

University of Bern – University of Stellenbosch Workshop

## **GRAMMAR EXPRESSING THEOLOGY:**

### **The New Testament and Contemporary Literature**

2-3 September 2025

University of Stellenbosch

Does it make a difference, theologically, whether we speak of God in finite verbs, nouns, (nominalised) participles, or adjectives? How are the usages of tense to be interpreted in terms of their theological value? Bringing together philological, exegetical, linguistic, and philosophical expertise, this workshop will scan the different areas of New Testament grammar (and that of contemporary literatures) for their theological value. Areas of discussion are verbal aspects, nominalisation, prepositional expressions and phrases, the *passivum divinum*, pronouns, and the like.

The basic assumption of and starting point for the discussion is that grammar needs to be discussed as more than just an empty shell waiting to be filled with the semantic value of individual lexemes. While semantics have been the focus of a good amount of New Testament scholarship since J. Barr's seminal *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, surprisingly little attention has been given to the theological value of grammar (see, however, S. E. Porter, *New Testament Theology and the Greek Language: A Linguistic Reconceptualization*, Cambridge 2022).

Contributions from the fields of Classics, New Testament studies, and Linguistics will present exemplary cases of theological uses of grammar.

## PROGRAM

*Ancient Studies Research Seminar*

**Tuesday, 02.09.2025, Ancient Studies Department (Seminar Room)**

17:00-18:30     **Rainer Hirsch-Luipold** (University of Bern-University of Stellenbosch):  
*The Grammar of “Sympathy” in Plutarch: Human beings in Resonance with the Divine*

*Workshop “Grammar Expressing Theology”*

**Wednesday, 03.09.2025, Ancient Studies Department (Seminar Room)**

14:00-14:30     **Rainer Hirsch-Luipold** (University of Bern-University of Stellenbosch) /  
**David Hirsch** (University of Heidelberg)  
*Introduction – The Theological Value of Grammatical Forms in the New Testament, Philo, and Plutarch*

14:30-15:00     **Cilliers Breytenbach** (Humboldt University of Berlin-University of Stellenbosch)  
*«καὶ λέγει». Vergegenwärtigung through the use of verbal tenses in Jesus’ speeches in the gospel of Mark*

15:00-15:30     **Joel Brown** (University of Stellenbosch)  
*Lexicogrammatical construal of divine agency in Ephesians 1:22–23*

15:30-15:40     *Discussion*

15:40-16:00     *Coffee break*

16:00-16:20     **Femia Kamper** (University of Bern)  
*The Conceptual Effect of Adjective-Noun Choices in Discussions of the Divine: (ὁ) δίκαιος/δικαιοσύνη in Plutarch, Philo, and Matthew*

16:20-16:35     **Philip Bosman** (University of Stellenbosch)  
*Paul’s prepositional aggregation in Romans*

16:35-16:50     **Josef Langermann** (University of Johannesburg)  
*Quantitative methods in the study of the New Testament*

16:50-17:00     *Discussion*

Team Bern/Bonn (per Zoom)

Apl. Prof Dr. Athanasios Despotis

Dr. Stefano De Feo

Dr. Travis Niles

Jordan Cárdenas Tibaduiza