CMI MA course: theological education in today's context



The Ss Cyril and Methodius Institute of Post-Graduate Studies (CMI) continues enrolling students for its MA course. This year, the following four programs are available: External Church Relations, Christian Sources, Philosophy and History of Religion, Canon Law.

CMI MA course was developed in 2010 as a preparatory stage for graduates of theological schools before they take a post-graduate course. For the nine years, the MA programs have grown into a separate area in the CMI's educational work. The CMI MA course today represents four educational programs with each aimed to train students for fulfilling pressing academic research and applied tasks facing the Church.

CMI MA course began its history with a program on External Church Relations. It goes back to the educational work which had been carried out for centuries by the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate and was aimed to train students for work in the sphere of church diplomatic relations. The link of the MA course with the DECR is preserved to this day. Students do practice work at the DECR and the DECR staff teach them principal subjects and guide them in their academic research work.

From the perspective of content, the program is not at all limited to the DECR's terms of reference in today's practice. Along with such disciplines as Inter-Christian Relations or Inter-Orthodox Relations, students study disciplines in the ecclesial-social, ecclesial-political and canon law modules. This broader approach of the program offers graduates additional opportunities for subsequent placement. They can work in various church structures, both diocesan and synodal, responsible for cooperation with state, society, mass media as well as other Christian confessions and religions.

New program on Christian Sources

In 2019, the CMI for the first time enrols students to MA program on Christian Sources. This program addresses Christian classical texts, biblical, patristic, particular liturgical and canonical. The Christian Sources program is innovative in that it combines biblical and patristic disciplines. The chosen methodological approaches to the study and interpretation of texts will allow students to not only do competent work with the totality of sources relevant to ecclesial theology but also to meet challenges posed to Christianity by modern culture.

MA program on Christian Sources in some sense unites, on the educational level, the CMI's efforts to develop traditional theological disciplines. The CMI annually holds two international conferences on patrology and Bible studies, each assembling leading specialists in their areas. For several years, the CMI has carried out a project for publishing a full set of textbooks on theology for undergraduate studies, including those on Bible studies, patristics, canon law and liturgics. The MA program on Christian Sources is called to become a significant link in the development of these endeavours in the CMI.

ON COOPERATION WITH THE HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

An important step in developing the CMI MA Course was made by launching two educational projects realized together with the National Research University Higher School of Economics.

The first project implemented in cooperation with the HSE Faculty of Law and with the participation of the Moscow Patriarchate Legal Office became a response to the labour market's demand for specialists in the legal regulation of the work of religious associations that have a fundamental training for canon law. A concurrent study of secular and canon law under the same program can be found in leading western universities. For the Russian educational space, the CMI's experience in realizing this approach so far remains unique.

"A study of secular law including the modern legislation on religious organizations cannot be imagined without a concurrent study of canon law", notes Dr Ye. V. Silvestrov, University of Essex, PhD/History, "Immersion in the history and theory of canon law including a general course on Orthodox Canon Law, as well as special courses on particular disciplines related to canon and ecclesial law makes it possible for students to understand the specifics of regulating internal church relations. It does not only broadens students' outlook on the theory and history of law but also considerably facilitates the understanding of principles of regulating church-state relations".

The second educational project is implemented by the CMI together with the HSE School of Philosophy. The aim of this project is to offer students a possibility for comprehensive academic studies on the phenomenon of religion with the broad use of inter-disciplinary approach that combines theological knowledge and academic-speculative approach to the study of religion. This approach is in demand in the modern Russian academic space in which only recently there were debates on the academic status of theology. It showed in practice that fruitful cooperation of theology with other academic disciplines is feasible.

HOW TRAINING FOR COMBINED PROGRAMS IS ARRANGED

Each of the combined educational programs is a combination of two MA programs with one carried out by the CMI and the other by the Higher School of Economics. In case of the philosophic program, the CMI implements the program on Philosophy and History of Religion, Academic Discipline 48,04.01 – Theology, while the HSE carried out the program of the same name, Academic Discipline 47.04.01 – Philosophy. In the second case, the CMI MA Course on Canon Law on theology is combined with the HSE MA course on Church, Society and State. Legal Regulation of Religious Associations; Academic Discipline 40.04.01 – Jurisprudence.

This mode of implementing educational programs allows students to make a flexible approach to the formation of their educational trajectory, which could cover the most of their educational, professional and scientific interests. The training under combined programs is possible in the following three formats:

1. An entrant enters at the same time the CMI and HSE, is trained under two programs and receives two Master diplomas, one on Theology from the CMI and Philosophy or jurisprudence from the HSE;
2. An entrant enters only the CMI, is trained under a theological program, attends particular disciplines in the HSE and after his training is completed, is granted the diploma of Master of Theology.
3. An entrant enters only the HSE, is trained under an appropriate program, attends particular disciplines in the CMI and is granted the diploma of Master of Philosophy or Jurisprudence.

The choice of a trajectory belongs to the student. At the same time, it is important that an entrant should remember that enrolment to the CMI and the HSE is made separately. It means that to be enrolled to the combined track you should apply to the both institutions and pass their entrance exams.

Students who are trained at the same time in the CMI and the HSE, will have to master more disciplines than their fellow students studying in only one institute, because their academic plan will include courses specific for the CMI and the HSE respectively. In addition, these students, in writing graduation papers, will have to combine theological and philosophical (juridical) approach to the problem under study. As for the rest, the training of students who entered the both institutes will not differ in anything from that of students enrolled either to the CMI or to the HSE.

HOW TO BE ENROLLED?

Applicants can hand in their papers for enrolment to MA program on Canon Law and Philosophy and History of Religion till July 31 inclusive. The documents for the programs on Christian Sources and External Church Relations can be handed in till July 22. The documents are presented to the CMI Acceptance Board at: Moscow, Pyatnitskaya ulitsa 4/2, Buid. 1, Office 303. Detailed information about the procedure and terms of enrolment is available on the CMI site: **http://doctorantura.ru**.

Entrants who enter the track combined with the HSE under the programs on Canon Law and Philosophy should hand in a separate set of documents to the HSE till July 31. The list of documents as well as the terms and procedure for enrolment in the HSE are available at the university official site **https://ma.hse.ru**.

CMI Press Service

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