



**POLIN
INSTITUTE**

NEZ AND JULIUS POLIN-INSTITUTE FOR THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH



Åbo Akademi
University

POLIN DAY

FEBRUARY 3, 2025



**THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA AND
CHRISTIANITY IN THE EAST:**

**Ancient Reception and
Modern Ecumenism**

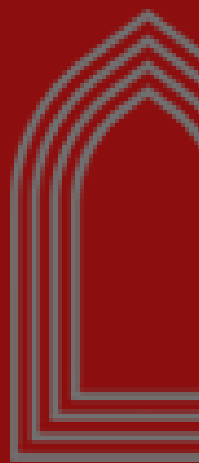


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**Åbo Akademi
University**

The Polin Institute | Biskopsgatan 16 | 20500 Åbo, Finland



**POLIN
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About the Polin Institute

As early as 1930, Julius and Inez Polin drew up a deed of gift concerning the above-mentioned parent fund. In a letter to the delegation of the Åbo Akademi University Foundation in 1935, Julius Polin stated that a portion of the returns from this fund should go to the Julius Polins förfäders Minnesfond subsidiary fund. The latter fund was established in the memory of three of Julius Polin's ancestors, all of whom were priests educated at the Royal Academy of Turku. According to the deed of gift, the annual return or a suitable portion thereof "should be used to support Swedish theology students in Finland". The following year, in 1936, after consulting with Åbo Akademi University's then rector, Otto Andersson, Julius Polin made an addition regarding the Julius Polins förfäders Minnesfond fund. The addition read as follows: "Only once the return from the said fund becomes available, and the theological faculty's need for scholarship funding for Swedish theology students has been met by other means, is the faculty entitled to use the funds or part thereof for maintaining and developing the faculty's activities." This explicit purpose serves as a guiding principle for all of The Polin Institute's activities.



About the Åbo Akademi University

Åbo Akademi University is the Swedish-language multidisciplinary academic university in Finland. We contribute to society through general learning, education and new scientific knowledge.

With campuses in Turku and Vaasa, Åbo Akademi University offers internationally renowned research and education. Through cross-border collaboration, we serve as the gateway to Finland for the Nordic countries.

Our activities are steered by the values of academic tradition in terms of the freedom of research and education as well as ethical responsibility. We endeavour to enhance diversity, inclusion, equality and sustainability.

We have nearly 6000 students and 1200 employees. We stand for ambitious education, research and collaboration both nationally and internationally. Our university is characterized by our responsibility to provide education in Swedish in Finland, where new innovations live side by side with old, academic traditions.



About the Faculty of Arts, Psychology and Theology

The understanding of languages, culture, religion and human behaviour provides you with tools for communication, critical thinking and dealing with the conditions of life. At the Faculty of Arts, Psychology and Theology, the focus is on the multifaceted world of human beings.

We offer studies within the five study programmes of Culture, History and Philosophy, Languages, Logopedics, Psychology and Theology. Education and research in this setting facilitate various subject combinations and international contacts. The faculty operates in Turku.



The Polin Institute

will celebrate the
1700 years since the
Council of Nicaea



Topias Tanskanen

Postdoctoral Researcher in
Exegetics at the Polin Institute,
Åbo Akademi University

Traditionally, Western theology has neglected the perspective of the Eastern Oriental Churches, not only from a linguistic point of view (the exclusion of Syriac, Ge'ez, Arabic from the curriculum of theological studies), but also from a theological point of view. Church history and the history of dogmas focus almost exclusively on Western Christianity, with partial consideration of the Greek Orthodox tradition. An example of this can be the textbook *Teologins historia* (English: History of Theology, also translated into German, Portuguese and Russian) written by the renowned Swedish scholar Bengt Häggglund, which is still used today. Eastern Oriental Christianity, which historically includes both the Nicene/Chalcedonian churches and the non-Nicene/Chalcedonian churches, has unfortunately remained somewhat unclear and unknown.

This Pauline day will focus on pre-Nicene theology, the Nicene Creed, theological reception in late antiquity, will further discuss Christological topics, as well as modern ecumenical relations between the churches of the East and West.

What and who to expect?

Jouko N. Martikainen

Did Christ See Corruption? Acts 2:27

Professor Jouko N. Martikainen is professor emeritus of Church History, especially Syriac Church History, at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Germany, where he worked between 1984–2001. He is also alumnus of Åbo Akademi University where he earned his doctoral degree in 1978.



Professor emeritus

Georg-August-Universität
Göttingen
Åbo Akademi University

Research focus:

Oriental Church History
Ephrem the Syrian
Religious Hymnology



UNIVERSITÄT
GÖTTINGEN



What and who to expect?



Grant White

Christology in the Anaphoras of the Ge'ez Tradition: The State of the Question

G.S. (Grant) White is a Senior Lecturer in Eastern Christian Studies at University College Stockholm and Sankt Ignatios College, Stockholm, where he teaches liturgical studies. He has taught liturgy, patristics, and church history at institutions of theological higher education in the United States, Finland, England, and Sweden, including St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. He has also served as Principal of the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, Cambridge, England.



Senior Lecturer

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Church History
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Liturgical studies

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What and who to expect?

Anni Maria Laato

Confessing Faith before Conciliar Creeds

In the first centuries AD, there were no fixed ecumenical Creeds. Yet the Christians did confess their faith with words and deeds. It was done in connection with baptism, liturgy, discussions with non-Christians, and sometimes, before Roman magistrates. In this presentation, it will be discussed what led to the formulation of fixed Creeds.

Anni Maria Laato, TD, FM, docent, senior lecturer in systematic theology



Docent of Church History
Senior University Lecturer

Åbo Akademi University

Research focus:
Patristics

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What and who to expect?

Serafim Seppälä

Nicene Themes with un-Greek Instruments? Ephrem the Syrian

At the core of Nicene theology lies the concept of ὁμοούσιος, an abstract Greek term inherently philosophical and ontological in nature, rooted in the Greek traditions of viewing the world in the level of static, abstract ideas. How, then, might one reflect this theological vision within a language and culture where ontological concepts are virtually absent, and ideas are more commonly expressed in dynamic terms – as processes rather than states? Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373) was the leading voice of Nicene Christology in the Syriac East. How did he respond to this challenge?

Serafim Seppälä is a professor of systematic theology and patristics at the University of Eastern Finland since 2007. He studied comparative Semitic linguistics and Islamic studies at the University of Helsinki, where he earned his PhD in 2002. Following several years at the Monastery of New Valaam, he pursued an academic career but continues to serve as an archimandrite in the Orthodox Church of Finland. His research interests span a wide range of topics in early Eastern Christian literature, including Byzantine aesthetics, Syriac and Greek ascetic and mystical theology, the interaction between Judaism and Eastern Christianity in late antiquity, the encounter between early Islam and Christianity in the Middle East, and the cultural heritage of the Armenian genocide.



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Research focus:

Encounter of Islam and Christianity (600-800), Syriac mystical theology, Early Byzantine ascetic literature

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UNIVERSITY OF
EASTERN FINLAND

What and who to expect?

Emil Anton

Modern Ecumenism between Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian Churches

This presentation examines the christological declarations of the Catholic Church with the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, as well as subsequent ecumenical declarations on pastoral and sacramental issues.

Dr. Emil Anton (born 1986) is a Finnish-Iraqi Catholic theologian and author.



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Doctor of Theology

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Systematic Theology
Ecumenism

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What and who to expect?

Topias Tanskanen

Aphrahat and Nicaea: Review of Research

Aphrahat the Persian Wise (d. 345?) wrote Demonstrations only some twenty years after the council of Nicea. Aphrahat's idiosyncratic christology, exemplified in the 17th demonstration, has been in the middle of debate as the scholars have tried to relate Aphrahat to different christologies. As a contemporary writer, Aphrahat can also illuminate the (non)influence of Niceanum in geographically more distant parts of the early Church. This paper will present and review the discussion on Aphrahat, his christology, and their relation to Niceanum.

Topias K. E. Tanskanen is a Postdoctoral Researcher in Exegetics in the Polin Institute at Åbo Akademi University and expert in early Jewish reception history of the Bible. He has studied Old Testament Exegetics and Jewish Studies at Åbo Akademi University, where he earned his ThD in 2023, and Hebrew and Semitic philology at University of Helsinki. He currently investigates the biblical interpretation of Aphrahat as a collaborator in the project "Isaiah between Judeo-Christian Borderlines" funded by the Academy of Finland and the Polin Institute.



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Exegesis of Old Testament
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What and who to expect?

Maros Nicak

East Syriac Christology in the Poetic Form of a Fictional Dialogue Between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople

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Maros Nicak works as vice dean at the Evangelical Lutheran Theological Faculty (CU). Maros did his doctorate in the field of oriental church history at the Georg-August-Universität in Göttingen and Post-Doc in Salzburg, Åbo (2x) and Uppsala. Within the ENLIGHT project, he is responsible for WP5 (Outreach). Founder of the Regional Academy of Comenius University.



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Polin Day

February 3, 2025

09:00 – 09:30 Opening of the Polin Day

09:30 – 10:15 Anni Maria Laato

Confessing Faith before Conciliar Creeds

10:15 – 10:45 Topias Tanskanen

Aphrahat and Nicaea: Review of Research

10:45 – 11:15 Coffee Break

11:15 – 12:00 Serafim Seppälä

Nicene Themes with un-Greek Instruments? Ephrem the Syrian

12:00 – 13:30 Lunch at Grädda

13:30 – 14:15 Maros Nicak

East Syriac Christology in the Poetic Form of a Fictional Dialogue Between Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorius of Constantinople

14:15 – 15:00 Grant White

Christology in the Anaphoras of the Ge'ez Tradition: The State of the Question

15:00 – 15:30 Coffee Break

15:30 – 16:00 Jouko N. Martikainen

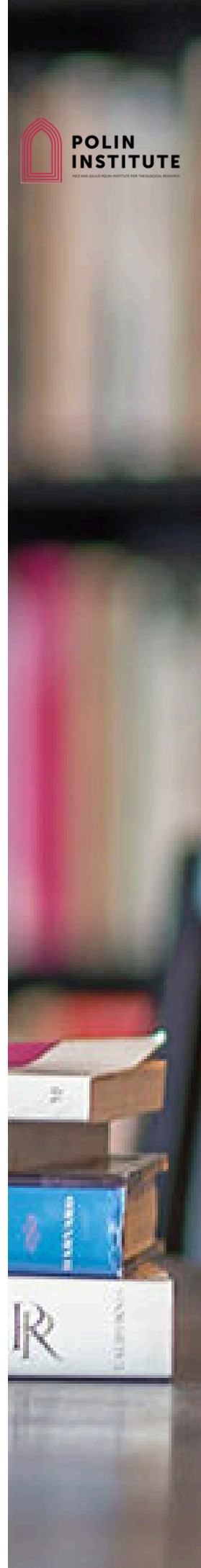
Did Christ See Corruption? Acts 2:27

16:00 – 16:45 Emil Anton

Modern Ecumenism between Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian Churches

16:45 – 17:00 Conclusion

18:00 Dinner



Contact



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Postdoctoral Researcher, Polin Institute

Topias K. E. Tanskanen is a Postdoctoral Researcher in Exegetics in the Polin Institute at Åbo Akademi University and expert in early Jewish reception history of the Bible. He has studied Old Testament Exegetics and Jewish Studies at Åbo Akademi University, where he earned his ThD in 2023, and Hebrew and Semitic philology at University of Helsinki. He currently investigates the biblical interpretation of Aphrahat as a collaborator in the project "Isaiah between Judeo-Christian Borderlines" funded by the Academy of Finland and the Polin Institute.

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Maros Nicak

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Maros works as a Vice Dean for Research, International Relations and Development at the Evangelical Lutheran Theological Faculty (CU). Maros studied evangelical theology at the Comenius University and catholic theology at the pontifical universities in Rome and the Vatican, did his doctorate in the field of oriental church history at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Göttingen and Post-Doc in Salzburg, Åbo and Uppsala. Within the European project ENLIGHT, he is responsible for WP5 (Outreach), within which he is also the main organizer of the Winter School: Fake News. Among other things, he is also the founder of the Regional Academy of the Comenius University.

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2025



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