

THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF GREECE
ORGANIZING COMMITTEE OF THE 2nd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE CENTENARY OF THE JOURNAL *ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑ*
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Open Call for Papers
for the 2nd International Conference
on the Centenary of the Academic Journal *Θεολογία*
(Thessaloniki, September 29-October 1, 2025)

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary (1923-2023) of the founding and continuous publication of the academic journal *Θεολογία* in 2023, two commemorative conferences were planned.

The first International Conference with the title: “Orthodox Theology *in via* in the ‘Dematerialized Reality’ of Late Modernity” was organized by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece and held in Athens from October 11 to 14, 2023. Its proceedings have already been published in three consecutive issues of the journal *Θεολογία* [vol. 95, issues 1, 2, and 3 (2024)].

The second one is scheduled by the Holy Synod to take place in Thessaloniki from September 29 to October 1, 2025, with the title: “2nd International Conference on the Centenary of the Journal *Θεολογία*: Its Contribution to Theological Scholarship and the Presence of the Orthodox Church and Theology in the Digital Age”.

Θεολογία is an academic journal that has been published uninterruptedly since 1923, by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, under the supervision of the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece. Its purpose has been and remains the publication of original and unpublished scholarly treatises, studies, articles, essays, and book reviews to promote academic research. Beyond Greek, *Θεολογία* has also published and continues to publish papers in English, French, German, Italian, or other foreign languages.

To further promote the international presence of the Journal, the translation of *Θεολογία* into English has been started, by decision of the Communication and Education Service of the Church of Greece (C.E.S.C.G.) No. 101/15.3.2022, starting with issue 92, 3 (2021), which has already been posted in digital form on the Journal's website. From now on, each issue will be posted on the website, translated in English, three months after the original edition in Greek.

Within this framework, the Church of Greece, recognizing the long and valuable contribution of *Θεολογία* to the cultivation of Orthodox theology across a broad range of theological disciplines –such as Church History, Dogmatics, Patristics, Hagiography, the Ecumenical Movement, Church Art, Liturgics, Philosophy of Religion, Sociology of Religion, Pastoral Theology, Comparative Religion, Canon Law, and others, as well as related disciplines like Philology, Philosophy, Textual Criticism, History, Sociology, and Psychology– decided that the second commemorative conference for the Journal's centenary should be dedicated, on one hand, to the Journal's history and contribution and, on the other hand, to the presence of the Orthodox Church and Theology in the digital age. The 2nd International Scientific Theological Conference will feature distinguished theologians and academics from the Orthodox world and beyond.

The conference is structured along two thematic axes:

I. The first one concerns the history of the journal *Θεολογία* to date (foundation, collaborators, thematic areas, evolution, and prospects, etc.) and an evaluation of its overall contribution. Proposals submitted under the Open Call for Papers will be reviewed anonymously by the Academic Committee, as was done for the 2023 conference.

Possible –indicative but not restrictive– thematic areas include:

1. Archbishop Chrysostomos Papadopoulos of Athens and the birth of *Θεολογία* (historical, political, and social context, formative factors of the era).

2. The history of the journal (content, special issues, developmental trends across editorial periods, collaborators, format, etc.) – Linguistic choices and publishing practices.

3. Theological trends and currents – The journal as a platform for prominent theologians and/or other intellectuals.

4. The journal's engagement with contemporary issues, interdisciplinary approaches, and activities.

II. The second thematic axis addresses the subject: "The Presence of the Orthodox Church and Theology in the Digital Age". Specifically, it explores how the new digital reality and its applications, regardless of their beneficial or harmful use, influence the nature, essence, and mission of the Church and its theology. It will examine how this reality impacts areas such as liturgics, anthropology, pastoral care, and mission. The thematic focus aims to explore whether digitality and the dematerialization of the human body alter the Church's identity. In this regard, the point is to explore the presence of Orthodox Theology in today's virtual and disembodied world of technology and artificial intelligence, which promotes disembodied society when e.g. space and time no longer exist in their tangible dimensions, challenging the biblical teaching: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (*Matt.* 18:20). In a way, this second axis represents a continuation and deepening of the concerns and the general reflections raised during the first Conference. Part of the presentations in this thematic area will be delivered by invited speakers, while the rest will come from proposals submitted under the Open Call for Papers and approved anonymously by the Academic Committee, as was done for the 2023 conference.

The conference's philosophy and approach aim to provide a platform for interdisciplinary exploration of the aforementioned issues, striving for a comprehensive examination of the dematerialization and promotion of a virtual digital "reality" and its impact on the Church and its theology, as well as on every aspect of human life and other religions. As such, distinguished experts of international acclaim, from various scientific fields, will be invited. These experts have engaged with the immense value of the human body and physical presence in human relationships, especially as technology increasingly devalues the body, diminishes natural presence, and suppresses human creativity. Of particular interest to the conference's focus is the study of the significance and value that these researchers attribute to the physical presence, aligning with the unwavering theological importance Orthodox theology places on the body, as expressed in the doctrines of the Incarnation and Resurrection.

To comprehend the above, it is necessary to examine whether claims about the “neutrality” of technology are an ideological construct (as philosophers, sociologists, and writers have argued since the early 20th century), which shifts all problems –real or anticipated– to the realm of good or bad usage. For instance, the classic argument is that a knife can be used to cut bread or to kill, so its use determines its benefit or harm, not its ontology. However, this ignores the fact that a knife is *inherently designed to cut*. Even if we accept the argument’s applicability to objects like knives, how would we address inventions such as the atomic bomb, a Kalashnikov, or an Uzi?

Authors and philosophers (e.g., Samuel Butler, E. Carpenter, L. Tolstoy, B. Russell, etc.) from as early as the 19th century and predominantly from the early 20th century have pointed out that the issue with technology lies not in its use but in its essence, which is not merely technical but rather a specific worldview and philosophy. That is, technology is based on, arises from, and reproduces a certain stance toward the world/nature, humanity, and God. Moreover, since it encompasses a purpose, we cannot speak of neutrality. It is no coincidence that this observation was formulated after the Industrial Revolution, as at that time there was truly a rupture –the introduction of the machine– which radically changed the relationship between humans and the concepts of tools, manual labor, time, distance, and so on.

Nevertheless, the position regarding neutrality and the good or bad usage of technology not only was not abandoned but was promoted even more intensely after the dropping of the atomic bomb (1945). And it continues to be used today, despite the in-depth analysis of the technical spirit by philosophers such as Heidegger, Sp. Kyriazopoulos, and others, and despite the fact that it is now widely known that technological development is funded by private individuals, companies, etc., for the achievement of specific purposes – usually not for the benefit of humanity, as is advertised, but for the maximization of profit, power, influence, and so on. This issue becomes even more pressing today with the development of digital technology, which completely overturns our earlier certainties, creating the illusion that the limits of human capabilities have been surpassed. Various forms of automation, Artificial Intelligence, and even the much-advertised “resurrection of the dead” (deathbots, griefbots, etc.) are creating a world unprecedented in its nature, whose evolution is not easy to predict.

It could be considered that the perception of neutrality and good/bad usage is a moderate position between technophobia and technolatriy. However, the aim of the Conference is not to get entangled in this dichotomy, because the role of the Orthodox Church and Theology is to represent the Eschaton within History and to remind humanity that it cannot derive its identity from created certainties. For this to happen, however, the Church and its Theology must not lose the conception of personhood, relationship, and embodied community.

Based on the above, thematic areas for the second axis of the Conference could –indicatively and not restrictively– be as follows:

1. What is the philosophy and ontology of technology, and how are they transmitted through technological achievements and the use of technological innovations?

2. The role and place of the body in the new technological world: comparisons, convergences, and divergences in different phases of the history of technology.

3. *Demonization vs. idealization* of technology: does this dichotomy touch upon the real problem?

4. The perception of technological neutrality and the misleading (?) dilemma of good and bad usage.

5. From secularization/disenchantment/desacralization to the digital transformation of Church and Theology.

6. How does digital technology practically affect aspects of ecclesiastical life, worship, and Theology?

7. Digital Parish and digital monastic life: the negation of Orthodox anthropology – The consequences of disembodiment for the Church and theology.

8. The consequences of digital "reality" on other religions and aspects of public life.

Based on this rationale, the Standing Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, through the Organizing Committee of the Conference and the Editorial Department of the journal *Θεολογία*, wishing to honor its more than century-long contribution to theological scholarship, invites those interested in participating with a presentation (holders of at least a doctoral degree) to submit to the Conference Secretariat, at the email

address: synedrio2025@ecclesia.gr, two separate files (in Word or PDF format): a) a brief biographical note (approx. 200 words), and b) the title of the presentation and an abstract (approx. 300 words) of their proposed contribution. The submission deadline is March 31, 2025. Presentations will take the form of short papers with a maximum duration of 15 minutes. Subsequently, all submitted proposals will be forwarded anonymously by the Conference Secretariat to the Scientific Committee for evaluation. All applicants will be informed of the outcome –whether their proposals are approved or rejected– no later than April 30, 2025.

The official opening of the Conference will take place on the afternoon of Monday, September 29, 2025, in the presence of the members of the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece and other official representatives of the State and Church from Greece and abroad. It will begin with an inaugural lecture at the Holy Cathedral of the Wisdom of God (Hagia Sophia). The main sessions will be held on Tuesday, September 30, 2025, at the Thessaloniki Concert Hall, and on Wednesday, October 1, 2025, at the Amphitheater of the School of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

The official languages of the Conference will be Greek and English.

For any additional information, interested parties may contact the Secretariat via email at synedrio2025@ecclesia.gr or by phone at +30.211.1824315 and +30.211.182.4316.

On behalf of the Organizing Committee