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CONFERENCE**

**ACADEMIC THEOLOGY
IN A POST-SECULAR AGE**

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Teaching Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology: A Ukrainian Case

In this paper, the problem of teaching of Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology has its own, very substantial context. Because theology strives to gain its place in secular universities, we have to expect serious critical reexamination of the competencies and authorities of the disciplines that deal with religion and God. Religious Studies have their place and field of knowledge that presupposes a search for rational approaches to religions based on methods of sociological, psychological, political, anthropological and other studies. However, the point of view that Philosophy of Religion still belongs to the disciplines of Religious Studies and, in some cases, even the disciplines that lie at the foundation of all other disciplines of Religious Studies, still dominates the academic institutions of Ukraine, in spite of its deceptiveness. The discipline of Religious Studies is practical in relation to the subject of its research, while Philosophy of Religion merely applies philosophical methods to religion. The closest discipline to Philosophy of Religion is the Theory of Religion and, in some sense, Comparative Religious Studies, although all three disciplines have fundamental differences in their methods, which can hardly be reduced to one discipline. In turn, Philosophical Theology is a relatively new discipline in post-Soviet countries, because the tradition is based on the analytic tradition, for a very long time has not been recognized or discussed. The methods and problems used in Philosophical Theology in the middle of the past century, only begin today to vie for a place in Ukrainian academic discourse. In the context of this conference "Academic Theology in a Post-Secular Age", the problem of teaching Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology is worth our attention because, perhaps, one of these disciplines may become the underpinning for academic theology in a Ukrainian university. In any case this paper attempts to propose a variant of the answer to the question "What kind of theology do we need today in secular university?"

First, I would like to begin with Philosophy of Religion. The subject of interrelations and boundaries of such disciplines as Religious Studies, Philosophy of Religion, Philosophical Theology, Philosophy of God, and Theory of Religions has not often been a subject for open discussions, and that is the reason for numerous unjustified generalizations that

we observe on the theoretical and practical levels. It is historically conditioned, that Philosophy of Religion in Ukraine is included among disciplines of Religious Studies, and the course on Philosophy of Religion is read, in most cases, by students of Religious Studies as the subject that contains the most common knowledge about religions. Curriculum on Philosophy of Religion represent the syntesis of sometimes incompatible problems, methods, and concepts that are united on the principle that "it is about religion in general." One may note the three tendencies of such substitution: 1) Philosophy of Religion is substituted with the Theory of Religion; 2) Philosophy of Religion is substituted with undogmatical statements and elements of different religious traditions; and 3) Philosophy of Religion is substituted with religious philosophy. We may also note that there is a fourth tendency, i.e., the substitution of Philosophy of Religion with the history of philosophy of religion, but this particularity, in comparison with the previous three, is not such a serious error. Thus, William Wainwright in the introduction to the *Oxford Handbook to Philosophy of Religion* defines the central topics of Philosophy of Religion as "the existence and nature of the divine, humankind's relation to it, the nature of religion, and the place of religion in human life." All the abstract thoughts we face in religion's teachings are regarded as philosophical, and, therefore, are named as Philosophy of Religion. This logic is very simple: for instance, all philosophical thoughts that are found in Judaism are encompassed in the Philosophy of Judaism, or, what may sound even more strange, Judaic Philosophy. Philosophical considerations of Muslim thinkers are Philosophy of Islam or Islamic Philosophy. This division is founded on the understanding of philosophy as thinking about ultimate and abstract ideas. Precisely in this context everyone can speak about his/her philosophy of life. However, if we speak about philosophy as an academic discipline, we mean defined methods and conceptualization of the cognition of the world: we construe a worldview. Philosophy here is not some kind of a chaotic perception of something that goes beyond the ordinary practical reason, but a rational toolkit that allows analyzing logically the existing phenomena and mechanisms. If we accept such understanding of philosophy, Philosophy of Religion would be then a strictly pure argumentation within the concrete philosophical approach and methodology on the possibility of cognition of the foundations of religion and its key related concepts. That is why Philosophy of Religion has to be an obligatory discipline for students of philosophy, but may be considered only as a secondary discipline for students of theology. Philosophy of Religion deals with questions of faith and possibilities of knowing God, but as such has to be extremely cautious in its assertions and conscious of when to stop making its assertions. This discipline has to be aware of its boundaries that are constituted by the chosen methodology and subject and must not allow crossing the fine line that marks the philosophical and apologetic statement, even in case the last one has a philosophical form.

Now, let us turn to Philosophical Theology. This term is being used more and more frequently in theology-philosophy discussions, and thus certain expectations derive from this. It is supposed that philosophical theology may be considered as some

kind of a mediator between theology and philosophy when we talk about God as the subject of thought. The reason for this is that analytical methods, which are used by Philosophical Theology, are in tune with the requirements that fit well for sciences, such as argumentativeness, conclusiveness, and logical rigor. At this moment, we must raise the question whether theology has to correspond to these requirements, but we will return to this later. In spite of the usage of philosophical tools and methodology, Philosophical Theology remains to be theology that has apologetics as its final aim, the defence of Christian truths and key statements of the Christian Faith. In this way Philosophical Theology appears a neutral ground, that unites, from one side, philosophical and logical methods; from the other side, it academizes theological problems. In some academic societies this fact made it possible to view theology as a recognized, independent, and legal part of an academic discourse. Moreover, Philosophical Theology, having as its aim the rigor, logical, and rational justification of Christian truths, strives to avoid confessional affiliations, and as such creates certain space for a dialogue between representatives of all trends in Christianity, upon the condition that all members of dialogue share the rules of academic studies. These three points create the possibility for new perspectives and interpretations, a reexamination of theological argumentation and, in the case of Ukraine, are providing certain perspectives of inter-confessional collaboration in the academic sphere.

So, providing a short summary, I would like to propose that today Philosophical Theology seems to be the discipline that can help theology to enter the academic domain as the discipline that recognizes and shares the rules of academia and provides the necessary foundation for inter-religious academic collaboration. In turn, strict boundaries that are conditioned by methodology allows Philosophy of Religion to be a kind of knowledge that lies at the foundation of the phenomenon of religion, and thus to be in a certain way the prolegomena to religious sciences. And that is the reason why there is Philosophy of Religion but no philosophers of religion.