



Metropolitan Hilarion speaks at MPhI Academic Council enlarged meeting

On December 22, 2016, the Academic Council of the National Research Nuclear University 'MPhI' held an enlarged meeting with participation of representatives of the staff and United Students Council to honour Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk as MPhI professor, head of its Chair of Theology, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, chairman of the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission and rector of the Ss Cyril and Methodius Institute of Post-Graduate Studies.

MPhI Rector M. Strikhanov opened the meeting by introducing the agenda. He reminded the gathering that this year Metropolitan Hilarion has turned 50 and extended him congratulations on behalf of the whole university team. He stressed that the university gives a great importance to the problems of spiritual and moral education by holding a great deal of activities aimed at the cultivation of youth on the basis of vital values traditional for Russia. In particular, two years ago MPhI launched an Academic Readings project aimed at extending the general scientific broadmindedness and knowledge of life and society and promoting the development of future researchers' active civic position and feelings of patriotism.

The rector invited to the rostrum A. Nevzorov, director of the MPhI center for humanitarian studies and technologies, who made a brief presentation of Metropolitan Hilarion's biography and ministry including his creative achievements.

In his speech, Prof. V. Tishkov, academic leader of the Academic Readings project, said that a number of leading academics and renowned public figures came to the university to read lectures two years before the project was launched. He expressed birthday wishes to Metropolitan Hilarion and presented him with several academic works published recently with the participation of the university.

Then Metropolitan Hilarion was asked to read a lecture as part of the Academic Readings project.

His Eminence began his lecture with asking the audience to honour in a moment of silence the the memory of the assassinated Russian Ambassador to Turkey A. Karlov, saying, 'I would ask you to honour with a moment of silence the memory of this wonderful man. Such events as the death of Andrey Karlov, which happened before our very eyes and the eyes of the whole world, remind us again and again of the meaning of human life and its transitory nature and of the fact that it is only one step from

life in time to life in eternity’.

Then Metropolitan Hilarion spoke about the early period of Christianity, which he studied in detail in the recent years producing as a result an extensive study on ‘Jesus Christ. Life and Teaching’. ‘When I began writing this book it turned out that there was so much material and so extensive literature that I failed to put it all in one book. Ultimately, I wrote six books’, he said. The first two volumes – ‘The Beginning of the Gospel’ and ‘The Sermon on the Mount’ – have already come out.

‘The Beginning of the Gospel’ considered the Gospel’s story of the birth of Jesus Christ and related events. Some chapters deal with the prophetic ministry of Jesus and relationships between Him and His disciples and the beginning of a conflict between Him and His opponents. The book ends in an attempt to present a portrait of Jesus Christ as He is described by the evangelists and to consider His way of life and His character traits.

In the second book, which analyzes the Sermon on the Mount, Metropolitan Hilarion emphasizes that this sermon was not something ancient and unfeasible but still remains the spiritual and moral code that Christians are called to embody in their life. ‘First of all, Jesus Christ has proved by His own life that it is possible to live up such lofty moral principles. Certainly, such a life requires self-sacrifice. Nevertheless, He has proved by His own life that it is possible’, the archpastor stated.

His Eminence also said that his work on the two books would continue in studies on ‘The Miracles of Jesus’, ‘The Parables of Jesus’, ‘The Lamb of God. Jesus in the Gospel from St. John’, and ‘The Death and Resurrection’. These studies are based on the Gospels which would be considered both historically and theologically.

Metropolitan Hilarion named the Gospel as the principle source of his study ‘Jesus Christ. Life and Teaching’. He spoke in detail on the authors of the Gospel’s text and the history of its creation, reminding in particular that ‘The three stories – from Matthews, Mark and Luke – are described in science as synoptic Gospels. This designation comes from the Greek word meaning ‘seeing together’, because in them there are much parallel and verbally similar material’. The forth Gospel, written by John the Theologian, renders the events from a different perspective, but, as the hierarch noted, ‘essentially there is no contradictions between the four Gospels’.

‘If we take the Gospel’s text, all in all the modern-day science knows of over 5000 manuscripts of the New Testament’ he continued, ‘No other work of the Ancient History has survived in such a number of manuscripts. It suggests that from the very beginning the Gospel’s testimonies were taken as reliable’.

In conclusion of his presentation, Metropolitan Hilarion gave some recommendations as to the right

understanding of the Gospel's text: 'The history as described in the Gospels can be compared to treasures put in a safe with two locks. To have an access to these treasures one has to have two keys. One key is the conviction that Jesus Christ was an absolutely real worldly man, while the other is the recognition that Jesus Christ was God incarnate. With these two keys the Gospel's history unfolds. It is with them that the Church has interpreted these stories and the teaching of Jesus Christ through centuries'.

After the lecture Metropolitan Hilarion answered questions from the audience.

His Eminence presented the MPhI library with some of his books.

In conclusion of the meeting, Rector M. Strikhanov expressed birthday wishes to Metropolitan Hilarion and thanked him for his profound and interesting presentation.

The MPhI academic male choir conducted by Russia's Honoured Artist Ms. N. Malyavina performed several church hymns, among them 'The Beatitudes' composed by Metropolitan Hilarion.

During his stay in the university, Metropolitan Hilarion visited its chapel dedicated to the Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God. The church choir sang 'Many Years' to him and he venerated the church's shrines and kissed the altar in the sanctuary.

Greeting the parishioners of the university church, the hierarch said, 'Dear brothers and sisters, I am delighted to visit the MPhI chapel and to see that divine services are held here and that Orthodox students have an opportunity to pray and enkindle a candle before an exam. I hope that the chapel will continue to be the spiritual center for this wonderful educational institution. I wish God's help to the clergy, to all who work and sing here and to the faculty and students!'

Press Service of the MPhI Chair of Theology

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