

## Tradition and Traditionalisms Compared

### A Joint Program of the *Tradition Project* and the *Postsecular Conflicts Project*

Trento, 12-13 June 2017 | FBK Aula piccola via Santa Croce, 77

Arrival of participants: Sunday (11 June) afternoon/evening. Dinner 20:00

#### Monday (12 June)

09:00-09:30 Session 1

Welcome by the host, Prof. Marco Ventura, Head of Religious Studies Program Fondazione Bruno Kessler

Welcome and overview over the respective programs by Kristina Stoeckl (Postsecular Conflicts) and Mark Movsesian & Marc DeGirolami (The Tradition Project)

09:30-10:30 Session 2 (moderator: Mark Movsesian)

Discussion of key-concepts with statements by participants: Tradition – *Predanie*

10:30-11:00 Coffee break

11:00-12:30 Session 2 continued

12:30-14:00 Lunch break (buffet lunch in FBK)

14:00-15:30 Session 3 (moderator: Pasquale Annicchino)

Discussion of key-concepts with statements by participants: freedom of religion, majority – minority

15:30-16:00 Coffee break

16:00-17:00 Session 3 continued

17:00-19:00 Free time, guided tour of Trento Old Town and Cathedral

20:00 Dinner

#### Tuesday (13 June)

09:30-11:00 Session 4 (moderator: Marc DeGirolami)

Discussion of key-concepts with statements by participants: Traditional values – Christian values

11:00-11:30 Coffee break

11:30-13:00 Session 5 (moderator: Kristina Stoeckl)

Discussion of key-concepts with statements by participants: church-state relations – disestablishment

13:00-13:30 Final discussion

13:30 Lunch and end of conference

## Key concepts and questions

### 1. Key-concept: Tradition – *Predanie*

- a. Under this keyword we would expect elaborations of tradition as received wisdom. In the Russian Orthodox context, the word “predanie” (tradition) refers to the accumulated wisdom and theological riches of the Church. It is a theological concept. The word “traditsia” is not used to refer to this body of ideas and lived experience.
- b. In the American context, although “tradition” can have a theological connotation, it often refers to something else: enduring usages and customs that are justified empirically—that is, because they “work.” In American politics, for example, traditionalists more often argue that tradition reflects practical accommodations that have been tested by time and that reflect diffuse, democratic decisionmaking and the collected wisdom of a people.
- c. What is the difference between *predanie* and *traditsia* in the Russian Orthodox context today? And what is the relationship between “tradition” in the Russian Orthodox and American contexts? When these two sides speak of tradition, do they mean the same thing? How do tradition and/or *predanie* differ from other political ideas and concepts, including populism and nationalism? How do these ideas manifest themselves in concrete expressions or movements today?

### 2. Key-concept: Traditional values – Christian values

- a. Under this keyword, we imagine we will discuss the traditional values discourse in the Russian context. What is the “right” place of religious values in a secular public sphere? What risks, chances and challenges are involved when such values are present in the public sphere as what they are (religious values, Christian values) or, alternatively and as happens in Russia, are “translated” into a new concept, traditional values?
- b. In the American context, too, “traditional values” does not connote a specific religion. Rather, contemporary traditionalists refer to the “Judeo-Christian” values that underlie our political and legal systems. That is, “traditional values” come from a combined, non-sectarian source. This is a change from the historical practice, in which Supreme Court Justices wrote of the Christian underpinnings of the common law and America’s identity as a “Christian nation.” Historically, jurists believed that Christianity was part of the common law. Indeed, some argue that the category now should be expanded to “Abrahamic values,” in order to encompass Islam—though many traditionalists would avoid this usage.

- c. How does the use of traditional values differ in Russian and American politics? Are there similarities? What are the reasons why, both in Russia and America, contemporary traditionalists have embraced an approach that specifically includes non-Christian religions?
3. Key-concept: freedom of religion: majority – minority
    - a. Under this keyword, we will consider the difference in understanding of “religious freedom” in the Russian and American context. The Russian understanding is notorious for being protective of the Orthodox majority and other Russian “traditional religions” and hostile to smaller or newcomer religions. This understanding is informed by Soviet repression, which greatly injured the Orthodox Church and diminished its capacity.
    - b. The American understanding of religious freedom, by contrast, highlights individual religious freedom. While there is also a competing understanding that emphasizes institutional religious freedom as critical, the importance of religious freedom for individual choice-making has been a constant theme in American law and culture. Indeed, 200 years ago, Tocqueville observed that Americans, uniquely, thought that Christianity and liberty were compatible. In Europe, Tocqueville said, people understood they were not.
    - c. The Russian understanding is thus in tension with the American understanding of individual religious freedom. It is actually interesting to see that religious actors engaged in Russia, like the Billy Graham Church, have found much common ground with the ROC on the topic of values, but have divided on the topic of religious freedom. Are there ways to overcome this tension? Or not?
  4. Key-concept: Disestablishment – church-state relations
    - a. Under this keyword, we will discuss how religious actors can/should bring their concerns into politics. Are churches part of civil society or partners with the state? Are churches successful in bringing their concerns into politics because they mobilize (electorate, lobbying, court cases) or because they are state partners with direct access to law making? The latter happens in Russia, but to a lesser degree even in Europe where in cooperation models like Austria recognized state religions get a direct say in critical legislation. In this model, churches can also influence the foreign policy of the state, as the Russian Orthodox Church has done with respect to international human rights.
    - b. America has what sociologists call a market model of religion. There are no direct links between specific churches and the state; rather, churches compete for social and political influence. And sometimes, as in the recent presidential election, socially prominent churches take an adversarial stance against an incumbent administration. The political and cultural foundations of

the United States are strongly influenced by Protestantism, however, and Protestantism has informed much of the country's political and legal history even if it informs it less now than at earlier points. Even in the American model, churches can have an effect on foreign policy—as with regard to the International Religious Freedom Act.

- c. How do these two models of political action work in practice? Are we seeing a change in these models at the domestic and international levels? Could it be that the religious professionals, like Vatican diplomats at the UN, is actually losing ground to religious grassroots movements?