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Orthodox Theology at Modern University: Main Approaches to University Curriculum

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Since the year 2001, many universities have been rolling out a new educational programme called Orthodox Theology as a major discipline. At the moment, the discipline is included into the curriculum of over 30 universities. The present article disputes on the main approaches towards forming up the Orthodox Theology syllabus for educating Bachelors of Orthodox Theology; lists the main subjects required for the Bachelor programme; formulates the principles for distributing subjects between 8 semesters of education.

Keywords: theology, religious studies, cultural studies, Siberian Federal University, an educational program.

The 033400.64 “Confession Theology” educational Bachelor’s programme is based on the Federal State Educational Standard for Higher Professional Education (FSES HPE) approved by the Decree of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation No. 183 dated February 9, 2011. The mentioned FSES HPE states that the Bachelor of Theology can be educated on the basis of the following confessions: Christian, Muslim, Judaic, Buddhist. The choice of the confession is determined by the traditions typical for this or that region of the Russian Federation, and various historical and cultural factors influencing the constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

Multiple sociological surveys demonstrate that all the constituent entities of the Russian Federation except for Chechnya and Ingushetia are populated with people who tend to choose

Orthodox Christianity as their confession. Over 80 % of adult Russians call themselves Orthodox Christians. Of course, we speak both of the religious and cultural self-determination of Russian citizens. This choice is based on the deep historical and sociocultural memory of the people. The group who claims Orthodox Christianity to be their religion mostly consists, but is not limited to, Russian people. The Tartars, Chuvashes, Mordvins, Ossetians and other large ethnic groups populating the modern Russian Federation choose to be Orthodox Christian; moreover, many people living beyond the borders of the country are also Orthodox. Altogether their number counts up to hundreds of million people.

In this situation the Orthodox Christian world feels the need for highly educated people who would possess deep knowledge of the

Orthodox belief and understand it as a historical way; the people who would be able to solve the problems faced today by the Russian Orthodox Church from rational positions.

November 28-29 in the city of Moscow His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Kirill held a council called “Theology at Universities: Interaction of the Church, State and Society” aimed at summarizing the experience of those religious and secular higher educational establishments which have been rolling out the 033400.62 Orthodox Theology course. The Council was opened with the speech of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill who emphasized the connection between opening theological orthodox education course at the universities of Russia and the critical religious need of millions of people. His Holiness remarked that orthodox theological education can be successfully carried out at universities where it can be based on the old traditions and rich educational and scientific experience of the establishments. His Holiness Patriarch also mentioned that the number of state-subsidized vacancies for theology students is not enough: in the year 2012 the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation provided only 180 vacancies for the huge country of many million population, which is a drop in the bucket, as the Patriarch says.

Of great importance was the speech of Metropolitan Hilarion who pointed at the critical need for the dialogue between theology and modern sciences, both humanitarian and natural. Such meaningful dialogue becomes possible only in the process of rolling out the theological educational programme at modern universities. Many speakers told of the interesting experience acquired by various Russian universities which had opened departments of Theology and began educating Orthodox theologians.

Scientific and methodological support for 033400.62 Orthodox Theology course is

provided by two universities which have been working in a nice and efficient partnership: Lomonosov Moscow State University and St. Tikhon’s Orthodox University which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. All participants of the Patriarch’s Council were presented with a great gift from the Rector of STOU: the full set of scientific and methodological aids (46 items) which is enough to begin carrying out high quality Orthodox Theology education.

The fundament of the educational process is the educational plan of the Orthodox Theology course which includes an educational schedule, the plan itself, descriptions of practical tasks, distribution of subjects, credits, exams, internships, final examination for each of the 8 semesters.

At the present time the Culture Studies Department of Institute for the Humanities of Federal State Autonomous Educational Establishment of Higher Professional Education “Siberian Federal University” is preparing for getting its license for Main Educational Programme (MEP) 033400.62 “Orthodox Theology”; educational plan based on the FSES HPE and the recommendations issued by the researchers and professors of St. Tikhon’s Orthodox University has been complete. It is essential to remark that the teachers and professors of the university took up the work on MEP “Orthodox Theology” with great inspiration. Despite their multiple research and teaching assignments, the teachers eagerly agreed to design this new educational programme.

At the present moment Siberian Federal University is hosting the Orthodox Theological Society which serves as a site for discussing scientific, methodological, teaching problems connected with the implementation of the MEP “Orthodox Theology”.

The syllabus for the Orthodox Theology course is designed for 8 semesters of 4 years of

study. Each semester is divided into weeks as follows:

1 semester: 17 weeks of studies, 3 weeks of exam session, 2 weeks of holidays;

2 semester: 17 weeks of studies, 4 weeks of exam session, 4 weeks of internship practice, 5 weeks of holidays;

3 semester: 17 weeks of studies, 3 weeks of exam session, 2 weeks of holidays;

4 semester: 17 weeks of studies, 4 weeks of exam session, 4 weeks of research practice, 5 weeks of holidays;

5 semester: 17 weeks of studies, 4 weeks of exam session, 2 weeks of holidays;

6 semester: 18 weeks of studies, 4 weeks of exam session, 2 weeks of research practice, 5 weeks of holidays;

7 semester: 17 weeks of studies, 1 weeks of state exams, 2 weeks of holidays;

8 semester: 17 weeks of studies, 4 weeks of exam session, 1,5 weeks for final qualification paper presentation, 7,5 weeks of holidays.

This way all the structural elements suggested to be included into the FSES HPE on Orthodox Theology, including the number of weeks for theoretical studies, holidays (including the 2 essential weeks of winter holidays), internship practice and research practice, state exams, final qualification paper presentation, have been successfully actualized.

FSES HPE of every educational programme (not only Orthodox Theology) includes standard blocks of subjects divided into the following groups:

Group 1: general humanitarian, social and economic subjects;

Group 2: general mathematics and natural science;

Group 3: special subjects;

Group 4: physical education.

The present structure is standard for Orthodox Theology syllabus as well. Naturally,

the content of each group is determined by the FSES HPE for Theology MEP, which is also connected with Orthodox Theology as a subject.

Groups 1, 2 and 4 are standard for all kinds of higher professional education in the Russian Federation. However, the syllabus for Orthodox Theology manifests the specificity of the subject.

We should remark that groups 1, 2 and 3 are subdivided into the following levels: level of basic subjects (essential for all students, determined at the **federal** level); the **regional** component closely connected with the essential subjects but determined by the university. The third level is **elective courses** chosen by students from at least two available options. Both the regional component of each block and the elective courses emphasize their connection with the general profile of the social and humanitarian, natural science and mathematics or the professional block.

The syllabus designed by the Culture Studies Department of Siberian Federal University includes the following subjects.

Block of general humanitarian, social and economic subjects

Basic subjects: Philosophy (180 hours), Foreign Language (360 hours), History of Russia (180 hours), History of Religions (144 hours).

Regional component: Pedagogy (180 hours), Sociology (252 hours).

Elective courses: Canonic Law / Sociology of Religion (108 hours), Ethics and Axiology in Religion / Business Ethics (108 hours).

Block of general mathematics and natural science subjects

Basic subjects: Computer Science (72 hours), Concepts of Modern Natural Science (72 hours).

Regional component: Logics and Argumentation Theory (72 hours).

Elective courses: Apologetics of Science / History of Science (72 hours); Information Culture in Academic Research / Information Technologies is Theology (72 hours).

Block of special subjects (professional disciplines)

It is also necessary to remark that the federal component of FSES HPE consists of several essential modules. Further we shall list the module titles and the subjects they include (for the federal component).

The basic subjects of the federal component are distributed between the following **modules**:

1. General Orthodox Theology;
2. Systematized Orthodox Theology;
3. Sacred Orthodox Texts;
4. Orthodox History;
5. Practical Orthodox Theology;
6. Religious Philosophy;
7. Language of Sacred Orthodox Texts;
8. Religion, State and Society;
9. Basic Safety.

Now let us consider what subjects the modules consist of.

General Orthodox Theology: History of Theological Education (72 hours), History of Theology (72 hours), Introduction in Theology (72 hours), Basic Theology (72 hours).

Systematized Orthodox Theology: Dogmatic Theology (360 hours), Comparative Theology (180 hours).

Sacred Orthodox Texts: Introduction in the Old Testament (144 hours), Old Testament Exegesis (180 hours), Introduction in the New Testament (The Four Gospels) (108 hours), New Testament Exegesis (180 hours), Introduction in the New Testament (Book of the Apostles) (144 hours), New Testament (Book of the Apostles) Exegesis (325 hours).

Orthodox History: History of World Orthodox Christianity in the Modern Age (72 hours), History of Russian Orthodox Church (396

hours), New History of Russian Orthodox Church (72 hours).

Practical Orthodox Theology (72 hours).

Religious Philosophy (180 hours).

Language of Sacred Orthodox Texts: Church Slavonic Language (252 hours).

Religion, State and Society: State and Confession Relationships (72 hours), New Religious Trends (72 hours).

Basic Safety (72 hours).

The **regional component** includes the following subjects: Methodology of Confessional Research (144 hours), Interdisciplinary Problems of Theology (144 hours), History of Old Christian Church (288 hours), Patrology of 1 – 4 Centuries (144 hours), Patrology of 5 – 8 Centuries (144 hours), Patrology of 9 – 15 Centuries (144 hours), Liturgics (144 hours), Liturgical Studies (288 hours), History of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy (72 hours), Sources of Ancient and Medieval Philosophy (72 hours), History of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy (72 hours), Sources of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy (72 hours), History of Russian Theology (180 hours).

Elective courses include the following subjects: Legal Fundamentals of Parish Activities / Religious Legislation of the Russian Federation (180 hours), Homiletics / History of Russian Orthodox Mission (180 hours), Rhetorics / Religious Signs and Symbols (108 hours), Ancient Greek Language / Sanskrit (252 hours), Methodology of Teaching Theology / Methodology of Teaching the Basics of Orthodox Culture (252 hours), Pastoral Psychiatry / Theological Language Analysis (180 hours).

Physical Education is essential for all main educational programmes and includes 400 hours of classes in the first six semesters.

The students are also supposed to do internship and research practice, take state exams

in Orthodox Theology and present their final qualification papers.

The question on the topic of scientific research work for Theology students is special. As we see it, the research can be based on Church History, Bible Studies, Church Archaeology. The experience of the other higher education establishments proves that these trends have been successfully studied. However, the trends of Orthodox Technology which have been researched by St. Tikhon's Orthodox University for over 20 years are also worth mentioning. They consider creating a database of New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia who died for their faith in the 20 century. We believe that in Siberia we could also carry out some sufficient research on the New Martyrs and Confessors of the 20 Century who were repressed and killed for their faith. Young researchers could begin their studies at the Krai Archive, learning

comparative historical and genetic methods of research. Their work would enable Siberian Federal University to make a contribution into the acknowledgement of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the 20 century in Modern Russia.

We suggest that the main educational programme 033400.62 Orthodox Theology should be widely discussed in the archdiocese of Krasnoyarsk Krai and the metropole. Teachers of Siberian Federal University need to see some advanced training, including remote training, at St. Tikhon's Orthodox University. We hope that the clergymen of our archdiocese and metropole will work with our Theology students. At the present moment we possess all the conditions required for carrying out the main educational programme of higher professional education 033400.62 Orthodox Theology in the most efficient way.

Теология православия в современном университете: основные подходы к образовательной программе

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Начиная с 2001 г. в российских университетах реализуется основная образовательная программа по направлению «Теология православия». В настоящее время более 30 российских университетов реализуют подготовку по этому направлению. В статье обсуждаются основные подходы к формированию учебного плана для подготовки бакалавра теологии православия, рассматриваются основные учебные дисциплины, которые необходимы для будущего бакалавра теологии православия, выделяются принципы распределения учебных дисциплин по 8 семестрам учебной подготовки.

Ключевые слова: теология, религиозные исследования, культурные исследования, Сибирский федеральный университет, образовательная программа.
