



Patriarch Kirill's interview to Russia TV channel

On September 9, 2012, the Russia NV channel showed an interview His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia gave to journalist Dmitry Kiselev.

- Your Holiness, the Church has encountered a real aggression. In my view, it is a manifestation of a broader phenomenon – anomie. Anomie is a term introduced by French philosopher and founder of sociology Emile Durkheim back in the century before the last. It is a value vacuum, an absence of supporting points. Don't you see that our society is standing on the verge of this development or has already been plunged in this state?

- To say in a few words what happened and still happens with regard to aggression against the Church, it is not an accidental development, of course. I cannot help thinking that it is a certain exploratory attack to see how deep is still people's faith and commitment to Orthodoxy in Russia. Indeed, many have long buried the ability of our people, at least most of the people, to show self-organization, to protect certain values, to defend their stance. I will not cite offensive statements made in reference to our people by some persons who claim to be a creative class, but it is a scornful view from above. Now the time has probably come for it, especially after all of you saw what happened when the Sash of the Mother of God was brought to Russia. We all remember indeed the reaction to it by millions of people who came to the church. The time must have come to check whether our people are really committed to the faith. Are they capable of defending it? Are they capable of defending anything at all? So, these provocations have happened for precisely this purpose.

Today, I think, all those who organized these provocations have seen for themselves that before them is not a faceless mass of a placid and amorphous majority but a people who are capable of defending what they hold sacred.

- But this is aggression not only against the Church. It is aggression against any values whatsoever. The Church is not a value for them. Victims of the NKVD are not a value. Human life is not a value. History is not a value. As a matter of fact, it is an anti-value protest. And this is not merely a matter of regret and indignation but it has depressed some and infuriated others...

- Quite right! But furthermore, it is aggression against our cultural core, against our civilization code. The notion of things sacred has always been central to the life of the people. Hence the notion of Holy Rus' came, not because we had many churches but because sacredness and the notion of things sacred was the dominant of life. It is to this core, this dominant, that the blow has been delivered.

At the same time, you are right. The point is a challenge to the value dimension of life. You yourself have remembered Durkheim, but he gave much attention to the moral state of society. He said that morality is both a compulsory minimum and a strict necessity. It is a certain bread of life for society, without which society will disintegrate, and he was quite right. It cannot be believed – though many insist on it, denying the importance of the moral dimension in public relations – that the most important thing is law, that it is law that holds people together in a community. But what stands behind law? – The threat of punishment. We are all together because if we break the standards of communal life, we will be punished. But morality is an inner motive of communal life. It is a spiritual bond that ties people together. It is really a fundamental notion of value without which a human community disintegrates.

And I would like to say this at this point. Those who reject God altogether believe that morality is an attendant thing, a cultural phenomenon. Culture changes and with it changes the context in which people live; morality changes. But actually it is not so. Look, today all the resources seem to have been used to shake the moral foundations of the people's life but they have failed. Look what the statistics says, with various sociological organizations stating: an absolute majority of our people do not accept blasphemy. A portion of those who approve of blasphemy constitutes a sociological error. An absolute majority of our people stand for law which would restrict the spread of sin. What does it imply? It implies that the moral feeling is alive in people.

- Your Holiness, among the points of the aggression is an accusation of interpenetration between church and state. How do you respond to such attacks?

- We respond with a single word – it is a myth. A myth created deliberately. Indeed, the Church has to be attacked from some ideological position and this ideological position has to be created. Today a myth is being created about the interpenetration, about the clericalization of our life. What for? – For the purpose of showing that through this interpenetration the Church claims to control your consciousness, your will. It is a certain pseudo-ideology, which is coming to replace the communist ideology. And the conclusion is made from this: the Church is dangerous from the point of view of freedom; she is going to enslave your consciousness.

Now let us move to 'a blamestorming'. So, the interpenetration, they say. But there is the Russian Church's Social Concept. Journalists, before spreading this myth, could have merely taken this small book and looked what it says about church-state relations. The Church safeguards her autonomy. The Church believes that only a free Church can make a spiritual influence on people, that any interpenetration, any clericalization is utterly dangerous for preaching. We already went through all this in the pre-revolutionary time. So, there is not a single document or a statement or a word of the Patriarch to lead to the conclusion about interpenetration.

Where has it all come from? – From this: for the last twenty years this very Church, which has been accused of passivity and inability to carry out mission in the modern world, has achieved very considerable results in enlightening our people. Our people are becoming Orthodox. Today we see before us in churches, purely visually during Easter service and on major feasts, a different people. These are middle-age people, men and women, people with children, young people – these are children and elderly people; they are our people.

So, let us say how a believing politician, a member of the Orthodox Church, should behave when he enters into dialogue with the Church. Is he supposed to distance himself from his beliefs in all possible

ways? He speaks with the Church as a son of the Church. He enters into benevolent dialogue with the Church. Why should we make a conclusion about interpenetration from a single fact that the president or prime minister worship together with the Patriarch one or twice a year? And why should we deprive these people, who are believers, of the right to worship, including together with their Patriarch? And this picture alone excites unhealthy feelings in those who do not wish to see the strengthening of the Church in our society.

Another picture presented by our opponents to prove the alleged interpenetration is the Patriarch at the submarine base at Vilyuchinsk. And what of it? Why no conclusions about the interpenetration of Church and American state are made when we are shown chaplains in Afghanistan? Why no question about interpenetration arises when chaplains work on professional basis in active forces of almost all the European countries? The Patriarch came on the invitation of marines in order to thank them. He came to his flock because most of the marines are believers. What sort of interpenetration is it? It is, if you like, a pastoral and missionary visit. And they show the picture to people and say, 'Look, what a great interpenetration it is'.

Here is a substitution of notions. It is not interpenetration but Christianization of our society that scares our opponents. This is where the horns grow from, as they say. It is the fear that Orthodoxy, which was almost destroyed in the Soviet time, during the 20 years has managed to come back to the life of its people. Not as much as we wish, of course, but all this noise may be raised precisely to stop us. I would like to say: it will fail.

- Late this summer there was your visit to Poland. To what extent has it managed to heal the wounds we have inherited from distant history?

- First, about the past and the present. Perhaps, there are no other two European nations over whom the past would hang so much and who would so consciously put salt on the wounds inflicted in the past, poisoning the present relations. We know that each side is keeping a thorough record of all the transgressions committed by the other side, each trying to strike a balance, the remainder being plus for one side while minus for the other, that is to say, 'the other side caused me more suffering than I did to

it'. And I am not sure this approach may be changed however much scholars may study the history. What does it mean? Does it mean that we should put salt on these historical wounds for ever and ever? Should we continuously re-open them? But perhaps we should find some new approach to all that happened and happens in our relations? Indeed, the two nations have lived together in history. God has willed us to always live together. Can't we as neighbours and people who share Christian values build a different foundation for our relations?

So an idea occurred that it should be said to historians should, 'Take all the historical problems with you, whereas we wish to open a new page in our relations'. But there must be some act of reconciliation. In dialogue with the Catholic Church in Poland, which lasted for three years, we have agreed that the word 'forgive' will be the key one in this act of reconciliation. We ask each other's forgiveness as Christian communities, as Christian nations, thus doing the will of our Saviour Himself. We wish to show in our bilateral relations our faithfulness to Christ, our commitment to the gospel's values, for we ask each other's forgiveness in the name of this commitment to the gospels' values.

And what do you think? When I came to Poland I was struck by the enthusiasm with which the Polish people responded to the Joint Message of the two Churches to the nations of Russia and Poland. Of course, there is always an opposition but in this case it was microscopic. The Message was signed by me and Metropolitan Jozef Michalik, president of the Conference of Catholic Bishops in Poland, in a symbolical place – the royal palace. It is my deep conviction that ideological and psychological prerequisites have been created today for turning the grave page on which mutual accusations from the past are written so that a new page may be open in relations between the two Christian nations which face the same challenges brought about by the disruption of Christian culture in Europe and the rejection of Christian moral values clearly stated in this Message. We have the same stand, defending the very morality which we discussed in the context of the words said by the far-seeing founder of the sociology.

- Your Holiness, November the 4th will mark the 400th anniversary of the banishment of Poles from Moscow. It is a national holiday in Russia, and it will be widely celebrated. Can you imagine the text of congratulations to come from Warsaw?

- I can. Now I can because I can also imagine what kind of text will go from Moscow to Warsaw on the occasion of the independence and territorial integrity of Poland. The point is that if psychological problems are lifted, if people come to the state of reconciliation with each other, than all these actions are quite possible. I would like to draw your attention however to this circumstance: the celebration devoted to the victory of the Russian arms does not mean a triumph over the adversary. We celebrate our victory, not their defeat, not their military failure because a real warrior always holds a worthy opponent in respect. Similarly, the celebrations to mark the 400th anniversary of our victory and the end of the Time of Troubles do not imply an disrespectful attitude to the other side, and I would like to say once again: it is in no way involves a triumph over their failures.

- Your Holiness, thank you!

Patriarchal Press Service/DECR Communication Service

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