval history at the University of Manchester from 1974 to 2003 and has since held visiting posts at Queen’s University, Belfast, the University of York, and All Souls College, Oxford. From 2009 to 2013 she was Chair of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies. Her publications include *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium* (1995) and numerous articles on aspects of Byzantine monasticism.

2. St Athanasios the Athonite and the Question of Communal Monasticism

by Zachary Chitwood

Traditionally regarded as the founder of communal monasticism on Mount Athos, Athanasios the Athonite acted as a touchstone in the debate about the merits of different forms of monastic life on the Holy Mountain both during his own lifetime and afterwards. His foundation of the Great Lavra served as a model for large, cenobitic monasteries on Athos, while also providing a place for the more traditional form of eremitic monasticism. This paper will explore the role that Athanasios himself and the cultivation of his memory played in discussions about the various forms of monastic life.

Zachary Chitwood is Professor of Byzantine Studies at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. He is the principal instigator of the project MAMEMS (‘Mount Athos in Medieval Eastern Mediterranean Society: Contextualizing the History of a Monastic Republic, ca. 850-1500’).

3. Gregory Palamas and Hesychasm

by Norman Russell

Gregory Palamas's take on hesychasm is a distinct variation of the uncontroverted teaching represented by his great Athonite contemporary, Gregory of Sinai. Palamas's development of the essence/energies distinction, drawing on the Cappadocians and Maximos the Confessor, was in response to Barlaam of Calabria, who challenged the hesychasts' notion of participation in the divine light. The Palamite version of hesychasm was vindicated by three Constantinopolitan councils held from 1341 to 1351, leading to the installation of a series of Palamite patriarchs whose political and social programme has been characterized by some modern scholars as 'political hesychasm'.

Norman Russell is an honorary research fellow of St Stephen's House, University of Oxford. He is also professor of Patristic and Byzantine Theology at the theological institute Sant' Eufemia di Calcedonia of the Greek Orthodox exarchate of Italy. His recent publications include *Gregory Palamas and the Making of Palamism in the Modern Age* (2019) and *Gregory Palamas: The Hesychast Controversy and the Debate with Islam* (2022).

4. The Eighteenth-Century Philokalic Revival

by Fr Maximos Constas

This religious revival of the eighteenth century, associated with the appearance of the *Philokalia* (Venice, 1782), was part of a larger publication project intended as a response to the European Enlightenment and in particular the French Revolution. This paper (1) considers the major guiding principles of the revival movement and (2) presents important new findings from documents in the Venetian State Archives regarding the original publication of the *Philokalia*.

Fr Maximos Constas is Distinguished Professor of the Humanities at the University of Austin, Texas. Formerly a professor at Harvard Divinity School and a monk at the monastery of Simonopetra, his latest project is the *Philokalic Library: The Kollyvades Fathers in Translation* (Newrome Press), the first two volumes of which are scheduled to appear before the end of 2024.

5. The Kollyvades Fathers and the Preparation of New Martyrs at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century

by Anthony Ladas

In the Ottoman world of the late eighteenth century, Orthodox men who converted to Islam and later sought to revert to Christianity were a source of anxiety for the institutional Church, which often discounted them for fear of reprisal from local authorities. Yet those who suffered martyrdom were

hailed by the faithful and lower clergy as ‘new martyrs’. This talk addresses the answer to this tension provided by the Kollyvades Fathers, who embraced these young men and prepared them to publicly profess Christ and perish for his name.

Anthony Ladas is a graduate of Fordham University, New York, and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Brookline, Massachusetts. His primary research interest is the counter-Enlightenment vision of the Kollyvades Fathers at the beginning of the modern era.

6. Russian Athonite Saints of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

by Nicholas Fennell

St Silouan and his disciple St Sophrony are the most famous Russian Athonites, but there were many more, mostly unknown, saintly Russians on Athos, where sanctity is manifested in asceticism rather than by miracles. Russian Athonite saints prayed ceaselessly; they were gifted with generosity, humility, endurance, and prophecy; they were obedient disciples and selfless teachers. Thanks to them, the tradition of elderhood (*starchestvo*) was bolstered in Russia and spread to the west. Russian Athonite saints proliferated in times of crisis, such as after 1914, when the once powerful and wealthy Russian community went into rapid decline.

Nicholas Fennell taught languages for forty years at Winchester College. Since retirement he has been writing in English and Russian about Russian Athos. His most recent publication is *Russian Monks on Mount Athos: The Thousand Year History of St Panteleimon's* (2021).

7. Saints of the Twentieth-Century Athonite Revival

by Graham Speake

In the last ten years or so an extraordinary number of Athonite fathers have been canonized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Without exception these were humble monks of the sketes and cells, the so-called Athonite desert. Not for them the bright lights of the ruling monasteries which were mostly in steep decline at the time. These were the men who gathered around themselves groups of energetic young disciples who instigated the spiritual movement that was to become known as the Athonite revival of the second half of the twentieth century. My talk will focus on this little-known group of luminaries who saved the Holy Mountain for future generations including our own.

Graham Speake is founder and Chairman of the Friends of Mount Athos. After a career in publishing, he has turned his attention to writing about Athos. He is author of the illustrated history, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise* (2nd edition 2014), which won the Criticos Prize, and of *A History of the Athonite Commonwealth: The Spiritual and Cultural Diaspora of Mount Athos* (2018).

THE VENUE

This will be our eleventh weekend conference at Madingley. The house dates from the sixteenth century and stands in its own grounds amid beautiful country 3 miles west of Cambridge. The surrounding park was landscaped by 'Capability' Brown in 1756. In the 1860s Queen Victoria rented the house for The Prince of Wales when he was an undergraduate. Bought by the University of Cambridge in 1948, it operates as a centre for continuing and adult education. The house has been extensively refurbished to provide disabled access, en-suite facilities to all study bedrooms, well-equipped meeting rooms, and a bar. Ample car parking is available on site. Meals are taken in the great hall where the cuisine achieves a high standard. We are fortunate to have the use of the nearby parish church for our services during the weekend.



BOOKING FORM

I/we wish to attend the conference. I am paying a non-refundable deposit of £50 per person (please see payment methods below). To reserve a place at the Conference, **bookings must arrive no later than 27 September 2024**; after that date, they will only be accepted at the discretion of Madingley Hall, and **cancellations after that date may incur the full conference fee.**

- Please reserve a single/shared room - £385 per person.
- Please reserve non-residential place(s) including meals - £110 per day.
- Please reserve non-residential place(s) excluding meals - £40 per day.

Please note, for non-residential delegates the evening dinner is optional and will be charged extra - £40.

A number of bursaries are available for students: please contact Maria Harff at foma.accadm@gmail.com for details.

Dietary requirements (if any)

Accommodation requirements (if any)

Name of member/guest

Address

Telephone E-mail

Please send this form to treasurer@athosfriends.org (preferred) and make a non-refundable deposit of £50 per person to **The Friends of Mount Athos bank account at Lloyds Bank** or via **PayPal**, please give *your Surname as reference + Madingley*:

In Sterling Account No: 00058730

IBAN: GB96 LOYD 3096 6400 0587 30

Sort Code: 30-96-64

SWIFT: LOYDGB21085

In Euros Account No: 86215304

IBAN: GB20 LOYD 3096 6486 2153 04

Sort Code: 30-96-64

SWIFT: LOYDGB21085

Or to pay by PayPal go to https://paypal.me/FoMAMembershipRenewa?locale.x=en_GB

email: paypal.foma@gmail.com

Otherwise, please send the form to Dr Maria Harff at **42 Hill View Road, Oxford OX2 0BZ**, enclosing a **cheque** for the deposit(s).