



# GBFE

Network for Research and  
Higher Education in Europe

## SECOND CALL FOR PAPERS

for a conference on the topic

### Let's do Theology!

- OFF THE MAP BUT NOT WITHOUT DIRECTION

AT FORUM WIEDENEST/GERMANY (NEAR COLOGNE)

26/27 August 2025

'Let's do theology' - that is the guiding principle of the GBFE. In the theses on our understanding of theological work, we write:

**"We enable students to carry out context-related, biblically and theologically reflected and action-orientated research"**, and we add: "In the midst of the paradigmatic changes that we are experiencing at the beginning of the 21st century, careful and innovative theological work is required in order to find viable answers to the questions of our time."

In previous meetings, we have often discussed the aspects of contextualisation and the reformulation of theology in constantly changing cultural realities. This provokes the question of whether the Christian faith is flexible without limits, or whether there is an unchanging core which must be preserved. Can we formulate something like the "essence" of the Christian faith, which must be carefully and faithfully transmitted? What criteria are to be used in such attempts?

**It is this side of the tension between continuity and discontinuity in theological contents and formulations that we want to explore at our conference in August 2025.**

We invite academic papers that address aspects of this theme. They should provide a deeper understanding of

tradition and innovation in theology and at the same time show constructive-critical approaches for moving forward.

In terms of scope and theme, we are considering the following questions and areas. Therefore, we invite proposals that would fit within this framework:

- In connection with the topic of "contextualisation", the question arises as to the core of the Christian faith, which cannot be changed in the course of contextualisation. Paul Hiebert's plea for "critical contextualisation" (1999) was an attempt at responsible contextualisation. What contributions are there to these questions today?

- In connection with the various 'post-terms' (post-modern, post-traditional, post-colonial, post-evangelical), the terms 'deconstruction' and 'reconstruction' are often used. What are the potential and limitations of these concepts?

- Sometimes concepts such as 'paradigm shift' (Kuhn) or 'reconstruction of narratives' (MacIntyre) are used to understand and shape developments and shifts in theology. Can these concepts help us to deal responsibly with continuity and discontinuity?

- All Christian traditions confess that the Bible is the

*norma normans* of the Christian faith. How can and must this 'normativity' be understood in view of the relativity of all human theological formulations? What are the implications?

- Even within normative scripture, we observe reinterpretations of biblical faith throughout the different epochs of the biblical narrative. What can we learn from this inner-biblical reconfiguration of theology?

- In the context of encounters between the Christian

faith and other religions and worldviews, the question of the essence of the Christian faith arises time and again. How can this essence be made known in dialogue with people of other faith traditions?

- Time and again and for different reasons have Christians attempted to define „the fundamentals“ of Christian faith ... with more or less success. What is there that could direct and inspire our thinking and what was and is highly problematic? What lessons do such attempts with the benefit of hindsight teach us?

**Please submit a paper title and abstract of no more than 200 words by 15 March 2025 to Mrs Dorothea Krämer (dorothea.kraemer@gbfe.eu). The programme will be finalised by April 2025.**

The proceedings will then be published as a Supplementum with the South African journal *Acta Theologica* (submission until 31 Dec 2025).

### Venue, date & language

The conference will last from 26 August 2025, 9.00 hrs., to 27 August 2025, 16.00 hrs.

It will include plenary sessions, presentations in parallel groups and a conference dinner on the Tuesday night. The conference language will be English; for small group presentations German will also be an option.

The conference site is Forum Wiedenest, 51702 Bergneustadt, Germany (near Cologne). (We will arrange a visit to Cologne before the conference for visitors arriving early.) The fee for the conference will be 210€, including meals and the conference dinner. Accommodation can be booked at the conference hotel (details to follow later).

### Literature

Some texts related to the topic of our conference:

Buchanan, Duncan & Jurgens Hendriks (eds.) (1995). *Meeting the Future: Christian Leadership in South Africa*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources).

Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Perdue & K. K. Yeo (eds.) (2015). *Jesus without Borders. Christology in the Majority World*. Carlisle: Langham.

Hiebert, Paul (1999), *Missiological Implications of Epistemological Shifts. Affirming Truth in a Modern/Postmodern World*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International.

Marshall, I. Howard (2004). *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology. Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker).

Theissen, Gerd (2007). *The Bible and Contemporary Culture*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis

Tomlin, Graham (2022), *Navigating a World of Grace. The Promise of Generous Orthodoxy*. London: SPCK.

McGrath, Alister & Matthew Thomas (2024), *Christian Theology. An Introduction (7th edition)*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Sedmak, Clemens (2002), *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Faith and Cultures Series). Maryknoll: Orbis Books.

Volf, Miroslav & Matthew Croasmun (2019), *For the Life of the World. Theology That Makes a Difference*. Grand Rapids: Brazon Press.

### Conference Committee

Prof Bernhard Ott, Switzerland, GBFE

Prof Jaco Beyers, South Africa, University of Pretoria

Prof Christoph Stenschke, Germany, GBFE and BTA Forum Wiedenest