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Keston Institute

Baylor University

Northwestern
University



IV Annual Conference of the Northwestern University
Research Initiative in Russian Philosophy,
Literature, and Religious Thought

Religion, Freedom of Conscience, and Human Rights in Russia and the West

*Celebrating and Continuing
the Work of the Keston Institute*



Magdalene College, University of Cambridge
September 4–5, 2026

Schedule at a Glance



Day 1 · Friday, September 4

8:00–9:00 AM

Breakfast · *Cripps*

9:00–9:30 AM

Prayer · *St John's College Chapel*

9:45–10:15 AM

Welcome · *Cripps Auditorium*

10:15 AM–12:00 PM

Session 1 · 1 panel

12:00–1:15 PM

Lunch · *Cripps*

1:15–2:45 PM

Session 2 · 3 panels

2:45–3:15 PM

Break

3:15–4:45 PM

Session 3 · 3 panels

5:45–6:45 PM

Keynote · *Cripps Auditorium*

7:00–7:30 PM

Reception · *Fellows' Garden*

7:30–8:45 PM

Formal Dinner · *Magdalene Hall*



Day 2 · Saturday, September 5

8:00–9:00 AM

Breakfast · *Cripps*

9:00–9:30 AM

Prayer · *St John's College Chapel*

9:45–11:30 AM

Session 4 · 3 panels

11:30 AM–1:00 PM

Lunch · *Magdalene Hall*

1:00–2:45 PM

Session 5 · 2 panels

2:45–3:15 PM

Break

3:15–4:45 PM

Session 6 · 1 panel

5:10–6:00 PM

Piano Recital · *Benson Hall*

6:00–7:00 PM

Wine & Canapés · *Pepys Cloisters*

Day 1 · Friday, September 4 · I

8:00–9:00 AM

Breakfast · *Cripps*

9:00–9:30 AM

Prayer · *St John's College Chapel*

9:45–10:15 AM

Welcome · *Cripps Auditorium*

Bradley Underwood, *Northwestern University*
Randall Poole, *College of St. Scholastica*



Session 1 · 10:15 AM–12:00 PM

PANEL 1.1

Cripps Auditorium

Chair: Bradley Underwood,
Northwestern University

Faith Before and Beyond the Church: Two Births of Poor Faith in Russia

Mikhail N. Epstein,
Emory University

The Generation Gap: Children and the Child-Like in Soviet Anti-Religious Posters

Julie K. deGraffenried,
Baylor University

Defending Freedom of Conscience in Early Soviet Russia

Scott Kenworthy,
Miami University of Ohio

Trinitarian Personalism as Existential Philosophy: Berdyayev's Approach to Individual and Community

George Pattison,
University of Glasgow

12:00–1:15 PM

Lunch · *Cripps*

Day 1 · Friday, September 4 · II



Session 2 · 1:15–2:45 PM

PANEL 2.1

Cripps Auditorium

Chair: Octavian Gabor,
Methodist College

Multiple sacralities, multiple realities?

Marietta van der Tol,
University of Cambridge

The Rights of the *Other* Man: Levinas, the Talmud, and a Few Talmudic Verses

Steven Shankman,
University of Oregon

Lev Shestov on Truth, Freedom, and Faith as a New Dimension of Thought

Marina G. Ogden,
Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies, University of Cambridge

PANEL 2.2

Cripps 4

Chair: Peter Gregory Winsky,
Loyola Marymount University

Freedom of Conscience in Berdyaev's Philosophical Heritage

Hieromomk Joseph
(Panteleimon Pavlinciuc),
Berdiaev Museum, Clamart, France

The Church, Sovereignty, and Human Rights in Carl Schmitt and Nikolai Berdyaev

Ana Siljak,
University of Florida

Spiritual Freedom versus "Objectification": The Personalist Foundation of Human Rights in Dialogue between N. Berdyaev and E. Mounier

Ekaterina Rozova,
Paris Nanterre University

PANEL 2.3

Cripps 3

Chair: Randall Poole,
College of St. Scholastica

***Pravo* and *Prava* in the Lexicon of Late Nineteenth-Century Legal Positivism and Religious Thought: The Case of Ivan Foinitsky and Vladimir Solov'ev**

Frances Nethercott,
St Andrews University

Berdyaev's Philosophy of History: The Fate of Humanism

Evelyn Heath,
Northwestern University

Conscience, Community, and Individuality: A Theological Defense of Democratic Moral Diversity

Nathaniel Wood,
Fordham University

2:45–3:15 PM

Break

Day 1 · Friday, September 4 · III



Session 3 · 3:15–4:45 PM

PANEL 3.1

Cripps Auditorium

Chair: Bradley Underwood,
Northwestern University

“Then we should be taken for human beings”: Dignity and Nationalism in Dostoevsky’s *The Diary of a Writer*

Lindsay Martin,
Baylor University

Tragic Dignity: Sergii Bulgakov and Vyacheslav Ivanov Debate Dostoevsky

Denis Zhernokleyev,
Vanderbilt University

On the Very Idea of Human Rights: Lev Tolstoy, Simone Weil and Hannah Arendt in Dialogue

Ana Matoso,
Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon

PANEL 3.2

Cripps 4

Chair: Michael Ossorgin,
Fordham University

Freedom in Dmitrii Merezhkovskii’s Political Theology

Andrzej Dudek,
Jagiellonian University, Poland

Divine Logos, Freedom of Will, and the End of History

Vladimir Marchenkov,
Ohio University

Contra Tolkien: Vladimir Nabokov and the Right to Create as God Creates

Erik Eklund,
Northwestern University

PANEL 3.3

Cripps 3

Chair: Randall Poole,
College of St. Scholastica

Human Rights and Personhood in the Mystical Writings of Anna Nikolaevna Schmidt (1851–1905)

Josephien van Kessel,
Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, Radboud University, Nijmegen

The Trubetskoi Brothers and the Idea of Social, Religious, and Political Unity

Eric Lohr,
American University

Dorothy Day, Hélène Iswolsky, and Freedom of Conscience

Lisa Radakovich Holsberg,
Fordham University

4:45–5:45 PM

Break

5:45–6:45 PM

Keynote · *Cripps Auditorium*

*Freedom of Religion and the Religion of Freedom:
Perspectives from the Russian Christian World*

Dr. Rowan Williams



7:00–7:30 PM

Reception · *Fellows' Garden*



7:30–8:45 PM

Formal Dinner · *Magdalene Hall*

8:45 PM

The end of Day 1

Day 2 · Saturday, September 5 · I

8:00–9:00 AM

Breakfast · *Cripps*

9:00–9:30 AM

Prayer · *St John's College Chapel*



Session 4 · 9:45–11:30 AM

PANEL 4.1

Cripps Auditorium

Chair: Randall Poole,
College of St. Scholastica

Spaces of Freedom in Total Institutions: Pastoral Care and Literature

Maike Schult,
Philipps-University Marburg, Germany

Two Lungs of Dignity: Reconfiguring the Imago Dei through the Political Spirituality of Vincent van Gogh and Vladimir Korolenko

Alex Villas Boas,
Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon

Religious and Political Understandings of Freedom of Conscience

Octavian Gabor,
Methodist College

On the Political Misuse of Revelation in Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*: An Esoteric Reading

Markos Galounis,
The Athens Centre, Greece

PANEL 4.2

Cripps 4

Chair: Bradley Underwood,
Northwestern University

Religious Associations and the Law in Romania

Megan Brand,
Arizona State University

Who is God and Who is Man: Dana Němcová and the Struggle for Human Rights in Czechoslovakia

Michael Long,
Baylor University

Religious Minorities in Putin's Russia: Jehovah's Witnesses as a Litmus Test

Emily B. Baran, *Middle Tennessee State University, USA*
Zoe Knox, *University of Leicester, UK*

PANEL 4.3

Cripps 3

Chair: Scott Kenworthy,
Miami University of Ohio

Tolstoy on Wartime Casuistry

Elizabeth Blake,
St. Louis University

Hegelianism as "False Christianity" (*Izhekhristianstvo*) in Tolstoy's Writings and Christianity in Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887)

Victoria Juharyan,
Johns Hopkins University

Lament for the Patriarch and the Ethics of Memory (Tolstoy's Religion in Jewish Press)

Inessa Medzhibovskaya,
New School for Social Research

The Body as Icon: Florensky, O'Connor, and the Trinitarian Mirror in 'Parker's Back'

Michael Ossorgin,
Fordham University

11:30 AM–1:00 PM

Lunch · *Magdalene Hall*



Session 5 · 1:00–2:45 PM

PANEL 5.1

Cripps Auditorium

Chair: Joshua Heath,
Trinity College, Cambridge

“The mind is not subject to God unless the free will is subject to reason”: Freedom and the Hesychastic Method in “The Poema of the Grand Inquisitor”

Peter Gregory Winsky,
Loyola Marymount University

Vladimir Solovyov and the Resurgence of the Antichrist

Bradley Underwood,
Northwestern University

John Milbank, Vladimir Soloviev, and the Human Rights Debate

Randall Poole,
College of St. Scholastica

“Responsibility before God”: A Remnant of the Past or a Perspective for the Future of the Free Democratic Basic Order?

Philipp David,
Justus Liebig University, Giessen

PANEL 5.2

Cripps 4

Chair: Ana Siljak,
University of Florida

The Existentialist Philosophy of Nicolas A. Berdyaev

Fr. Robert F. Slesinski,
Eparchy of Passaic, New Jersey

What Does It Mean to Win? Natural Law in Semyon Frank’s *Force and Law* (1916) and *The Spiritual Foundations of Society* (1929)

Dmitry Biriukov,
University of California, Los Angeles

Spiritual Autonomy and National Destiny: Berdyaev on Religious Freedom

Sr. Teresa Obolevitch,
The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

2:45–3:15 PM

Break



Session 6 · 3:15–4:45 PM

PANEL 6.1

Cripps Auditorium

Chair: George Pattison,
University of Glasgow

Solidarity and Prayer: Thinking with Rowan Williams, Catholic Social Thought, and *The Brothers Karamazov*

Paul J. Contino,
Pepperdine University

Metaphysical Responses to the Crisis in the Russian Orthodox Church's Theology of Politics

Antoine Arjakovsky,
Collège des Bernardins, Paris

Tolstoy's Diaries, Wittgenstein's Doubts, Bibikhin's Organisms and Mechanisms

Caryl Emerson,
Princeton University

4:45–5:10 PM

Break

5:10–6:00 PM

Piano Recital · *Benson Hall*

Pictures at an Exhibition

«Картинки с выставки»

Modest Musorgsky (1839–1881)

Performed by Dominik Stadler

Introduction by Caryl Emerson, *Princeton University*



6:00–7:00 PM

Wine & Canapés · *Pepys Cloisters*

7:00 PM

The end of the conference

Conference Sponsors



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Research Initiative in Russian Philosophy,
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