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## **Theological Education for Laypeople in Russia, Belarus' and Ukraine: a Survey of Orthodox and Catholic Institutions**

WIL VAN DEN BERCKEN

During the last decade an entirely new theological educational system has emerged in Russia, Belarus' and Ukraine: theological education for laypeople. It is not just a copy of the theological training that is offered in seminaries. Rather, it is a broad theological and religious-cultural education at academic level that is made available for both sexes and for all ages. The new education was initiated through both public and private initiatives as well as by the churches themselves, the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church.

In this study I shall survey the eleven most important Orthodox and Catholic<sup>1</sup> theological educational institutes in Russia, Belarus' and Ukraine: six in Moscow, two in St Petersburg and one each in Minsk, L'viv and Kiev, describing their origin and comparing their study programmes. These institutes are:

1. St Tikhon Orthodox Theological Institute, Moscow.
2. St Philaret Moscow Orthodox Christian Institute, Moscow.
3. St Andrew's Biblical Theological College, Moscow.
4. Father Alexander Menn Orthodox Open University, Moscow.
5. Russian Orthodox University St John the Theologian, Moscow.
6. St Thomas Institute of Philosophy, Theology and History, Moscow.
7. Russian Christian Institute for the Humanities, St Petersburg.
8. St Petersburg School of Religion and Philosophy, St Petersburg.
9. Sts Methodius and Cyrill Theological Faculty, Minsk.
10. Ukrainian Catholic University, L'viv.
11. St Thomas Aquinas Higher Institute of Religious Studies, Kiev.

All these institutes have more or less regular contacts with the Institute of Eastern Christian Studies of Nijmegen University through the academic exchange programme 'Prospekt'. This programme was initiated in 1997 by the late director of the Institute, Dr Ed de Moor, and elaborated by Dr Evert van der Zweerde and myself during several trips to the countries involved. Since 2000 it has been coordinated by Josephien van Kessel MA, who expanded the programme to Romania and Bulgaria. Thus far, more than 50 students and lecturers from the aforementioned institutions as well as from several other institutions in those countries have studied in Nijmegen for six-week terms. In addition to this short-term exchange programme, Prof. Dr Herman Teule, the present director of the Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, has created the possibility for students from Eastern

Europe to study at the Graduate School of Theology of Nijmegen University. Since 2000 eight students from Russia and Ukraine (and three from Romania and Bulgaria) have received a two-year scholarship to pursue either a Master's or a PhD degree in theology in Nijmegen.

Whether these academic exchange programmes will be continued depends on the further availability of sponsors in the Netherlands. Neither exchange programme is financed by the Dutch Ministry of Education or by the European Community. Nevertheless, so far the cooperation has proved fruitful, not only for the partner institutions but also for the Institute of Eastern Christian Studies.

### **St Tikhon Orthodox Theological Institute**

*Pravoslavny Svyato-Tikhonovsky Bogoslovsky Institut*

ul. Novokuznetskaya 23-B, Moscow. [www.pstbi.ccas.ru](http://www.pstbi.ccas.ru). Rector: Fr Vladimir Vorob'yev

This is by far the biggest theological educational centre in Russia. It has at this moment more than 2000 full time students as well as up to 2000 'correspondence students'. The Institute was founded by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1992. It evolved out of the Theological Catechetical Courses that the Patriarchate had begun to offer one year earlier. St Tikhon's study programme requires four years for the degree of Bachelor (*bakalavr*), five for the qualification *spetsialist*, and one more year for the degree of Master (*magistr*). It is not yet possible to defend a PhD thesis. The Institute was accredited in 1997 by the Ministry of Education. It was the first theological institute in Russia to receive *akkreditatsiya*.

The Institute has seven faculties: theology, mission, philology, history, pedagogical studies, ecclesiastical art, and music. The faculty of theology offers a traditional theological programme as well as the possibility of specialising in religious studies (*religiovedeniye*). The student population of the faculty of theology is all male and most are preparing for the priesthood. This is a somewhat strange construction because female students can study the same subjects in the faculty of mission, albeit with a more practical orientation towards teaching religion and diaconal work and without having to take courses in Greek and Latin. These languages however can be chosen as electives. More than half the students at the Institute are women, and one third have already completed some form of higher education in secular institutions.

In the faculty of philology, modern and classical languages are taught in order to prepare teachers for Orthodox grammar schools (*gimnazii*). The faculty also offers courses in Hebrew, Syriac and Coptic for translators of theological literature. The faculty of pedagogical studies trains future social workers and teachers for elementary schools. Of great importance in the Orthodox Church are icon and fresco painters, art historians, experts in restoration, musicologists and choirmasters, and these disciplines have their own faculties.

The Tikhon Institute has a large number of 'correspondence students' (*zaochniki*) in the faculties of theology, mission and pedagogical studies. There are also branches of the Institute in thirteen other locations: Kemerovo, Yekaterinburg, Rostov on Don, Ufa, Neryungri, Karaganda, Arkhangel'sk, L'viv, Syktyvkar, Naberezhnyye Chelny, Kirov, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky and Valaam. The 'correspondence department' of the faculty of theology is especially meant to provide some opportunity for higher education for the often undertrained provincial clergy.

The Tikhon Institute also promotes scholarly research. It publishes the series *Bogoslovsky sbornik* and organises annual conferences. (That of 1994 on 'the Unity of the

Church' was not up to standard because of personal attacks on the priests Georgi Kochetkov and Aleksandr Borisov.) Members of the Institute also actively participate in the publication of the *Pravoslavnaya entsiklopediya*. This is an ambitious long-term research project involving hundreds of scholars. In total, 25 volumes are planned, of which six have already appeared.

The Institute cooperates with the St Serge Institute in Paris, St Vladimir's Seminary in Crestwood, NY, and the newly established Institute of Orthodox Studies in Cambridge, UK.

Studying at the St Tikhon Institute is free of charge. It receives some support from sponsors and from the local authorities. The lecture halls are dispersed over ten buildings in Moscow. The library contains more than 50,000 books, but there is a lack of money to supply the library with all the necessary equipment and literature.

### **St Philaret Moscow Orthodox Christian Institute**

*Svyato-Filaretovskaya Moskovskaya Vysshaya Pravoslavno-Khristianskaya Shkola*

ul. Pokrovka 29–38, Moscow. [www.sfi.ru](http://www.sfi.ru). Rector: Fr Georgi Kochetkov

This is the oldest of the theological educational centres for laypeople in Russia. It developed out of the catechetical courses that deacon Georgi Kochetkov started in 1988 at the parish church of the Vladimir Mother of God. With this initiative Fr Georgi (ordained in 1989) became (together with Fr Aleksandr Men') a pioneer of religious *glasnost'* at this turning point in Russian history.

In 1990 the Institute joined the then newly organised nongovernmental and nonconfessional Russian Open University, but after the collapse of this University in December 1992 the Institute became entirely self-supporting and it expanded its activities. In addition to the courses in catechetics, it now also offers courses in other disciplines of theology. The Institute received its current name in 1995. At present St Philaret offers various courses in practical theology (catechetical, pedagogical) and an academic training in its Advanced School (*Vysshaya Shkola*). This School is the most important division of St Philaret. It has 205 students, all of them part-time, of whom 70 are correspondence students.

To be admitted to the Advanced School one has to be over 21. Its students have often completed some form of higher education and combine their study with a job. The four years of study leads to a Bachelor's degree and an additional three years are needed for the Master's degree. However, these degrees are not recognised by the Ministry of Education, because the school is not accredited. The curriculum focuses on the practical needs of the church. Courses in six disciplines are taught: missiology, catechetics and homiletics; dogmatics and liturgy; biblical studies; philosophy; church history; ancient and modern languages. The library contains some 16,000 books. For twelve years St Philaret has held annual conferences in cooperation with other Orthodox and secular academic institutions.

St Philaret has had a complicated relationship with the Moscow Patriarchate. This is partly due to the attempts by Fr Georgi Kochetkov in the early 1990s to celebrate the liturgy in Russian instead of Church Slavonic. In 1997 Kochetkov had to step down from his pastoral function and lost his school premises in the Sretensky Monastery. Recently relations have improved and Kochetkov is allowed to celebrate the liturgy privately (*vneshtamo*) in a church at the Novodevichy Monastery.

There is one important difference between St Philaret and St Tikhon as far as their vision of the church is concerned. The former rejects the idea of a close relationship

between church and state because of the dangers connected with the concept of a national church and because of what it sees as the superficial character of much of cultural Orthodoxy. The Institute stresses the need for a personal religious commitment on the part of each individual. In spite of this critical attitude, St Philaret is very much church-oriented; in the words of vicerector Margarita Shilkina, 'Independent in status but deeply ecclesiastical in character'.

The Institute is also proud of its independence from the state. In 1999 St Philaret received from the Ministry the *litsenziya* to teach but, as noted above, no *akkreditatsiya* of its diplomas. This does not mean that the level of the study is not academic; it certainly is. The Institute is not in fact looking for state accreditation, because then it would have to conform to the recently established state norm (*gosstandart*) for theology (which will be discussed below). It would probably also have to give up its critical attitude towards the church and comply with the guidelines of the local bishop. Furthermore, it would also have to include in its programme courses on constitutional law and computer training, subjects almost all students have already studied in earlier stages of their higher education. It is precisely because most of the students already have a diploma that there is no direct need for the Institute to receive state accreditation.

### **St Andrew's Biblical Theological College**

*Bibleisko-Bogoslovsky Institut sv. Apostola Andrey*

ul. Iyerusalimskaya 3, Moscow. [www.standrews.ru](http://www.standrews.ru). Rector: Aleksei Bodrov

This institute was founded in 1995 by Aleksei Bodrov. It developed from the Sunday Orthodox University (*Voskresny Pravoslavny Universitet*) founded in 1990 by Fr Aleksandr Men'. (In 1991 this University changed its name to the Orthodox Open University – see next section.) At the end of 1994 two different movements arose within the Orthodox Open University: one wanted to maintain and even to expand the University as a public institution for theological education without compulsory examinations; the other wanted to establish a systematic theological education at an academic level. The latter movement became St Andrew's Biblical Theological College.

Although independent from the church, St Andrew has good relations with the Moscow Patriarchate and cooperates with it on various projects. Rector Bodrov summarises the position of the college as 'Orthodox by background but ecumenical in character'. The college focuses on modern Bible study and interconfessional and interreligious dialogue. The five-year programme received *akkreditatsiya* in December 2002, quite a success for such a small institute. Currently there are 33 full time students and some 150 students in correspondence or summer courses. St Andrew also organises courses elsewhere in the country and in the 'Near Abroad'.

The College publishes the quarterly *Stranitsy* and the annual *Mir Biblii* as well as translations of modern theological works.

St Andrew's College is housed in a modern, well-equipped building just outside the centre of Moscow. The study is not free of charge. The College receives support from the Anglican, the German Evangelical and various American churches.

### **Father Alexander Menn Orthodox Open University**

*Obshchedostupny Pravoslavny Universitet*

Raushskaya nab. 4–5, Moscow. [www.educenter.sitek.ru/menrus.htm](http://www.educenter.sitek.ru/menrus.htm). Director: Fr Georgi Chistyakov

In contrast to St Andrew's College, and in spite of its name, the Orthodox Open University is not an academic institution. It is a 'people's university', accessible to everyone (*obshchedostupny*). The Open University grew out of the public lectures by Aleksandr Men', which started in 1989, still in Soviet times. In those years Fr Aleksandr taught courses on the Bible and Christianity, subjects on which he had published a number of books in the Russian diaspora in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1990 Fr Aleksandr founded the 'Sunday Orthodox University'. Sadly, the day after its inauguration on 8 September 1990, for which he gave the opening lecture, Fr Aleksandr was killed. The next year the university was renamed the 'Orthodox Open University founded by Fr Aleksandr Men''. In 1993 Patriarch Aleksi gave his blessing to the university.

The Orthodox Open University has been part of the Moscow Continuing Education Centre (*Moskovsky Tsentri Nepreryvnoy Obrazovaniya Vzroslykh*) since 1995. This centre for adult education is subsidised by the city of Moscow, the TACIS programme of the European Commission, and various German, French and English cultural institutions. The aims of the Open University correspond well with the general educational (*prosvetitel'ny*) character of the Centre. More concretely, the University aims to offer basic religious education, to promote dialogue between confessions, and to help nonbelievers to understand Christianity. In the spirit of Aleksandr Men', the University is very ecumenical and has not only Orthodox but also Roman Catholics and Protestants on its teaching staff.

The evening courses on theology and the Bible form a coherent programme of three years. There are about 200 students, 40 per cent of whom are retired people. In the past ten years more than 1000 students have followed its programmes. The study is not free of charge, because the staff are not paid by the Moscow Continuing Education Centre. (From its beautiful location on the Moskva embankment across from Red Square one could obtain the wrong impression that the Centre is rich.) Because of its accessibility the Orthodox Open University has a special place among the theological institutions of the capital.

### **Russian Orthodox University St John the Theologian**

*Rossiiskiy Pravoslavnyy Universitet sv. Apostola Ioanna Bogoslova*

ul. Petrovka 28-2, Moscow. Rector: Igumen Ioann Ekonomtsev

The Russian Orthodox University, founded in 1992, also provides a theological education. The University evolved out of a joint initiative by Fr Ioann Ekonomtsev, head of the Department of Religious Education and Catechisation of the Moscow Patriarchate, and a group of Russian philologists and classicists. The official address of the University is still that of the Department in the Vysoko-Petrovsky Monastery in the historic centre of Moscow, but in 1996 the University received a lecture building from the City Council of Moscow outside the centre.

The aim of the Russian Orthodox University is to create a Christian intelligentsia that is deeply familiar with the moral and cultural values of Russian Orthodoxy. The University considers itself to be the successor of the late-seventeenth-century Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy (*Slavyano-Greko-Latinskaya Akademiya*), and in the first years it was as a matter of fact housed in the former Academy's Zaikono-Spassky Monastery. This is not to say that the University is mainly looking to the past. Its goal is to create a 'confessional university' after the model of Catholic universities in Western Europe and the United States.

There are eight faculties, two of which are religious in orientation: the faculty of

philosophy and theology and the faculty of biblical and patristic studies. Together they have some hundred students. In the other faculties (history and philology, economics, law, ecology, church art, and medicine, offering a postgraduate programme for doctors), the usual professional programme also includes some requirements in theology and ethics. In 1998 the University gained ministerial *akkreditatsiya* for its Bachelor's degree (four years) and its Master's degree (six years).

Theology at the Russian Orthodox University is less specialised than at St Tikhon. The University does not aim at professional training for the church. The theology programme is embedded in a broader cultural context with disciplines such as European and Oriental philosophy and history of religion. In the faculty of biblical and patristic studies, Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Syriac are taught. At the opening ceremony of the University the need for thorough knowledge of these ancient Christian languages was strongly emphasised. The faculty plays an important part in producing modern translations of the Bible and of patristic writings, many of which are currently available in Russian only in imperfect nineteenth-century translations.

In the other faculties the programme aims to maintain a balance between professional training and religious education. There is close cooperation between the Orthodox University and Moscow State University (MGU) in the secular disciplines.

### **St Thomas Institute of Philosophy, Theology and History**

*Institut Filosofii, Teologii i Istorii sv. Fomy*

ul. Fridrikha Engel'sa 46-4, Moscow. [www.jesuit.ru/action/education](http://www.jesuit.ru/action/education). Rector: Fr Octavio Vilches-Landin SJ

The St Thomas Institute of Philosophy, Theology and History is the new name of the St Thomas Aquinas College. This Roman Catholic college was founded in 1991 by the Polish priest Tadeusz Pikus and, one year later, was placed under the direction of the Catholic Apostolic Administrator of Moscow. In 1999 it was handed over to the Jesuits and it moved to a modern building. The Institute offers a five-year evening-course programme in Catholic theology.

In March 2003 St Thomas Institute received legal recognition as an educational institute by the Moscow City Council. However, the programme has not (yet) been accredited by the Ministry of Education, the high academic level of the programme notwithstanding. This is a result of the complicated juridical situation of non-Orthodox churches in Russia today. The Institute hopes for recognition by the state in the near future, if not in the field of theology, then at least as a more general programme of 'religious studies'.

The study programme consists of six disciplines: philosophy; theology; biblical studies; church history and church art; social sciences; classical and modern languages. In 2003 there were 76 students from various denominations. The Institute has an excellent library (open to the public) with a collection of works unique for Russia, most of which it received from Jesuit institutions in the West. Since 2001 St Thomas has been publishing the journal *Tochki*. The rector of the Institute is a Mexican, but most of the 43 staff members are Russian, including several Orthodox priests. The Institute is open to ecumenical initiatives but official contacts with the Russian Orthodox Church are limited.

### **Russian Christian Institute for the Humanities**

*Russky Khristiansky Gumanitarny Institut*

Fontanka 15, St Petersburg. [www.rchgi.spb.ru](http://www.rchgi.spb.ru). Rector: Dmitri Burlaka

In 1989 a group of young scholars from Leningrad State University founded an independent programme of 'Higher Courses in the Humanities'. In 1991 a subdivision was formed by members of the North-West Branch of the Russian Academy of Education, The Institute of Russian Literature, and the St. Petersburg Spiritual Academy.<sup>2</sup> This subdivision was called the Russian Christian Institute for the Humanities. In 1993 the Higher Courses fell apart into several private institutions, of which the Russian Christian Institute for the Humanities remained the most important.

The curriculum of the Institute contains nine departments: philosophy, theology and religious studies; Russian culture; antiquity and medieval studies; art studies (*iskusstvovedeniye*); philosophical anthropology and psychology; management; oriental studies; Finnish language and culture; English language and culture. It presents the disciplines 'in synthesis with a Christian spirituality, because Christianity is the base of the European culture'. The pedagogical aim of the Institute is not to propagate Orthodoxy but to restore relations between Christianity and culture by means of 'integral humanitarian education'. This is based on the concept of culture as an organism, which develops in successive phases, the highest of which is Christianity. Philosophy, literature and history of religion are studied synchronically. A special place is devoted to the study of Russian religious philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Institute defines its philosophical position as 'creatively conservative'. The department of philosophy, theology and religious studies has about 60 students.

In contrast to the theological institutions in Moscow the Institute sees Christianity primarily as a cultural phenomenon. Theology is taught in relation with philosophy and comparative religion. The Bachelor's and Master's degrees are degrees in religious studies. The Institute has accreditation from the state. The study is not free of charge.

Since 1997 the Institute has published the annual *Vestnik russkogo khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta*. However, more important is the philosophical series *Russky put'*. The volumes of this series contain essays on and critiques of Russian philosophers, religious thinkers, literary writers and influential western philosophers under the title 'Pro et Contra'. This approach often results in an interesting collection of studies. So far more than 20 volumes have appeared.

Since 1994 the Institute has been cooperating closely with the Orthodox Institute of Missiology, Ecumenism and New Religious Movements (*Pravoslavny Institut Missiologii, Ekumenizma i Novykh Religioznykh Dvizhenii*). The latter was founded in 1993 by the priest Vladimir Fedorov of the St Petersburg Spiritual Academy and since 1998 it has been connected with the St Petersburg Interchurch Partnership 'Apostolic City – Nevskaya Perspektiva' (*Mezhtserkovnaya Organizatsiya 'Apostol'sky Gorod – Nevskaya Perspektiva'*). Under the direction of Fr Vladimir and managed by Marina Shishova, it organises conferences and publishes studies on the religious situation in Russia. It is the only ecumenical research institute in Russia.

### **St Petersburg School of Religion and Philosophy**

*Vyssшая Religiozno-Filosofskaya Shkola*

Universitetskaya nab. 5, kom. 300, St Petersburg. [www.srph.ru](http://www.srph.ru). Rector: Nataliya Pecherskaya

The School of Religion and Philosophy is the oldest private institution for religious studies in St Petersburg and indeed in the whole of Russia. It was founded in 1990 under the aegis of the St Petersburg Association of Scholars. In 1992 it was recognised by the City Council as an independent institution. The School offers a programme for the study



of world religions in our time. It also strives to revive interest in the traditions of the Russian Orthodox Church and to restore the Christian values that have been for so long a part of the Russian artistic and literary heritage. It also promotes diaconal work by laypeople in cooperation with church and public organisations.

The School has three sections: philosophy, religious studies, and fine arts; special attention is paid to Orthodox church history and iconology. A specific methodological approach in the philosophy programme is the emphasis on close reading and hermeneutic analysis of primary literature, instead of merely offering general historical surveys. Theological disciplines such as dogmatics, liturgical studies, patristics and biblical exegesis are taught in the religious studies section, which closely cooperates with the philosophy and fine arts sections. In general, the emphasis is on the 'culture-founding' (*kul'turoobrazuyushcheye*) heritage of Orthodoxy, but there is also much attention to interreligious dialogue.

The School of Religion and Philosophy cooperates with the diocese of St Petersburg and other regional educational institutions in developing the teaching of 'fundamentals of Orthodox culture' (*osnovy pravoslavnoi kul'tury*). The School also organises international conferences. In 2003 it had 60 students in the full-time (four-year) and the part-time (five-year) programme. The diploma of 'Specialist in Religious Studies' is recognised by the state.

A common feature of the two Petersburg institutions is that they promote the study of theology in close relationship with its cultural context. In this they differ from the Moscow institutions that specialise in theology. There is, however, an important difference between the two: the Russian Christian Institute for the Humanities has as its point of departure a general religious-cultural concept, while the School of Religion and Philosophy is more church-oriented. Both see the need to link Orthodoxy with the national context, however.

Both institutions were founded in order to provide an alternative for the philosophical materialistic and atheist education at the Soviet universities. They created an academic liberal arts programme based on religious-humanistic and Orthodox Christian values. The future will show whether they can maintain their pioneer function in the educational system in Russia, which is gradually becoming more pluralistic.

The teaching staff in all eight institutions discussed so far mainly come from state universities, the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Spiritual Academies of the Orthodox Church. Some lecturers work at several institutions at the same time. They are mostly hired on contract basis, with the exception of St Tikhon, which has a staff of full-time professors. Because they were educated in the Soviet era, most lecturers at the institutes, while having a degree in philosophy, humanities or social sciences, did not receive a training as theologians. As the first generation of lay theologians, Biblical scholars and patrologists, they had to explore an entirely new field of study with limited sources and material available.

The material conditions of the institutions, such as offices, lecture halls, library collections and computer facilities, are gradually improving. After having moved several times, most of the institutions now have their own buildings. Many institutions get financial support from Christian communities in the West, such as the Evangelical Church in Germany, the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic organisation Kirche in Not and the World Council of Churches.

Although the number of theology students at the *platnyye* ('to be paid for') institutions has declined in recent years, students are highly motivated.

### **Sts Methodius and Cyrill Theological Faculty**

*Fakul'tet Teologii imya svv. Myafodziya i Kiryly*

pr. F. Skaryny 24, Minsk. [www.christeducenter.org](http://www.christeducenter.org). Dean: Metropolitan Filaret

The only theological educational establishment for lay students in Belarus' was founded in 1993 at the European Humanities University of Minsk. This university was established jointly by the National Academy of Sciences, the Ministry of Education, Minsk City Council, the Belarusian Orthodox Church and the International Humanitarian Foundation. The faculty of theology is Orthodox and its rector is metropolitan Filaret of Minsk. However, there are Catholic and Protestant lecturers as well and the faculty has signed a collaboration agreement with the Catholic University of Fribourg and maintains good relations with other faculties and several churches in Germany and Austria.

In 1999 the Faculty gained state accreditation for its Bachelor's degree in theology and, in 2000, for the degree in religious studies. Since 2001 there has been a Master's degree in both theology and religious studies.

A guiding principle for the faculty is 'the renewal of the place of Christian traditions in modern culture and reconstruction of a Christian methodological system in higher education and scientific spheres, which still are often based on Marxist principles'. This principle gives the study a clear orientation. The programme includes courses in Biblical archaeology, scripture, systematic and dogmatic theology, liturgy, patristics, comparative theology (Catholic and Protestant), moral theology, canon law, catechetical method, sects and new religious movements, Russian church history, history of the Roman Catholic Church, introduction to theological terminology, world religions, classical and modern languages, philosophy, social sciences and ecology.

One hundred students are spread over the five-year programme and 20 people over the 1.5-year Master's programme. The library contains some 13,000 volumes and is the country's only public theological library.

Although the faculty of theology is connected to the European Humanities University, it is not financially supported by it. To finance the faculty a national foundation was created in 1996, consisting of church officials and representatives from industry and the financial and cultural world. Since 1999 the foundation has been named the International Voluntary Association 'Saints Methodius and Cyrill Christian Educational Centre' (director Grygory Dovgyallo). It not only provides money for 80 student grants, but also develops other initiatives: a Sunday school for children and adults in Minsk, postgraduate theological summer courses for priests and laymen (in cooperation with St Andrew's College in Moscow), international conferences, and the annual Cyril and Methodius Lectures which are held on 24 May (the feast day of these two patrons of Slavic culture).

### **Ukrainian Catholic University**

*Ukrains'kyi Katolyts'kyi Universytet*

vul. Ilariona Svetsits'koho 17, L'viv. [www.ucu.edu.ua](http://www.ucu.edu.ua). Rector: Fr Borys Gudziak

The L'viv Theological Academy (*L'vivs'ka Bohoslovs'ka Akademiya*) was established in 1994. It was a reestablishment of the previous Greco-Catholic Theological Academy (*Hreko-Katolyts'ka Akademiya*), which was founded in 1928, when Galicia was part of Poland, by Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, as an institution for the clergy. In Soviet times it was closed. On its reestablishment in 1994 it also opened its doors to lay students (Catholic as well as Orthodox). The aim of the Academy was 'to promote theological

reflection in the Church, cultivate its intellectual life, and foster the articulation of a Christian world-view in contemporary Ukrainian society'. It also tried to stimulate ecumenical dialogue. From the beginning the Academy was seen as a first stage in the development of a Ukrainian Catholic University (*Ukrains'kyi Katolyts'kyi Universytet*). On 29 June 2002 the new university was formally inaugurated and the L'viv Theological Academy became its faculty of theology and philosophy.

The faculty has about 350 students, half of them laypeople. Connected with the faculty is the catechetical–pedagogical institute, with more than 600 students. This offers mainly part-time courses for catechists and schoolteachers of Christian ethics.

Several of the professors and lecturers of the faculty have lived and studied at universities outside Ukraine, including Harvard, Ottawa, Oxford, the Pontifical Oriental Institute, the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Catholic University of Lublin. A number of courses in the third year of the curriculum are taught by visiting professors from various countries.

The curriculum of the faculty includes courses in five disciplines: theology, philosophy and social sciences, humanities, English language, classical languages. The theological disciplines, which are at the centre of the curriculum, are preceded by a thorough training in historical and systematic philosophy. After five (!) years students receive a Bachelor's degree in theology. This degree was accredited in 1998 by the Congregation of Catholic Education in Rome.

There are seven research institutes in the faculty, besides the catechetical–pedagogical institute. Among them is the institute of church history, which had already been founded in 1992 and which possesses archives and an extensive database about the life of the underground Ukrainian Catholic Church in the Soviet period. The others are the institute of religion and society, the institute of marriage and family life, the institute of theological terminology and translation, the institute of liturgical studies and the institute of canon law. All of them have well developed research programmes.

The theological faculty of the Ukrainian Catholic University is internationally competitive thanks to the cooperation of universities and scientific institutions in Europe and North America. The faculty also cooperates with L'viv National University and other institutes of higher education in the city. It fulfils an important task in Ukraine: not only does its library hold the largest collection of religious materials in Ukraine, but it also provides the rest of the country with Ukrainian-language textbooks for disciplines that were neglected during the Soviet period. Because the faculty is part of a full-scale confessional university, its cultural importance for Ukraine will surely continue to grow.

### **St Thomas Aquinas Higher Institute of Religious Studies**

*Instytut Vyschykh Relihiinykh Nauk imeni sv. Fomy Akvins'koho*

vul. Yakira, 13a., Kiev Rector: Fr Andrei Kaminsky OP

This is a Roman Catholic institution in Kiev where laypeople can study theology at an academic level. It was founded in 1992 by the Roman Catholic hierarchy as the College of Catholic Theology St Thomas Aquinas and two years later it was handed over to the Dominicans. These affiliated the College with the university of the order in Rome (the Angelicum) and in 2000 the College won accreditation of its Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Congregation of Catholic Education. At that time the College also received its present name. Although the name refers to 'religious studies' the focus of the curriculum is very much on theology.

The Institute trains theologians but also works towards developing a Christian intelli-

gentsia in Ukraine. The programme takes four years and consists of three disciplines: theology, philosophy and humanities. Lectures are given in Ukrainian, Russian and English, or, with the help of an interpreter, in Polish and Italian. Some of the staff members are Orthodox theologians.

Currently there are about 150 evening students and 35 external students, mainly catechists. The student body is mixed. While some do not pursue degrees, others, the better students, are given the opportunity to continue their study abroad. The study is offered free of charge since economic conditions in Ukraine preclude charging tuition fees. It is only by donations from abroad that the Institute has kept afloat. Since 1994 the Institute has published its own periodical, *Kolegiya*.

Thus far, only the Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic Churches in Ukraine have organised academic theological education for lay students. The Orthodox Churches provide some courses for teachers at secondary schools, but they are catechetically and not academically oriented.

### Theology at State Universities in Russia

A recent development in the field of theological education in Russia has been the creation of theological faculties at state universities. This has been a much-discussed issue during the last few years and although it is now formally settled, the practical implementation of the project is still in progress.<sup>3</sup> The idea of giving theology a place in the academic curriculum was launched by the Ministry of Education in 1992, when the faculties of communist social sciences, including 'scientific atheism', were closed. Two universities, in Omsk and Barnaul, started a theological department, but their definition of theology was close to 'religious studies' and their approach was agnostic.

St Tikhon Institute led the way for the establishment of a committee in 1994 to promote the status of theology in higher education. Among the members of the committee were Patriarch Aleksii, the president of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the president of the Russian Academy of Education, the rector of Moscow State University, along with a few other academics. They persuaded the minister of education to formulate formal criteria for the discipline of theology (*gosstandart teologii*) from the perspective of a religious (rather than atheist or agnostic) worldview. In this respect it is significant that the Russian word used for theology in secular universities is *teologiya* and not *bogosloviye*, which is reserved for theology programmes in an ecclesiastical context.

The next step was taken in 1998 with the formation of a Coordinating Council of the Ministry of Education and the Moscow Patriarchate, to which were appointed four theologians of the Tikhon Institute, including the rector. No Christian confessions other than Orthodoxy were represented on the Council. The Council decided that the state norm should consist of a general multiconfessional section – that is, humanities and a professional training in various disciplines – and a confessional section. The latter would be provided by the various confessions according to a fixed model. These confessions are the so-called 'traditional' religions in Russia that are mentioned in the 1997 law on religion: Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism. The state thus recognises four variants in theological education, and there is no option for Catholicism or any denomination of Protestantism.

In the meantime, a discussion was started in the media concerning the constitutional legitimacy of theological education at state universities. Some people expressed fear that the secular character of public education would be lost and that the principle of separation between church and state would be violated. In a letter of 21 January 1999 the minister of education, together with the members of the committee, stated that 'secular' did not

mean 'atheist' and that there was no question of violating the separation of church and state since the study of theology was on a voluntary basis and was not an ecclesiastical training.

Two years later, in February 2001, the state norm of theology leading to Bachelor's and Masters' degrees was recognised by the Ministry of Education, and eight universities received permission to introduce the new study programme 'Orthodox theology'. As of 2003 there were ten universities in Russia which offered a theological curriculum: Omsk and Barnaul (which adapted their existing study to the new standard), Belgorod, Orel, Ryazan', Sarov, Yekaterinburg, Vladivostok and Tula (which has two institutions). Altogether these universities have about 500 students. Five other universities are considering the introduction of theology (Kursk, Rostov, Surgut, Nizhni Novgorod, and Moscow State University of Linguistics). A programme 'Islamic theology' is offered at the Russian Islamic University in Kazan'.

The new theological faculties or departments at the state universities have all started from scratch. The problems they face are immense. There are not enough qualified lecturers, few handbooks, and no specialised libraries at all. Sometimes the new chairs of theology are grouped together with those of religious or cultural studies. Some independent observers estimate that the chances for the development of theological studies at state universities are not very great.

The two main universities, Moscow State University (MGU) and St Petersburg State University, do not have plans for creating theological faculties. Both these universities have well-developed philosophical faculties with good departments of religious studies (at MGU 124 students), and these faculties prefer to remain independent from the Orthodox Church. Moreover, in Moscow there is not really a need for yet another institute since theological education for lay students is already available at St Tikhon and at the Russian Orthodox University.

However controversial theological studies at the state universities may seem from a political point of view, one has to bear in mind that Russia is not exceptional in this respect: it fits into the European tradition. However, there is one crucial difference between Russia and Western Europe: in the West all Christian confessions have the right to create a theological faculty at a state university, or to establish their own theological university with support from the government when they meet the required academic standards. In Russia the Orthodox Church has by law a monopoly.

### **Religious Studies (*Religiovedeniye*)**

In the former Soviet Union this discipline has been largely transformed in the past decade from the study of ideological, so-called 'scientific', atheism' to the historical, philosophical and cultural study of the phenomenon of religion. In recent years several new institutes or university departments have emerged that offer a programme in 'religious studies'. Among them is the Centre for the Comparative Study of World Religions (*Tsentr Sravnitel'nogo Izucheniya Mirovykh Religii*) that was founded in 1992 at the Russian State University of Humanities (*Rossiisky Gosudarstvenny Gumanitarny Universitet*) in Moscow. This small centre, headed by Nikolai Shaburov, studies Christianity, Islam and Judaism, and strives to revive the traditions that existed in Russia in this field prior to 1917. The new status of the discipline in Russia is also illustrated by the appearance of the first scholarly journal in the field in 2001, neutrally entitled *Religiovedeniye*. It is published by the new department of religious studies at the Amur State University in Blagoveshchensk, founded in 1999 by Andrei Zabayko, in cooperation with the Moscow Society for the Study of Religion (*Ob'yedineniye Issledovatelei Religii*), MGU and St

Petersburg State University. In the new Institute of Man (*Institut Cheloveka*) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, religion is treated in an entirely new way. The Institute supports research in widely differing areas (for example, the research done by Sergei Khoruzhi in Moscow on Orthodox spirituality, but also projects on rational theology by Tat'yana Artem'yeva in St Petersburg).

These few examples may suffice to illustrate the diversity of initiatives that are being taken in secular circles in Russia to renew academic research in religious studies. Together with the development of curricula in theology at state universities and private institutions and, most important of all, the creation of theological education for laypeople by the churches themselves, they demonstrate the growing intellectual interest in religion and Christianity in the postsoviet societies.

## Notes

- <sup>1.</sup> This article is based on the author's visits to the various institutions and meetings with their directors. There are institutions run by various Protestant denominations, but these are not included in this survey. All quotations in this article are from the websites (mostly in English) of the institutions themselves.
- <sup>2.</sup> Although *Dukhovnaya Akademiya* is often translated as 'Theological Academy', the translation 'Spiritual Academy' avoids confusion with the new theological institutes.
- <sup>3.</sup> This information is derived from *Pravoslavny Svyato-Tikhonovsky Bogoslovsky Institut 1992–2002* (Moscow, 2002), pp. 239–50, and from private talks with members of the St Tikhon Institute.