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Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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New Essay Examines Nicaea’s Role in Christianity’s Separation from Judaism

(Bonn, 15.05.2026) A new scholarly essay by Archbishop Thomas Paul Schirmmacher explores the historical relationship between early Christianity and Judaism, focusing on the lasting impact of the Council of Nicaea (325 AD). The essay appears in the recently published volume “Their Lord and Ours: The Enduring Legacy of Nicaea” (World of Theology Series 33).

In his contribution, Schirmmacher argues that the Council of Nicaea marked a decisive stage in the separation of the Christian Church from its Jewish roots. While affirming the theological importance of the Nicene Creed, he highlights how political and cultural factors—especially under Emperor Constantine—contributed to distancing Christianity from Jewish traditions.

A central focus of the essay is the Council’s decision to separate the date of Easter from the Jewish Passover. According to Schirmmacher, this move symbolised a broader shift toward defining a distinct, non-Jewish Christian identity. He further suggests that such decisions were influenced less by biblical or theological reasoning and more by prevailing anti-Jewish attitudes of the time.

The essay also discusses the apparent absence of Jewish-Christian representatives at the Council and interprets this as part of a wider process in which leadership in the Church had already shifted away from its Jewish origins. Schirmmacher points to historical evidence indicating that Jewish followers of Jesus continued to exist for centuries, even as institutional Christianity increasingly distanced itself from them.

In addition, the author examines Constantine’s policies and rhetoric, describing them as openly hostile toward Jews and influential in shaping subsequent Christian atti-



Schirmmacher speaks during the conference “The Contemporary Church and Antisemitism Today: What Must We Do?” in Berlin in 2022 © IIRF/Martin Warnecke

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Evangelical Review of Theology (New York, Bonn) theology.worlddea.org/evangelical-review-of-theology

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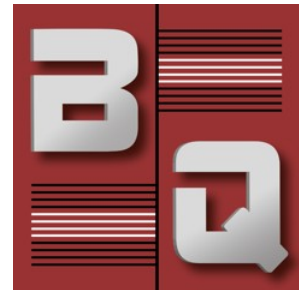
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tudes and legislation. He argues that these developments laid the groundwork for long-term theological and social divisions between Christianity and Judaism.

Despite this critical perspective, Schirmacher maintains that the core Christological insights affirmed at Nicaea remain rooted in biblical tradition. His essay calls for further research into early Jewish-Christian communities and encourages contemporary reflection on Christianity's historical relationship with Judaism.

The essay is part of the volume "Their Lord and Ours: The Enduring Legacy of Nicaea," which brings together a range of scholarly perspectives on the continuing significance of the Nicene Creed.

Downloads and Links:

- The essay "Nicaea and the Separation of the Christian Church From Its Jewish Roots" by Thomas Schirmacher: <https://thomasschirmacher.net/?p=25511>
- The book "Their Lord and Ours: The Enduring Legacy of Nicaea": <https://thomasschirmacher.net/?p=25204>
- BQ 924 – 29/2026 "WEA publishes a book to mark the 1,700th anniversary of Nicaea": <https://bonn-profiles.net/?p=12409>

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