Archpriest Nikolay Danilevich: The situation in Ukraine is not at all such as being presented to Patriarch Bartholomew and as he declares to the world

In one of his interviews, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople stated that his interference in Ukraine for all its contradiction to church resolutions had as its consequence "the restoration of canonicity" of the multi-million Ukrainian people and expressed an opinion that the presence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in this country as being in canonical unity with the Moscow Patriarchate is harmful for the interests of the Ukrainian nation.

A response to these statements was made by the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's department for external church relations, Archpriest Nikolay Danilevich, in the air of the internet-channel 'Pershiy Kozatskiy':

- I would like to share some thoughts about this statement of Patriarch Bartholomew. It seems to me that this statement is too political. The logic of the statement precisely political, and this is the logic of a power slipping away, precisely a power that has bread it. Clearly, it has not happened without reasons: there is a conflict between Ukraine and Russia. But it seems to me that we have started having problems with the Patriarchate of Constantinople since the time when this Patriarchate for some reasons adopted the logic of our schismatics, the so-called 'Kiev Patriarchate' and the logic of a dying political power. And the fact that the citizens of our country, not only believers, voted in such a majority (73%) for a new president shows: the people do not accept this ideology. They were not so much for the new President Zelinsky as against the previous head of the state and that ideology. Clearly, there is no such thing as one hundred percent pro or contra. But the people themselves have testified that they do not agree with such an interpretation of history and such an approach.

The logic of a church hierarch should be different. In the history of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, too, there were cases when its presence in Ukrainian lands was undesirable. Let us recall the Union of Brest, which was concluded in 1596. After it, representatives of the Patriarchate were kept out of Ukraine because the Polish-Lithuanian authorities considered them Turkish spies. However, the ecclesiastical Ukraine was incorporated in the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

We also know the further history; we know how in the 1600s the Catholic power pressurized the Orthodox. In fact, Western Ukraine up to the Dnieper, just as the Right-Bank Ukraine was Uniate. And it is still a question whether today we would have been Orthodox if Ukraine would not have reunited with

Russia in 1654 and later in 1686, would not have moved to the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. I think, thanks to these facts Ukraine remained Orthodox.

Each situation, each event in history plays its own role. And the Lord uses particular circumstances to preserve His Church. It seems to me that the unity with the Moscow Patriarchate has played a positive role for our Church.

Clearly, we can evaluate every event only after it happened. I will cite another example: Poland, 1924. the Patriarchate of Constantinople gave autocephaly to the Polish Orthodox Church, and in the period from 1924-1939, 156 of her churches were destroyed together with the magnificent St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Warsaw. And the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which called itself the Mother-Church, did nothing with regard to what was going on in at that time. I will say more: we spoke about it with Constantinople's representatives when we were there. They answered to us, 'Well, such were the times'. Yes, such were the times. Now we have certain times as well, and I think that one cannot say that the presence of a particular Patriarchate in a particular country is harmful or not harmful – history is ruled by the Lord. The Lord gives to some part of the country to be part of this or that Church; later it can become autocephalous, still later it can lose its autocephaly. These matters belong to Divine Providence. And we as people of the Church should be guided not by arguments produced by a political power, which comes and goes, but by the interests of the Church. For this reason, what should prevail in our judgement are the interests of the Church, church logic and ecclesiastical argument.

Patriarch Bartholomew also said that by his action he allegedly restored the unity of Orthodox Christians in Ukraine. He stated that he has brought the whole Ukrainian people back to canonicity. But actually it is not true since the overwhelming majority of the Orthodox faithful was and is in the canonical Church and has not left it anywhere. Regrettably, there is a direct evidence of manipulation, distortion and creation of a parallel reality. Here, in Ukraine, the situation is completely different from how it is presented to Patriarch Bartholomew and what he declares to the external world.

We can see how many problems have arisen in Ukraine now precisely because of the presence of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. We lived in peace until he interfered. The interference of Constantinople is precisely what has done harm to Orthodoxy and the Church because people are driven away from churches. Thank God, this process seems to abate.

Unfortunately, Constantinople has created more problem than solved. It also concerns the latest events – the consecration of an archimandrite of Greek descent [as 'bishop' of the OCU], which involved two hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople – Metropolitan Emmanuel of France and Metropolitan Amphilochios of Adrianople. I know that in this connection some Local Churches have already expressed their protest to Constantinople because the question arises: Is it possible for them to

celebrate together with these hierarchs? Indeed, according to Apostolic Canons 10 and 45, etc., those who concelebrated with schismatics shall be deposed. It is a canonical question. Therefore, we can see that because of Constantinople's interference more problem then solutions are arising.

I wish that the political logic and political argumentation could be absent from church life. It does harm to the Church because politics keeps changing. We should look at the faithful rather than sit in our offices piling up papers. Regrettably, the hierarch of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, especially those who reside in Turkey, have no real flock. These are 'armchair' metropolitans: they have titles but have no flock. For this reason, they do not feel the Church and the decisions they adopt, the statements they make do not correspond to the church reality. Why other Churches do not make such statements?–Because they have a real flock, be it larger or smaller, they are pastors, not just politicians in robes.

Therefore, I would like to express the wish that we all, including representatives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, in making such statements, should think about people, about the real Church, not about politicians, should think about how to bring back those who are in schism, but in an ecclesial, not political way.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/46306/