



Chairman of Synodal Information Department on journalists' assessment of Patriarch Kirill's work

Nezavisimaya gazeta published on 18 August 2010 an article by V. Legoida, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Synodal Information Department, entitled 'Why to Cipher the Patriarch?' The text of the article is given below.

The activity of Patriarch Kirill expressed in his speeches and trips to dioceses has sometimes provoked a mixed and strange reaction mainly in the mass media. They say, what does the Patriarch travel for, what does he make speeches for, and on themes far from 'pure spirituality' at that? Sometimes the critics do not conceal their attitude: they wish the Primate of the Russian Church limited his activity to celebrations and church sermons, saying it is exactly his primary task and the rest is the work of the evil one. (this attitude put frankly and simply is this: 'your task is to wave a censer and that's all). Certainly, to celebrate and preach are the main tasks of a pastor. But does a sermon cease to be such if it is given not within but outside a church?

A small 'sensation' for starters: escorting His Holiness the Patriarch on all his trips, I have never heard him speak on purely economic or political topics, entering the field that belongs to functionaries, politicians or economists. For instance, speaking about the economic crisis, His Holiness has always underscored that the reasons should be sought for in the crisis of personality, in the blurring of clear moral guidelines. Aren't these a Pastor's words? Or, speaking recently in the National Academy of Law in Odessa, the Patriarch devoted his speech to the phenomenon of morality. In the presence of venerable professors and lawyers, the Primate of the Church said that 'if people's conscience does not work no laws would work'. I do not rule out it was for the first time that such words were heard in an educational institution. But for some reason it all often looks different in the mass media: journalists are looking for political or economic terms in Patriarch Kirill's speeches and take them out of the context. It results in an image of such an 'effective manager', who is inevitably subjected to criticism. And this criticism could be even acceptable but for one 'but': the image created by the mass media has nothing to do with the real Patriarch Kirill, and the pictures of 'church life' have as little to do with reality as Leo Taxil's 'bible' with Holy Scriptures. As one metropolitan said to his atheistic opponent, 'I do not believe in the god you are talking about either. He has nothing to do with Christ'. So, let us agree on the terms.

Any public speech made by the Patriarch is a talk about moral foundations, about the feeling of God, about human relations. Whatever issue it may concern, it is always held within the spiritual and moral field. For some reason this seemingly common-book maxim is lost within modern journalism. I would like to hope that there is no malice here. Simply, the requirements (instructions?) are such that with us

politics should be put above problems of one's own soul and should have priority. As a result, journalists, volens nolens, carefully eliminate the spiritual context of the Patriarchal words, leaving only that which appears to be politics. Some just juggle with facts, while other even invent them.

By virtue of office His Holiness the Patriarch has to have many meetings with functionaries, politicians, businessmen. It is equally natural that in internal church life the Patriarch remains, along with other duties (to be more precise, along with the main duty to stand for the Church before God) the key administrator. To be at the same time an intercessor and manager is the destiny of not only any Primate of the Russian Church but also each of her hierarchs. Such were St. Alexis the Metropolitan of Moscow, St. Philaret (Drozdov) and many others. Therefore it is strange to see a surprise at Patriarch's instruction to begin collect aid to victims of wildfires. Some see in it nearly an interference in the affairs of a secular state (You see? The Orthodox are prying again. They had better sit in their churches, but no, they would not, they attempt to help). The others, on the contrary, are in a hurry to suggest that without His Holiness nobody would begin collecting anything, while modestly passing over in silence the large-scale collection of donations (over 12 million roubles for homeless victims of fire as of August 11) which has begun in many places even before the Patriarchal appeal. I think it is worthwhile to clarify the words of the ROC Primate to avoid new questions. By his instruction the Patriarch has activated a unified system of relief to make the efforts of volunteers and donors more effective. This is by way of deciphering what has been ciphered by some journalists.

Of course, in the midst of our fellow-journalists there are regular critics of the Church and Patriarch Kirill. They would condemn all and always. If the Patriarch goes to Ukraine, it is a political visit, an interference in the affairs of the other state. Had he not gone there, there would have been even more noise alleging that he neglected his Ukrainian flock. If the Church collects money, clothes and medicines for the victims of fire they say she had rather pray more strongly for rain. If she did not collect donations she would come under tough criticism for passivity. And so on any occasion.

One can continue 'ciphering' by calling the Primate of the Church just a manager and the like. In doing so, we will in no way influence the life of the Church, the less so God who judges us according to our deeds. But we will confuse ourselves. Fortunately, there is a difference view of the personality of the present Patriarch. It can be told by hundreds of people who the Patriarch of the ROC deals with. In recent times among them were the mother of little Olga from Odessa, patients in a hospital in Dnepropetrovsk, schoolchildren in the town of Staritsa... These people however are approached by journalists on much rarer occasions, unfortunately. They are more interested in revealing non-existent problems and exposing absent designs. A pity.