

INTRODUCTION

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The Council of Nicaea in 325 marks a significant milestone in ecclesiastical history, as it is the first 'ecumenical' council. The current anniversary edition, commemorating 1700 years since the Great Council of Nicaea (AD 325), features original articles, some of considerable scope, proposing new interpretations based on the latest research. The articles are organised thematically, guiding the reader from broader to more specific topics.

The extensive essay by John M. Rist describes the political context – Constantine's 'big tent' policy of unifying the Empire religiously and creating a theologically unified Christianity – in which the Council of Nicaea 325 took place. Regarding this, Rist demonstrates that the leading figures in the initial theological debates were Ossius of Cordova, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Alexander of Alexandria, and Arius. Athanasius only later played a significant role. Initially supporting *homoousios* under Ossius' influence, Constantine later became convinced that the term was not flexible enough for his 'big tent' policy, and therefore, following advice from Eusebius of Nicomedia, began to favour the *homoiousios* – a way of understanding the *homoousios*, as Rist argues, already present during the council's working sessions in 325.

That Eusebius of Caesarea introduced a theology of likeness (epitomized by the term *homoiousios*), as opposed to one of identity or consubstantiality (epitomized by the term *homoousios*), between the Father and the Son at the Council of Nicaea is defended by the following extensive essay signed by Dragoș Andrei Giulea. The author of a recent monograph on the theological debates of the fourth century, reviewed in this issue, Giulea closely traces their portrayal as a confrontation between theologies of likeness (initially the most prevalent, implying degrees of divinity), the Nicene theology of identity (supported by Alexander of Alexandria