52nd International Ecumenical Seminar
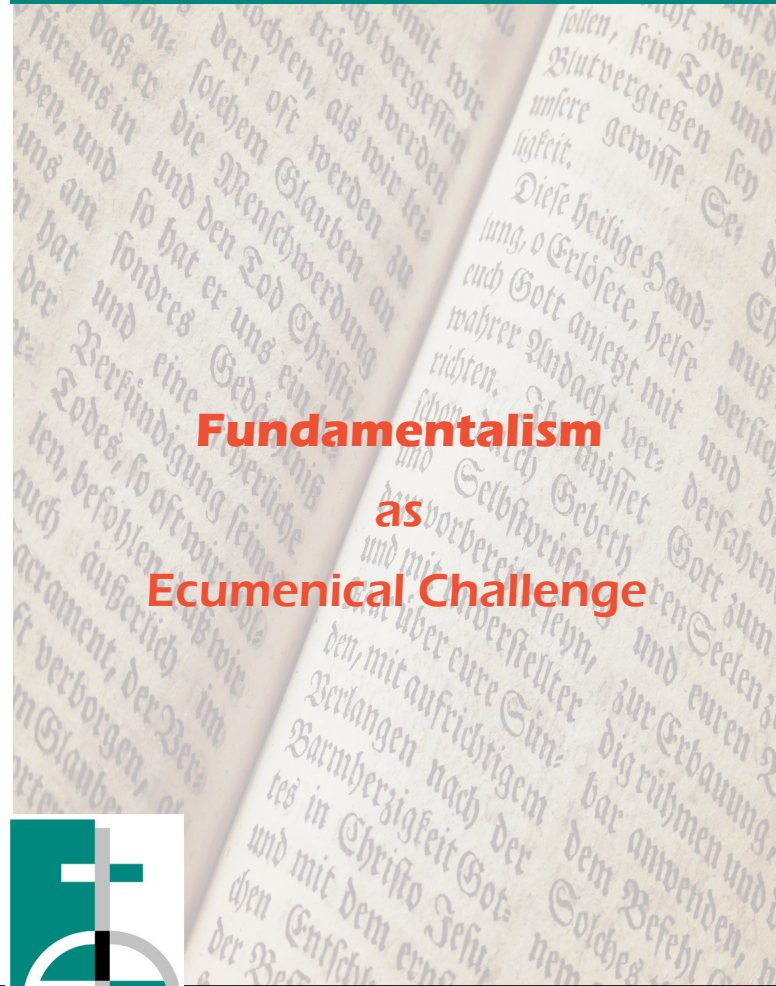
July 2 - 9, 2018

Fundamentalism as Ecumenical Challenge

Dates

From July 2 (arrival and evening reception)
to July 9 (departure after breakfast), 2018,
in Strasbourg, France

Registration and Information

Registration until April 15, 2018
Postal address   8, rue Gustave Klotz
                        F - 67000 Strasbourg
Conference office   Elke Leypold
Telephone   +33 (0)3 88 15 25 75
Fax   +33 (0)3 88 15 25 70
Email   StrasEcum@ecumenical-institute.org

In recent years we have seen the growth in both political and religious life of movements that can be called "fundamentalistic." As they represent a great challenge for churches today as well as for ecumenism overall, the Summer Seminar will take the occasion to probe deeply the matter of fundamentalism. A specific definition of fundamentalism will not be given in advance; rather, during the Seminar we will pursue greater conceptual clarity. For example: in which contexts is this term used? Does it qualify as an objective description of a social phenomenon? Or is it rather chiefly a polemical label applied to an opponent's position? Who are the leaders in the fundamentalist movement(s)? What defines the fundamentalist outlook?

After these initial steps toward getting a handle on fundamentalism we'll take up versions of Christian fundamentalism as they appear in various geographic contexts: in the American, African, Asian, and European settings. What kinds of movements predominate in each place? To what extent do they resemble one another despite their different contexts? In what ways are they different? And to what degree are positions "fundamentalistic" in one location but accepted as perfectly normal in another?

From the ecumenical point of view, the question is especially relevant as to how fundamentalist movements manifest themselves in confessionally unique ways. Therefore in the Summer Seminar we will look at the particular expressions of fundamentalism in Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism, seeking again their commonalities as well as their differences. The one thing that all fundamentalist movements have in common, however, is the claim to be the ones who interpret holy Scripture (whether the Bible or the Koran) authentically. In the Seminar thus the central question will be: what constitutes a fundamentalistic approach to Scripture that can be distinguished from other exegetical approaches; what makes this approach so compelling to those who stand by it; and what are its limits?

Seminar participants are encouraged to share their own experiences with fundamentalist movements in the discussions following lectures and in group work sessions. How best to respond to fundamentalist movements is still, from an ecumenical perspective, an open question. The Seminar will offer the opportunity to discuss this question in all its dimensions and bring forward fresh ideas for consideration.

In addition to the theological discussions, the Seminar fosters opportunity for conversation among the participants, reports of their own ecumenical or confessional experiences, the posing of questions and offering of responses. Since participants come from many different churches and countries, this exchange is always especially exciting and enlightening, both in the plenary sessions and in small group work. The conversation continues over delicious French food at the Stift's dining hall or a glass of wine in one of the charming restaurants in the old city of Strasbourg.

Languages

English and German are the main languages of the seminar. Simultaneous interpretation of every lecture and discussion is available. In the plenary participants can also offer interventions in French.

Costs

The cost of the seminar, including full pension and a single dormitory room, is € 730,-. Financial support may be granted through the participants' home churches or other institutions. We encourage participants to contact their church leaders in this regard. As in previous years, a small portion of participant fees are used to cover the cost of participants from Eastern Europe and other continents.