

**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**

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

**Co-sponsored by Trinity College, University of Cambridge; Baylor University,
Departments of History and Modern Languages and Cultures; and the Keston Institute**

**Day 1
September 4**

9:00 – 9:30 Prayer, St. John’s Chapel

10:00 – 10:15 Welcome and Remarks about the Keston Institute

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

10:15 – 12:00 Session 1

1.1 Cripps Auditorium

After Atheism: The Phenomenon of Minimal Religion 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

The Individual, Personhood, and Community: Berdyaev in Dialogue with his Contemporaries
George Pattison, University of Glasgow

12:00 – 1:00 Cripps Lunch

1:00 – 2:45 Session 2

2.1 Cripps Auditorium

Metaphysical Responses to the Crisis in the Russian Orthodox Church's Theology of Politics
Antoine Arjakovsky, Collège des Bernardins, Paris

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

2.2 Cripps 5

Freedom of Conscience in Berdyaev's Philosophical Heritage
Hiernomonk 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

2.3 Cripps 1

Conscience, Community, and Individuality: A Theological Defense of Democratic Moral
Diversity
Nathaniel Wood, Fordham University

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, UCLA

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

2:45 – 3:15 Break

3:15 – 5:00 Session 3

3.1 Cripps Auditorium

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

Lindsay Martin, Baylor University

Human Rights, Antisemitism, Dostoevsky

Susan McReynolds, Northwestern University

On the Very idea of Human Rights: Lev Tolstoy, Simone Weil and Hannah Arendt in Dialogue
Ana Matosa, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Lisbon

Tragic Dignity: Sergii Bulgakov and Vyacheslav Ivanov Debate Dostoevsky

Denis Zhernokleyev, Vanderbilt University

3.2 Cripps 5

Freedom in Dmitrii Merezhkovskii’s Political Theology

Andrzej Dudek, Jagiellonian University, Poland

The Courage to Be: Between the Search for Transcendence and the Decision to be Oneself

Marta Lechowska, Jagiellonian University

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

Vladimir Marchenkov, Ohio University

3.3 Cripps 1

Dorothy Day, Hélène Iswolsky, and Freedom of Conscience

Lisa Radakovich Holsberg, Fordham University

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

6:00 – 7:00 Keynote (Dr. Rowan Williams), Auditorium

7:15 – 9:00 Formal Dinner, Magdalene Hall

**Day 2
September 5**

9:00 – 9:30 Prayer, St. John's Chapel

10:00 – 11:30 Session 4

4.1 Cripps Auditorium

“Who cares for you?” Alice, the Queen of Hearts, Conscience against Tyranny
Miguel Cabedo e Vasconcelos, Universidade Católica Portuguesa

Spaces of Freedom in Total Institutions: Pastoral Care and Literature
Maïke 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

4.2 Cripps 5

Religious Associations, National Constitutions, and International Covenants in Romania, France, and the United Kingdom
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 and Political Understandings of Freedom of Conscience
Octavian Gabor, Methodist College

4.3. Cripps 1

Tolstoy on Wartime Casuistry
Elizabeth Blake, St. Louis University

Hegelianism as “False Christianity” (*lzhekhristianstvo*) 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

11:30 – 1:00 Lunch, Magdalene Hall

1:00 – 2:30 Session 5

5.1 Cripps Auditorium

Tolstoy's Diaries, Wittgenstein's Doubts, Bibikhin's Organisms and Mechanisms
Caryl Emerson, Princeton University

"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

"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

5.2 Cripps 5

Contra Tolkien: Vladimir Nabokov and the Right to Create as God Creates
Erik Eklund, Northwest University

Grossman, *Everything Flows*, Narrative and Dynamism
Austin Benedetto, Northwestern University

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

5.3 Cripps 1

The Existentialist Philosophy of Nicolas A. Berdyaev
Fr. Robert F. Slesinski, Eparchy of Passaic, New Jersey

Berdyaev's Philosophy of History: The Fate of Humanism
Evelyn Heath, Northwestern University

Spiritual Autonomy and National Destiny: Berdyaev on Religious Freedom
Sr. Teresa Obolevitch, The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

2:30 – 3:00 Break

3:00 – 4:45 Session 6

6.1 Cripps Auditorium

From Solidarity to Sobornost': Fyodor Dostoevsky, Vladimir Soloviev, Sergei Bulgakov, and Rowan Williams

Paul J. Contino, Pepperdine University

Vladimir Soloviev: Russian Religious Personalism and Human Rights

Randall Poole, College of St. Scholastica

The Anti-Christ and Human Rights

Bradley Underwood, Northwestern University

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

Markos Galounis, The Athens Centre, Greece

6.2 Cripps 1

Yakov Druskin, Baptism, and the Justification of Non-Denominational Christianity in Soviet Russia

Ruslan Kraev, KU Leuven

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

5:10 – 6:00 Piano Recital, Benson Hall

Introduction by Caryl Emerson

Modest Musorgsky, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, performed by Dominic Stadler

6:00 – 7:00 Wine and Canapes, Pepys Library

For inquiries regarding the conference, please contact:

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