

PAPERS AND PUBLICATION

Those who wish to present a paper should send a summary (400–500 words) by email to St. Andrew's Institute by 1 September 2018. The Organizing Committee selects papers for the Conference and sends invitations to the speakers. The working language of the conference will be English.

Upon arrival at the conference every participant will receive summaries of all the papers and the conference programme. Papers are scheduled for 20 minutes each. Some of the papers will be published in St. Andrew's quarterly *Pages: Theology, Culture, Education*. The registration form can be found on St. Andrew's website www.standrews.ru. Registrations, summaries and papers should be sent to:

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ORGANIZATION AND ACCOMMODATION

The Conference will assemble on Wednesday 24 October for the opening ceremony and the first session in the evening. Participants will depart after breakfast on Saturday 27 October.

The Conference will be held in the well-known spiritual and academic centre, the Monastery of Bose. The organizers will provide accommodation and meals.

St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute

PATRONS: METROPOLITAN KALLISTOS OF DIOKLEIA, LORD RICHARD HARRIES,
PROFESSOR HANS KÜNG, PROFESSOR JÜRGEN MOLTMANN, VERY REV. LEONID KISHKOVSKY,
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ST. ANDREW'S
BIBLICAL THEOLOGICAL
INSTITUTE

(Moscow, Russia)



MONASTERY OF BOSE

(Magnano, Italy)

Invitation and Call for Papers

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

THEOLOGY AND VIOLENCE:
Discerning the Roots of Religious Conflicts

24–27 October 2018
Bose, Italy

Visit our web-site
WWW.STANDREWS.RU

THEME OF THE CONFERENCE

The contemporary situation, in which many political, national and religious conflicts are breaking out regularly in different parts of the world, poses serious challenges to Christian theology and also to the theology of other religions.

Christianity has always claimed to be a religion of peace and nonviolence (“blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God,” “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”). From its very beginnings the adherents of Christianity suffered (and continue to suffer today, especially in the Middle East) from severe persecution for their faith, so that martyrdom has always been praised as the highest form of devotion to God and has become part and parcel of the Christian ideal. The theology of martyrdom still remains relevant and often helps Christians of different confessions to overcome their differences and come together (the “ecumenism of blood,” as Pope Francis has called it).

At the same time Christians themselves often admitted, supported and even initiated violence against other groups: non-Christians, “heretics”, even against those coreligionists who shared different political views or belonged to a different ethnic group. Some famous theologians including Augustine, Luther and Calvin could not escape the temptation to justify violence against those who they thought persisted in their “wrongdoings” or “wrong thinking.”

Violence, at least in its legitimate forms, underlies any political system (especially the state, as Max Weber emphasized in his *Politics as a Vocation*), so perhaps it is a kind of “necessary evil” present in every society as well

as in international relations. But perhaps religion is also based on violence or at least has to resort to violence in order to preserve order in a society and restrain it from even greater violence?

René Girard has transformed the discussion of religion and violence by his provocative “mimetic theory”. He locates “the sacred” in the vulnerable instability of societies in crisis. “Religion” (especially where this involves sacrifice) is nothing other than the attempt by such groups to survive, caught as they are in a vortex of competing desires and the struggle for recognition. “Sacrifice” here is equivalent to the social expedient of “scapegoating”. Girard goes on to claim that only the “real” sacred of the gospel of peace can overcome the “false” sacred of violent transcendence centred on victimization.

What can theological reflection on violence and religion bring out today, especially in view of the world torn by conflicts in which religion is engaged? In the course of the conference the following issues will be addressed:

- Is it possible to overcome religious violence or are religion and violence inseparable?
- How should religion react to the language of violence when it gains strength in a society, especially when religion itself is used to support this language?
- In a situation of conflict, should religion take the side of one of the conflicting parts (given that we can rarely discern who is right and who is wrong) or should it try to be neutral and to remain “above” the conflict?
- What are the theological implications of violence? Can there exist, within the boundaries of Christianity and along with the theology of martyrdom, a “theology of violence”?