

Newman Seminar in Late Ancient and Byzantine Cultures

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<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89171490250?pwd=Q3Q4RHR1ckFrZDZYckxVVct2ZDRpZz09>

24 May Symeon the New Theologian (1000 year from his death) – on Zoom

OBS! dag och tid: Tis. Kl. 15:00-17:00

Taras Tymo (Catholic University of Lviv, Ukraine)

"Mystery of Theology": St Symeon the New Theologian's Teaching on the Nature of Theology

Based on the close reading of Symeon's major works on the nature of human theologizing (3 *Theological Discourses* and *Hymn 21*) and the analysis of their historical/theological context, we will explore the questions:

- why Symeon wrote this particular works and what is their polemical context (opponents and their positions);
- what are the major dogmatic issues at stake in this polemic;
- what is Symeon's vision of theology resulting from this polemics

The presentation is based on author's doctoral research in the past years (2018-2021) and his own Ukrainian translations of a number of Symeon's writings, including the ones directly analysed in this talk.

Barbara Crostini (Newman Institute, Uppsala)

Saint Symeon (the New Theologian) and Syria: Exploring Christian Experiences at the Turn of the Millennium

Abstract:

Almost every scholar dealing with Symeon's life has asked in what type of world Symeon moved in, so as to frame his personality and spiritual vision in the wider Byzantine context. Conflict with the Arab-Muslim world was the main question that plagued the Byzantine Empire as well as Western Christian lands from Charlemagne onwards. Living in Constantinople did not exempt Symeon from perceiving this wider world of contrasts that impinged on key issues of religious understanding and compelled to more stringent definitions of the faith. Symeon was a contemporary of Avicenna (Ibn Sina, 980-1037) and of Ibn Hazm (994-1064), both powerful Muslim thinkers. In particular, Basil II's victory at Aleppo in 995 opened a new phase in Byzantine relations with Syria, which brought a revival of the cults of the famous Symeons, St Symeon the Elder of Aleppo and St Symeon the Younger, and a new interest in stylite asceticism to Constantinople. In this paper, I address the links between the Syrian experience of God and Symeon the New Theologian's. Taking cues from his *Life*, I will try to articulate ways in which his interpretation of the monastic life could have been appealing at a time when affective piety was on the rise as a means of intercultural communication. The focus towards the East responded to a global situation of crisis within which the lives of Christian saints were negotiated as manifestos of the Christian experience.

Please look at chapter 34 in the *Life* (PDF attached).