

Celebrating the 1700 jubilee of Nicea

OPEN SEMINAR ON THE LEGACY OF NICEA

LOCATION: GAMLA STAN, BRUNNSGRÄND 4,
BOTTENVÅNING, STOCKHOLM

TIME AND DATE: 10.00-14.00, 21. AUGUST 2025

SPEAKERS

- **CYRIL HOVORUN,
PROFESSOR, PHD**
 - **EMIL HILTON SAGGAU,
DR.THEOL. (HABIL), PHD
SECRETARY GENERAL**
 - **ANDREAS WESTERGREN,
DOCENT, PHD**
 - **JOHANNES AAKJÆR, PHD**
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*ORGANISED BY :NORDISK PATRISTISK NETVÆRK, DANSK FORUM
FOR PATRISTISK, COLLEGIUM PATRISTICUM LUNDENSE, LUNDS
UNIVERSITET, DANSKE KIRKERS RÅD, SVERIGES KRISTNA RÅD*

CELEBRATING THE 1700 JUBILEE OF NICEA

IN 2025, CHRISTIANS ACROSS THE WORLD WILL CELEBRATE THE COUNCIL OF NICEA, WHICH SHAPED THE FORM OF CHRISTIANITY. THE FOUNDING BELIEFS OF THE EARLY CHURCH WERE EXPRESSED IN THE NICENE CREED, WHICH HAS BECOME A POINT OF REFERENCE FOR CHRISTIANITY. THIS FOUNDATION STILL STANDS TODAY AND CONTINUES TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON CHRISTIANITY.

HOWEVER, THE COUNCIL AND ITS DEBATES WERE NOT A HARMONIOUS GATHERING OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS. ITS HISTORY CONTAINS STORIES OF STRUGGLES, INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS, AND DECLARATIONS AGAINST OPPOSING GROUPS AS HERETICS. DESPITE THIS, THE LEGACY OF THE COUNCIL IS AN IDEAL OF CHRISTIAN UNITY AND THE COMING TOGETHER OF THE CHURCHES IN ALL THEIR PLURALISM TO AGREE ON ESSENTIAL TOPICS, SUCH AS THE DATES OF EASTER. NICEA HAS BECOME AN IDEAL OF CHRISTIAN UNITY, LOST AMIDST CENTURIES OF STRUGGLES, BUT REVIVED IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT OF THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES, AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE LABELING OF THE STOCKHOLM MEETING IN 1925 AS THE "NICEA ON CHRISTIAN ETHICS."

THIS OPEN CONFERENCE WILL FEATURE A SERIES OF SCHOLARS WHO WILL DISCUSS THE HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NICENE COUNCIL, AND EXPLORE THE CREED'S CONTINUING RELEVANCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY. THE AIM IS TO OPEN UP THE COUNCIL, ITS TEXTS, AND ITS STORIES, TO REFLECT ON ITS LEGACY AND ITS ONGOING INFLUENCE.



PROGRAMM

9.30-10.00 Coffe

10-10.15: Opening, NN speaker

10.15-11.15: Keynote: Nicaea and the Monotheistic Revolution

Archimandrite Cyril Hovorun, professor, St. Ignatius, Stockholm

For most of its prehistory and history, humankind was polytheistic. That monotheism took over was not predetermined and can be viewed as a miracle and a revolution. The Council of Nicaea was an essential component of this transition. Initially contained within Judaism and sporadically appearing in philosophical henotheism, monotheism became the Roman religion after Constantine. Before Nicaea, Christian theology concentrated on demonstrating that God is one. Nicaea introduced nuances to these arguments that made it almost rejected. Ultimately, the Council of 325 was accepted as part of the monotheistic revolution, which continued with the rise of Islam. This paper situates Nicaea within the centuries-long history of ideas and interreligious dialogue.

11.15-11.45: Synodality, politics and forced unity in 325

Emil Hilton Saggau, dr.theol. (habil), Ph.D., secretary general of the National council of churches in Denmark.

The Council of Nicaea in 325 CE marked the culmination of a prolonged process of the institutionalization of the Church, a development that, among other things, took shape through the establishment and use of synods (or councils) of bishops. This process can be traced back to the Apostles and figures such as Ignatius of Antioch in the first and second centuries and continued to evolve over the subsequent centuries.

In theory, synods were intended to resolve theological and ecclesial issues and foster unity among Christian communities. In practice, however, they often became arenas of intense debate, political maneuvering, and at times even violent conflict.

In this lecture, I will examine the origins, purposes, and unfolding of synodality in the early Church. My aim is to explore both its constructive and destructive outcomes, particularly as they culminated in the Council of Nicaea in 325, and how they shaped the trajectory of subsequent ecclesial councils.

PROGRAMM

11.45- 12.30: break and sandwich

12.30-13.00: On Constantine and the political situation in the 4th century,

Docent Andreas Westergren, Lund University

In this short communication, the circumstances around Nicaea will be addressed, and not least how they made sense for emperor Constantine. I will argue that the Christian doctrines were intelligible to the emperor, and that the Creed from an imperial point of view could be read as a political ideology, with the Son as the Father's providence, or politics.

13.00-13.30: The Nicene Imperative: Classical Theology and the Continuing Relevance of the Homoousion

Johannes Aakjær, PhD

The theology developed in defense of the Nicene Creed continues to challenge how we perceive fundamental aspects of Christian doctrine. This remains true even if there seems to have been no clear agreement at the council of Nicea on how to understand its controversial formulations about the being of God as epitomized by the notion of the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, the 'homoousion'. The necessary correlation of the divine persons in Nicene thought marks out trinitarian theology from a merely generic conception of God. The anti-subordinationist arguments developed in defense of the homoousion lays the foundation of an egalitarian ontology with ramifications not only for theology proper, but also for soteriology and theological ethics. This paper will discuss some of the implications of the homoousion. While the Nicene Creed may no longer be a unifying definition of theological fundamentals, its theology may still – perhaps for this very reason – be imperative to how we perceive the gospel, ecumenism, mission, and so on in a 'post-Constantinian' age.

13.30-14.00: discussion and concluding remarks