



Primate of Russian Orthodox Church: Theology should be regarded not only as a set of subjects taught at seminaries, but also as a serious science

In his address at the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia raised the topic of theology as a science and theological education. His Holiness told about the activities of the coordinating centre that unites efforts of theological institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church and is responsible for the promotion of theology as a science. The centre was established in compliance with the decisions of the Bishops' Council of 2013, and is supported in its work by the secretariat of the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission.

“As the result of the long-term work, theology was included in the list of branches of science by the Higher Attestation Commission of the Russian Federation, and later in the Nomenclature of Branches of Science. Almost a year later, the dissertation council for theology, first in the history of the Russian state, was established, and this year the first candidate dissertation on theology has been defended,” the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said.

As His Holiness noted, there is a similar opportunity in Ukraine, whose legislation envisages not only the inclusion of theology in the list of branches of science, but also the possibility, under certain conditions, the recognition by the state of the degree of theology, received at a theological educational institution. In a number of countries in the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church, local governments have certified the Bachelor's and Master's programmes. However, it is only in Lithuania that there is an opportunity to defend candidate or doctoral theses. There the programme was drawn up, based on the Catholic doctrine.

According to His Holiness, all the current opportunities must be used to the full extent in order to develop theology as a serious science. Theology should be regarded not only as a set of subjects taught at seminaries, but also as a serious science, the Primate emphasized.

His Holiness also informed the participants in the Council of the implementation of yet another decision concerning the promotion of cooperation with theological departments at secular higher education institutions and the allocation of more stated-funded places, at least in Russia, for students of theology. Considerable success has been achieved in fulfilling this latter task: while in the 2013/2014 academic year there were 293 such places, in the current 2017/2018 academic year the number has increased to 558.

The achievements of diocesan councils for theology have been less evident, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted. “In cooperation with the Interdepartmental Working Group for Teaching Theology at Universities, the diocesan councils for theology need to engage more actively in the scientific life of their regions,” the Primate of the Russian Church said.

Bishops' Council Information Service

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