

Ecclesiological Investigations Thessaloniki 2025 Conference



Wednesday, 17 September

St. Gregory Palamas Educational and Cultural Foundation

([Nik. Plastira 65](#), Thessaloniki 54250)

Coach Departs Downtown for SGPECF at 14:00

([Eleftherios Venizelos Statue](#), Aristotelous Square)

Conference Registration Open (14:30–17:00, Atrium)

Parallel Session 1: Concepts and Terms (15:00–16:30)

Session 1.1 The Future of Creeds and Councils

Location: Auditorium

Chair: Anastacia Wooden (Catholic University of America)

• “The Continuing Relative Value of Classical Creedal Christology”: A Test-Case for Christian Unity in the Theological Formulations of World Christianity

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Fuller Theological Seminary)

• Nicaea and the Inadequacy but Necessity of “Sufficiency”

Eugene Schlesinger (Santa Clara University)

• Calling Together an Ecumenical Council in Post-Christendom

Charles Shaw (Advent Lutheran Church)

Session 1.2 Nicaea toward the Future

Location: Omega Room

Chair: Dale Irvin (Ecclesiological Investigations)

• From the Ecumenical Authority and Exclusivity of the Nicene Creed to the Recognition and Reception of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

Georgios Martzelos (CEMES)

• Extensions to the Global Problems of Our Human Societies

Kostas Zorbas (Orthodox Academy of Crete)

• Recent Ecumenical Dialogue on the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed - Any Potential towards greater Unity between East and West?

Miriam Haar (Institute for Ecumenical Studies and Research Bensheim)

Session 1.3 New Reflections on Synodality

Location: Alpha Room

Chair: Sandra Arenas (Catholic University of Temuco)

• Synodality Beyond Synods: The Limitations of an Events-Based Synodality

Brian Flanagan (Loyola University Chicago)

• Synodality and Democracy

Christophe Arvanitis (Académie Ecclésiastique Suprême Patriarcale de Crète)

• Nicaea: A Model for a Sociopolitically Informed Theology of Synodality in the Twenty-First Century

Christopher Denny (St. John’s University)

Opening Prayer (17:00–17:15, Auditorium)

Welcome and Opening Remarks (17:15–17:30, Auditorium)

Plenary Session (17:30–18:45)

Leo Lefebure (Georgetown University)

Sophia’s Banquet: Christian Identity, Dissent, and Power

Location: Auditorium

Chair: Aaron Hollander (Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute)

Respondent: Tamara Grdzeldze (Ilia State University)

Reception (19:00–20:00, Outdoor Courtyard)

Sponsored by the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Thessaloniki

Coach Returning Downtown Departs at 20:00

Thursday, 18 September

American College of Thessaloniki

([17 Sevenidi St.](#), Pylaia Thessaloniki 55535)

Coach Departs Downtown for ACT at 9:15

([Eleftherios Venizelos Statue](#), Aristotelous Square)

Coffee (9:45–10:15, West Hall Patio)

Plenary Session (10:15–11:45)

Susan Durber (World Council of Churches)

The Council of Nicaea: Inspiration for Those Seeking Unity Today

Location: Bissell Library

Chair: Miriam Haar (Institute for Ecumenical Studies and Research Bensheim)

Respondent: Sotiris Boukis (Greek Bible College)

Coffee Break (11:45–12:15, West Hall Patio)

Parallel Session 2: Dissent (12:15–13:45, West Hall Classrooms)

Session 2.1 Struggles for Dogma

Location: West Hall 101

Chair: Eugene Schlesinger (Santa Clara University)

• Defining orthodoxy: dissent, development, delineation, and disobedience in a twenty-first century communion

Charlie Bell (Girton College, Cambridge)

• Perichoretic *Avapxyia*: The Queerness of Trinitarian Inclusivity Beyond Monarchy

Timothy Couper (Fordham University)

• On the Phenomenology and Hermeneutics of Dogma: Rethinking Theological Norms Beyond Ecclesial-Political Power

Jack Pappas (Fordham University)

Session 2.2 Discourses of ‘Heresy’

Location: West Hall 102

Chair: Vladimir Latinovic (University of Tübingen)

• On “Heresy,” “Schism,” and “Rival Assemblies”: Basil of Caesarea, the Council of Nicaea, and the Problem of Rebaptism

David Hunter (Boston College)

• Heresiological Assumptions in Christian “Re-Enchantment”: Problematic Implications from Prospective Doctrinal History

Nicholas Brotherton (Union Theological Seminary)

• For Reconsidering the Concept of Heretic to Deepen Dialogue Among Christians: A Reflection Inspired by the Melitian Schism

Nino Sadzaglishvili (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

Session 2.3 Protestant Reflections on Nicaea

Location: West Hall 103

Chair: Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Fuller Theological Seminary)

• Ruminating on a Reformed Nicene Ecclesiology: Between Polarities of Polity

Henry Kuo (Eden Theological Seminary)

• The Nicene Creed in the Anabaptist-Mennonite Tradition: Ethics, Complicity, and Unity

Jeremy M. Bergen (Conrad Grebel University College)

• The Fading Ecumenical Dream?: The National Council of Churches and Bureaucratic Christianity

Casey Smith (Princeton Theological Seminary)

Session 2.4 Conversation with the Author: Raimundo C. Barreto’s *Engaging “Base Ecumenism”*

Location: West Hall 105

Chair: Aaron Hollander (Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute)

Panelists:

Ana María Bidegain (Florida International University[retired])

Aristotle Papanikolaou (Fordham University)

Dale Irvin (Ecclesiological Investigations)

Raimundo C. Barreto (Princeton Theological Seminary)

Session 2.5 Reception and Resistance: Nicene Paradigms

Location: West Hall 104

Chair: Ted Dedon (Creighton University)

• Is Nicaea really over? Conciliarity and Reception in the Eucharistic Ecclesiology

Anastacia Wooden (Catholic University of America)

• A Temple without columns? A Common Creed without Common Life: Understanding Together the Nicene Creed

Augustinos Bairactaris (Patriarchal Ecclesiastical Academy Crete, Heraklion)

• Unity through ontology: a movement towards unity through the ontological paradigm of Nicaea in contradistinction to Zizioulan existentialism

Nicholas Desmond Bamford (Egerton Rothsay School)

Lunch (14:00–16:00)

Participants are on their own for lunch, at ACT Cafeteria or at area restaurants

Parallel Session 3: Power (16:00–17:30, West Hall Classrooms)

Session 3.1 Politics, Territory, and Conciliar Legacy

Location: West Hall 105

Chair: Brian Flanagan (Loyola University Chicago)

• Did the Synod of Tyre in 335 CE foreshadow the non-Chalcedonian schism?

Michael Long (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki)

• Nicaea's Geo-Ecclesiological Paradigm and Post-Modern Church Unity

Ihor Rantsya (Institut catholique of Paris)

• Conciliarity and State Theory: A Path for Modern Ecclesiology? The Case of Canonical Territory Conflicts
Yury Safoklov (University of Hagen)

Session 3.2 Race, Ethnicity, and Ecclesiology

Location: West Hall 102

Chair: Yenny Delgado (University of Lausanne)

• The Trinity and the Spirits: A Decolonial Ecumenical Re-Reading of the Nicene Creed from an Indigenous Perspective

Marina Behera (Oxford Centre for Mission Studies)

• From Bundang to Kabul: How White Evangelical Racism Shaped Korean Christian Mission

Sangeon Kim (Princeton Theological Seminary)

• Rome Has Spoken, The Matter Is Closed: Reimagining a Nicaean Era Vision of Papal Primacy in the Context of Synodality and White Supremacy

Deepan Rajaratnam (Saint John's University)

Session 3.3 Power & Justice

Location: West Hall 103

Chair: Nikolaos Dimitriadis (CEMES)

• From 325 to Project 2025: Nicaea, Religious Nationalism and the Legacy of Imperial Orthodoxy

Michele E. Watkins (St. John's University)

• By Their Fruits You Will Recognize Them: Legacies of Nicaea and the Call to Leave the Empire

David Ketter (Liberty University)

• Councils, Conciliarity, and Confessing in a Fractured and Unequal World

Stephen Brown (The Ecumenical Review, World Council of Churches)

Session 3.4 The Politics of Nicaea, Then and Now

Location: West Hall 104

Chair: Joy McDougall (Candler School of Theology)

• The "Church of Piety" towards Constantine's political authority: the sanctification of political authority from Nicaea to the present

Pantelis Levakos (KU Leuven)

• Not of This World: The Church and Political Authority

Joshua Cole (Union of Charismatic Orthodox Churches)

• Performing Pilgrimage: Political Ecclesiology in Immigrant Solidarity Work

Britta Marie Meiers Carlson (University of the South)

Session 3.5 Charismatic Christianity and Questions of Identity

Location: West Hall 101

Chair: Tamara Grzelidze (Ilia State University)

• Bridge-Building Dialogues: LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Ecclesial Unity within Pentecostalism in Latin America

Claudia Alvarez (Princeton Theological Seminary)

• Christian Identity: Mother

Mother Gaye Coston (Union of Charismatic Orthodox Churches)

• Pentecostalization and the "Nicene Option"

David de la Fuente (Fordham University)

Short Break (17:30–17:45, West Hall Patio)

Plenary Session (17:45–19:00)

Geraldine Smyth (Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin)

The Wound of Christian Identity in Times of Division

Location: Bissell Library

Chair: Nikolaos Dimitriadis (CEMES)

Respondent: Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi (International Hellenic University)

Coach Departs ACT for Downtown at 19:00

Friday, 19 September

American College of Thessaloniki

(17 Sevenidi St., Pylaia Thessaloniki 55535)

Coach Departs Downtown for ACT at 9:15

([Eleftherios Venizelos Statue](#), Aristotelous Square)

Parallel Session 4: Identity (10:00–11:30, West Hall Classrooms)

Session 4.1 Contemporary Catholic Ecclesiology

Location: West Hall 101

Chair: Jason Welle (Boston College)

- The Body as an Image of Unity? Two Hundred Years after Johann Adam Möhler's *Unity in the Church*
Elyse Raby (Santa Clara University)
- Communion in the Risen Christ, the ideal locus for true ecumenism. The relationship between Paul VI, Athenagoras and Chiara Lubich
Roberto Catalano (Istituto Universitario Sophia)
- The Catholic Church's Modern Trinitarian Journey - from Pope Paul VI to Pope Francis
Patricia Madigan (Dominican Sisters)

Session 4.2 Creedal Commitments and Interpersonal Relationships

Location: West Hall 102

Chair: Radu Bordeianu (Duquesne University)

- The Hard Limits of Christian Identity: Primacy and Power aimed at a Theology of Friendship
Ted Dedon (Creighton University)
- The Nicene Creed as a Call for Christian Unity Today
Ioannis Panteldis (Trinity College Dublin)
- Receptive Ecumenism: a contemporary paradigm of the First Ecumenical Council
Crystallia Latsara (University of Helsinki)

Session 4.3 New Avenues for Ecclesiological Problems

Location: West Hall 105

Chair: Britta Marie Meiers Carlson (University of the South)

- Between Self and Other: Nicaea's Theological Boundaries and the Flourishing of Identity
Matthew Brown (Fordham University)
- Ethics – aesthetics in ecclesiology: Christology saving churches from ugliness and meaninglessness
Sandra Arenas (Catholic University of Temuco)
- Orthodoxy and Culture: Toward a Typology of Orthodoxy Systems Ethics
Rachel Contos (Fordham University)

Session 4.4 Asian Theologies and Christian Identity

Location: West Hall 104

Chair: Dale Irvin (Ecclesiological Investigations)

- Reassessing Nicaea's Legacy in Contemporary Ecclesial Boundaries
Aaron Joshua John (United Theological College, Bangalore)
- A Kapwa Ecclesiological Model: A Space for Negotiating Similarities and Differences
Agnes Brazal (De la Salle University)
- The Nicene Creed and Its Impact on Modern Chinese Christianity
Jacob Chengwei Feng (Fuller Theological Seminary)

Session 4.5 Local Theologies and Christian Identity

Location: West Hall 103

Chair: Miriam Haar (Institute for Ecumenical Studies and Research Bensheim)

- Beyond Nicaea: Affirming Christian Identity in Abya Yala
Yenny Delgado (University of Lausanne)
- Anishinaabeg Interpretations of Early Church Doctrine via Methodist Hymnody in 19th-Century British North America
David Kim-Cragg (Emmanuel College, University of Toronto)
- From the Council of Nicaea to the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines
Levy Lara Lanaria (San Carlos Major Seminary)

Coffee Break (11:30–12:00, West Hall Patio)

Plenary Session (12:00–13:15)

Marco Demichelis (University of Bologna)

Divine Word and Spirit in a Human Body? 'Isā ibn Maryam and the Interreligious Debate between Islam and Eastern Christianity

Location: Bissell Library

Chair: Jason Welle (Boston College)

Respondent: Angeliki Ziaka (WCC)

Lunch (13:15–15:00)

Participants are on their own for lunch, at ACT Cafeteria or at area restaurants

Parallel Session 5: Interreligious and Intercultural Reflections (15:00–16:30, West Hall Classrooms)

Session 5.2 Nicaea, Judaism, and Islam

Location: West Hall 102

Chair: Jason Welle (Boston College)

• The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in Arabic: Christian Denominations and Islam Between Unity and Distinction

Anna Canton (University of Palermo)

• Is an Anti-Supersessionist Ecclesiology Possible after Nicaea?

B. Kevin Brown (Gonzaga University)

• How can the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea be commemorated in the context of current Jewish-Christian relations?

Martin Hoegger (HET-PRO, Switzerland)

Session 5.3 Nicaea and Interreligious Dialogue

Location: West Hall 103

Chair: Aaron Hollander (Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute)

• Orthodoxy in Dialogue: Engagement with Non-Believers and Other Religions as a Challenge to Nicene Consensus

Eugen Rosu (Rio Salado College)

• Council of Nicaea: a phenomenological and inter-religious perspective

Thomas Blanquart (Pontifical Oriental Institute)

• Nicaea's Homousios and Vatican II's Nostra Aetate: The Significance of History, Culture and Context for Renewal of Theological Approach

Olisaemeka Okwara (Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg)

Session 5.4 Leaders and Members: Practical Issues in Ecclesiology

Location: West Hall 104

Chair: David de la Fuente (Fordham University)

• Eucharistic Unity: The Tension between Nicaea's Codification of Presbyter-Led Eucharistic Communities and Imperial, Episcopal, and Doctrinal-Based Church Unity

Radu Bordeianu (Duquesne University)

• Practical Ecclesiologies and Lay Vocation: Case Studies from the Creative Callings Research Project

Claire Wolfeich (Boston University)

• The Council of Nicaea on Christian Identity and Its Limits in the Orthodox Missions Today – An African Perspective

Ngige John Njoroge (Kenya Methodist University)

Coffee Break (16:30–17:00, West Hall Patio)

Final Plenary Session (17:00–18:00)

Location: Bissell Library

Chair: Sandra Arenas (Catholic University of Temuco)

Panelist: David Hunter (Boston College)

Panelist: Vladimir Latinovic (University of Tübingen)

Concluding Prayer and Remarks (18:00–18:15)

Coach Departs ACT for Downtown at 18:30

Banquet Dinner for All Conference Participants (20:30–)

Thessaloniki Officers' Club, ([1 Eth. Amynis](#), near the White Tower, walking distance from hotels)