

## 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 15 September 2019. 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](http://www.standrews.ru). Registrations, summaries and papers should be sent to:

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## ORGANIZATION AND ACCOMMODATION

The Conference will assemble on Wednesday 23 October for the opening ceremony and the first session in the evening. Participants will depart after breakfast on Saturday 26 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.

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### St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute

PATRONS: METROPOLITAN KALLISTOS OF DIOKLEIA, LORD RICHARD HARRIES,  
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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 OF FREEDOM

23–26 October 2019  
Bose, Italy

Visit our web-site  
[WWW.STANDREWS.RU](http://WWW.STANDREWS.RU)

## **THEME OF THE CONFERENCE**

The problem of freedom has been central to Christian theology since its beginnings. Already in John 8:31-36 we see a distinction between what can be termed 'external' and 'inner' freedom, i.e. freedom from outside constraints (such as slavery or oppression) and freedom from one's own sins. In the following centuries, growing monasticism emphasized this inner freedom achieved through fighting with those thoughts and passions which were deemed bad and evil. This became an ideal which every Christian was supposed to strive for and which still plays an important role in the Christian life.

This insistence on inner freedom, however, often ignored external freedom. While stressing the necessity for Christians to fight against their individual sins, the church rarely took into account their outward conditions (social, political, economic), however terrible they might be. Moreover, it was often stressed that the latter had been instituted or sanctioned by God and therefore did not need to be changed. Thus the church was often used (and is still used) to support and to vindicate social injustices, oppressive political regimes, etc. This brought about various movements within the church (such as liberation theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) that pointed to these outward conditions as a kind of social sin which deprives people of their basic rights and freedoms and which should be tackled first of all. The contrasting of 'inner' and 'external' freedom, therefore, can be misleading because social structures in many respects determine the individual's propensities and behaviour. It is hardly possible to strive for moral or spiritual perfection when one lives in miserable conditions, so it will be hypocritical to preach 'inner' freedom to those who suffer from poverty or oppression.

There is yet another dimension of freedom which can be termed 'ontological freedom' and is different from freedom of will or choice described above. Paul Tillich lamented that very few theologians and philosophers nowadays think about the question of ontological freedom. The contemporary Greek theologian John Zizioulas is one of those who consider this question to be of primary importance. He argues that freedom is about absolute ontological otherness, that to be free in an ontological sense means to be absolutely 'other'. However, is freedom in this sense possible alongside an omnipotent God? How can God create a person with the full ontological identity that is His other, i.e. that possesses something of his/her own to communicate to God? And what is the role of the doctrine of creation out of nothing regarding the question of ontological freedom?

The 20<sup>th</sup>-century Russian philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev went so far as to claim that freedom is uncreated, that it is 'the nothing, manifest prior to all being,' out of which God created the world. But can there be something that is not created by God, something that is, in Berdyaev's words, 'outside' of God?

The ontological dimension of freedom, although different from its moral or sociopolitical dimensions, is not totally separated from them, but rather underlies them and helps us better understand the roots of many social and political problems and conflicts. The forthcoming conference will discuss different views and concepts of freedom from a theological perspective, under the general title of 'theology of freedom'.