Institute of Ecumenical Studies (Lviv, Ukraine)

St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute (Moscow, Russia)

DELM - Development of Ecumenical Leadership in Mission Network

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ACADEMIC THEOLOGY IN A POST-SECULAR AGE

Lviv 2013

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DELM - Development of Ecumenical Leadership in Mission Network
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The role of theology in the academic sphere and in society in general is currently being re-evaluated. On the one hand, there is a strong, based on the Enlightenment's ideology tendency to marginalize theology and push it away from academia. On the other hand, in recent years there has been a serious need in a properly theological thinking and reflection felt by many intellectuals.
The Enlightenment's attempt to remove theology from university and replace "faith" with "reason" has led in fact to dehumanization of the academic sphere and its transformation into a sort of intellectual factory producing knowledge and technology but unable to approach ultimate questions of human life. For this reason many intellectuals today would like to see theology as a partner in the academic (and not only academic) discourse. There is a great need for contemporary theology to be equipped both intellectually and spiritually. Today's theology is in a desperate struggle to prove its viability in the contemporary situation. In the course of the Conference which was held in Lviv (Ukraine) **9-12 November 2011**, the following questions have been discussed:

- *Is it correct to mark today's academic sphere as totally "secular"? or perhaps there is no "secular" at all as, for instance, Radical Orthodoxy movement affirms?*
- *How can theology be faithful to the Divine Revelation and at the same time accept critical reasoning required in the academic sphere?*
- *What language should theology employ in its dialogue with other academic disciplines?*
- *What can the scientist gain from the theologian today, and vice versa?*

Editorial board:
Fr. Roman Fihas - Chief Compiler
Fr.Dr. Oleh Kindiy - Theological Editor
Luba Markewycz, Fr. John Lucas - Literary Editors

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Foreword

The discussion on the new role of religion in a post-secular age was raised at the annual meeting of the Development of Ecumenical Leadership in Mission network (DELM). Coming from different countries (usually Central-Eastern Europe) and belonging to different Christian denominations but heavily engaged in mission and ecumenical activity, DELM's participants organize an annual academic conference with the following discussion on many important themes. A similar conference organized by the Institute of Ecumenical Studies of the Ukrainian Catholic University and St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute was held in Lviv in 2011.

During the conference participants explored the significance of the new term Post-Secular age and it's main symbols in science and society. They discussed the state and the role of theology in different contexts, what the main directions in its development are and who to cooperate with on other academic disciplines. It was acknowledged that the arrival of the post-secular age doesn't mean the revival of the religious worldview over the secular one or the disappearance of secularism. In post-secular society religion starts to raise its voice in public debates. Many begin to understand the significance and importance of theology in building an open and fair society. Theologians should be active "players" in academic and political spheres, proposing constructive initiatives in developing our common human home in new circumstances.

The proceedings of the conference you hold in your hands contain many positive but also some weak points. A reader of the book would be challenged with the variety of opinions and academic approaches in the articles written by speakers from different academic backgrounds and contexts. Some speakers such as Dr. Panteiis Kalaitzidis and Dr. Frank Bestebreurtje are well known theologians; some articles have been composed by a younger generation of theologians and philosophers. From the other side a reader can find their most appropriate answer to the number of questions raised during the conference and can discover a variety of approaches in understanding the theme.

It is worthy to note that the conference on the role of theology in a post-secular age was one of the first of its kind in Central-Eastern Europe, where theology appeared as an academic curriculum only 20 years ago. With this book we would like to foster further discussion about the role of theology in the modern world, how theology could cooperate with other academic disciplines and how Christians should proclaim the Good News in a changing modern context.

We would like to thank all conference participants for their important contributions to the debate. Such common events and academic work provides a solid base uniting us for further ecumenical engagement and friendship. Help us to become genuine witnesses of the Word of God to the ends of the earth (see Act. 1. 7).

Fr. Roman Fihas

Institute of Ecumenical Studies, Lviv, Ukraine

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remains the most conservative institution in society, and her development continues only through inertia. This is why, maintaining its connection with the Church, theology must not only testify in the university, but also find in it a living connection of times, movement, dynamics of change, and challenges which provoke growth.

It is noteworthy that in the beginning of the twentieth century Russian and Ukrainian universities were home to a powerful and growing Christian student movement, headed by visible Evangelical Christians Professor V. Martsinkovsky and Pastor P. Nikolai. Despite the declared "Christianity" of the movement, it was closer to the *university* than the Church in its confessional expressions. Today the trend is returning. *University Christianity* becomes inter- or even non-confessional, therefore theology within university boundaries will always differ from Church theology. And in this difference there is a danger as well as an advantage: the latter is fully possible, if the Church will simply stop avoiding dialogue with *university theologians*.

How can the university participate in theology, or theology exist in the university today? If we reconstruct the history of this connection, then the university appears in the field of theology only in certain historical stages. Correspondingly, when history is drawing to a conclusion, this connection is broken, the university and the Church become strangers, and theology is divided between them in such a way that unity between the intellectual and the confessional, culture and the Church, is no longer possible.

Historical reconstruction can be juxtaposed with theological projections, by which the Church and the university, Jerusalem and Athens, are examined in the light of the providential redemption and justification of the future. Today both the university and the Church are freed from history, from naïve loyalty to quickly-aging traditions and explanatory systems. This freedom from the past can be welcome if you keep in mind its positive significance as freedom for the future. The university becomes open to new sources and forms of knowledge, turns to theology looking for answers to its questions. The Church becomes open to the university, seeing the sciences and scholarship as potential allies in reasonable thought and natural law. In this convergence there is not only the joy of freedom and openness, but also responsibility for the future in a general theoperspective.

Evangelical Churches are poor in history and theological traditions, which forces and teaches them humility and simplicity, but it also frees them for a new era and the free choice of a relevant image, a project of the future, in which they can return to the lost connection between the simplicity of the Gospel and intellectual boldness for the testimony to gentiles and other "philosophers of this age."

Vitalii Khromets
Institute of Philosophical Education and Science, National Pedagogical Dragomanov University, Kyiv, Ukraine

The Situation and Perspectives of Theological Education in Ukraine

The question whether Theology can be allowed to have its place in Higher Educational Institutions of Ukraine is still a subject for discussions. However, worth noting, that this question is rather rhetorical. In the Decree of Cabinet of Ministers (not valid after the Decree KM N 787 (787-2010-п) from 27.08.2010 "On the list of areas and specialties, on which the training of the specialists in Higher Education institutions on the corresponded educational-qualification levels may take place" the specialization "Theology" has been implemented on the BA level (6.030100), specialist level (7.030103) and MA level (8.030103). In this Decree the specialization "Theology" is included in the Philosophy program (0301), together with the specialties "Philosophy" and "Religious Studies". Later, according to the Decree of Cabinet of Ministers from 13.12.2006 "On the list of areas and specialties, on which the training of the specialists in Higher Education institutions on the educational-qualification level of Bachelor" the specialty "Theology" has been excluded from the list of BA programs, but has been left as the program for MA and specialists. This situation has existed for five years. However, at the Decree of Cabinet of Ministers from 17 March 2011 #267 "The Changes to the Lists, Approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine from 13 December 2006 #1719 and from 27 August 2010 # 787" has been added the item "0203 Humanities" of the part "Humanities and Arts" on the BA level "Theology (with confessional designation)" (6.020304). In this Decree few changes also were made in positions "0203 Humanities" in the specialty "Theology" on the Specialist level and MA level: on these two levels the denominational confession also have to be denoted in the title: Specialist in [Confession] Theology (7.02030103) and MA in [Confession] Theology (8.02030103).

One detail also needs to be noted. In the Decree of Cabinet of Ministers from May 24, 1997 #507 the specialty "Theology" has been included into the Training Direction "Philosophy". However, in further Decrees the classification has been changed: the title "Training Direction" has been replaced with "Division of Knowledge" and now the specialty "Theology" is included in the division of knowledge "Humanities". However, theologians argue, that Theology has to be a separate division of knowledge, with its sub-specialties, without being considered as part of the Humanities.

The next step in theology becoming the academic field in Ukraine was the Decree of the Higher Attestation Committee from April 29, 2010, #273. In this Decree to the List of specialties, on which the Candidate and Doctor Thesis Defense with the conferment of the academic degrees may take place in the filed 09 - Philosophical Sciences, with the specialization 09.00.14 - Theology. The fact, that Theology is included into the List of Philosophical Specialties may attract a good deal of criticism, but we have to admit that by means of this the beginning of training of the human resources of high qualification on theology may take place.

Ukraine has come a very long way in governmental acceptation of theology as academic and university field of knowledge, but at this moment we have legal grounds for implementing and developing Theology. However, we have to understand the social demand for theology: what kind of theology we need in our universities, and where the state diplomas of theologian may be applied.

At this moment we are on the level of implementing the theology on confessional direction in universities (the other variant is not presupposed by the existing norms), we need to raise the questions, what first steps do we have to make to start this process?

While beginning to implement theology of confessional direction into university curriculum, we need to ask ourselves about the first steps we need to make this process moving.

Human Resources. The license and accreditation of the specialization on BA and MA level in preparing professionals in this specialty depends upon available staff that can teach theology at university level. At this moment, because of the newness of the specialty, it is impossible to provide enough trained faculty. So we need to find the candidates and doctors of sciences, who were defending their dissertations on near theological problems and whose theses would be theological in their essence. Exactly this circle of specialists has to become the first ones, who will be accepted by the State theologians.

Teaching and Methodological Sources. We need to write academic programs, textbooks, handbooks for theology. There are two possible variants to fill in the gap in this field: books may be translated from other languages or they may be written in Ukrainian by Ukrainian scholars, but, again, it will take a long time.

Accepting Church Curriculum and Teaching Programs. Before we can invite the first students in the institutions of higher learning, we need to organize meetings and discussions with the representatives of all the main Churches. As the next step, we have to send teaching plans and curriculums written by specialists from Churches to key teaching institutions for peer review. It is very important that the theologian, who is to be trained in state universities, has been accepted by Churches, otherwise such a theologian will not be in demand.

Elaboration of the Wide Specter of Specializations. We have to create on BA level the specializations that will allow the alumni to apply his/her knowledge to any sphere he/she wants and have the necessary knowledge. These may be only academic specializations, such as Patrology, Biblical Studies, and such action-oriented specializations as Religious Journalism, Religious Pedagogy, etc.

Theology. For this we have to find specialists of high qualification (Candidates and Doctors of Sciences), who may be recognized as specialists in "Theology". We have such specialists in Ukraine, so the opening of the specialized Academic Councils is just a matter if time.

We have to look optimistically in the future, because in Ukraine on the legal and state levels we have the system of training of theologians. At this moment, we just have to unify the enthusiasts, who have the necessary level of qualification.