

Call for Papers

COMENIUS-SOMEF CONFERENCE CLUJ/KOLOZSVÁR, Romania MAY 14 - MAY 17, 2025

Theology in Context: Sources, Beliefs, and Practices

Theology as an interdisciplinary field navigates the space between revelation and faith, as found in Scripture and Christian traditions, and the contextual, cultural, societal, and ecclesial challenges it encounters. This position *'in between'* raises several critical questions. To what extent have our theological understandings, interpretations, and experiences of sources, beliefs, and ecclesial and religious practices been influenced by the specific contexts? How have contextual challenges historically influenced or even transformed theological reflection in past and present? Conversely, how has theology maintained a distinct and critical voice concerning its context?

This first joint COMENIUS-SOMEF conference, hosted by the Protestant Theological Institute in Cluj/Kolozsvár, Romania, aims to explore the mutual influence between theology (and philosophy of religion) and their contexts, both past and present. We anticipate contributions from various theological disciplines, including biblical studies, church history, systematic theology, theological ethics, practical theology and religious education, to enrich each other and foster interdisciplinary learning. Furthermore, the conference will provide an opportunity *to discuss developments in theological faculties and institutes in The Netherlands and Central European countries*.

The COMENIUS-Committee, est. 1999, organizes bi-annual interdisciplinary theological conferences, for Central and Eastern European Theological Institutes and Faculties and Dutch Theological Institutes and Faculties. SOMEF, est. 1999, stands for the bi-annual Sud-Ost-Mitteleuropäischer Fakultätentag für Evangelische Theologie.

Since 1999, SOMEF and COMENIUS conferences were organized alternately. This conference on Theology in Context is the first joint conference, prepared by representatives of both committees.

Conference Theme:

Our cultures and societies are undergoing rapid transformations:

- Cultural Developments: The influence of postmodern, relativistic worldviews; advancements in social media and artificial intelligence; the impact of technology; and the prevailing immanent frame.
- Socio-Political Developments: The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, rising polarization, the growth of populism, climate change, and the refugee crisis.
- Demographic Changes: migration, urbanization, gentrification, and new challenges faced by younger generations for the young (generation Z, α).
- Ecclesial Developments: rapid secularization in Western societies alongside the emergence and growth of new faith communities, such as the Pentecostal movement.

What are the implications – and the concerns that they may raise – of such often rapid changes for biblical, historical, systematic, ethical, philosophical, and practical theological reflection? Also, what are the consequences for religious education? Conversely, how can theology and philosophy, when conceived interdisciplinary, critically **influence these contextual developments**? Historically, theology has both legitimized contemporary events and offered new interpretations, orientations, and critiques.

Possible contributions:

- **Biblical theology** (OT/NT): case studies examining how the religious-cultural context influenced theological thinking, how the context was interpreted theologically, and attempts to influence the context.
- **Church History**: case studies focusing on models of mutual influence between church and culture, theology and philosophy, church and popular piety, and church and politics.
- **Systematic Theology/Dogmatics**: case studies on contextual challenges where truth claims are at stake, exploring models for translation, contextualization, and critique.
- **Theological Ethics**: case studies on rapid contextual challenges, such as artificial intelligence or medical-technical developments, exploring models for relating Christian ethics to contemporary moral dilemmas.
- **Practical (Empirical) Theology**: case studies on current ecclesial developments, focusing on models relating theological and empirical dimensions of church life.
- **Religious Education**: case studies of current developments and challenges of religious education at schools and parish education, including confirmation work.
- **Philosophy of Religion**: case studies focusing on models relating the transcendent to empirical reality, i.e. contextual developments (cf. 'das Absolute und die Geschichte').

Proposal Requirements

Proposals should be no more than 250 words and **explicitly address** the overall conference theme from your specific discipline. Include your name, email address, affiliation, country, and phone number.

Deadline: **November 1, 2024**

Send your proposal to prof. dr. Jenö Kiss:

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