

“My child, don’t lose sight
of common sense and discernment...
for the Lord is your security.” Proverbs 3:21

Moscow's Sleight of Hand

by Hagiographos
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Do not lose sight of the basic value of the land on which the house sits.

The Agia Sophia controversy is important, but the “adversary within,” namely the local Kremlin based church and the Patriarch of Moscow is taking advantage of our circumstances. As we are all enthralled by the political posturing of Recep Erdogan and our circumstances the Russians are playing very dirty games.

While the world and the entirety of Christendom is focused on the reconversion of Agia Sophia “museum” back to its illegal status, as a mosque, the Kremlin and Russian Orthodox Church are making back-door dealings with Erdogan.

Publicly Patriarch Cyril proclaims, "A threat to Agia Sophia is a threat to the whole of Christian



civilization, and therefore to our spirituality and history," yet all those who surround the local bishop of Moscow sing a different song.

“Politicians from Russia’s State Duma have made appeals to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to transfer control of Orthodox Christian locations inside the country to the jurisdiction of Russia.”

“Sergey Gavrilov, the head of parliament’s Committee for the Development of Civil Society, Public Issues and Religious Associations, announced that the country needs to take control of churches which formerly belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church” and are now located in Turkey.

“I believe that, today, this issue should be



resolved,” he said. “We need to discuss at least seven churches that once belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church – about their return and restoration.”

Publicly, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, the chairman of the Department of External Church Relations in Russia, called the reconversion of Hagia Sophia “a slap in the face [of] the Orthodox Church, with the whole Christian world.”

Yet behind closed doors he’s advocating for the Moscow based church to control vast portions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and according to Gavrilov, the Moscow Patriarchate wants “Russia to take control of not only churches, but Orthodox farms, pilgrim centers, and hotels, which were built by Russians and belonged to [Russia] before the revolution.” Arch-priest Fr. Nikolaos Balasov stated that “at the beginning of the 20th century, seven Russian Churches functioned in and around Constantinople, but not all of them have survived to this day.”



Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Hagia Sophia status is “an internal affair of Turkey.” And “there are other more pressing issues” according to Russian Metropolitan Anthony of Borislov “Patriarch Bartholomew, instead of dealing with Hagia Sophia, he’s preoccupied with Ukraine.” He goes on to state “The Patriarch, as the first, had to take care of the unity of Orthodoxy, but as you can see [as a result of Ukraine], evil has consequences.”

However according to reports the recent Synod of Moscow (July 17) “officially links Ukrainian autocephaly with Hagia Sophia issue.” The iterations of Archbishop Theodosy (Snigiryov) of Boyarka “If the Phanar continues to systematically split Orthodoxy, then anything can happen.” Church spokesman Vladimir Legoida who ignored millions of Ukrainian pleas said, “The concern of millions of Christians were not heard,” in Turkey. Ridiculous and scandalous comments by the Kremlin and



Muscovite hierarchy are everyday occurrences and are unworthy.

We must straightforwardly denounce the unorthodox attempts by any politically charged international propaganda. Whether they emanate from President Erdogan, the Kremlin, or the Russian Orthodox Church which can only serve to further divide Orthodoxy and undermine the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The Great Church of Christ

The Great Church of Christ is not a building, it is the Ecumenical Patriarchate. “The ‘Great Church of Christ’ is the touchstone and reference point for ecclesiastical affairs in the East, whether in terms of church government, relations with the state, or liturgical matters.”

From the second century Irenaeus who first referenced to the “Great Church” (ecclesia magna).



The Great Church of Christ under the Ottoman Empire took under its omorphorion the burden and sacrifice of all the Ancient Patriarchates: Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch and became the “Great Nation” of Christians began at the doorstep of Kiev and included: Belgrade, Sofia, Salonika, Constantinople, Damascus, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Cairo, Tripoli, and Algiers. The Great Church, the Great Nation of Christians, The Ecumenical Patriarchate.

As magnificent a structure, luxuriously decorated, historically significant, ecclesiastically important and aspires to all our human possibilities, we must not lose sight of the basic value of the land on which the house sits. The sacrificial Phanar “the Sacred Center, our Ecumenical Patriarchate, is at the heart of Orthodoxy, is the spiritual womb of our Genos.” As His All-Holiness said, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, during its centuries-long ministry in Istanbul, struggles, “sometimes under better conditions and sometimes under worse conditions, often in unpleasant conditions, but we are patient that better days will come and we will move on.”

“We who are here and serve the Church and the Romiosini from this position, we consider it a special blessing of God and privilege, because we have received this lot, the blessing, to carry on the tradition of many centuries in which our Ecumenical Patriarchate is based here and serves not only its own spiritual children but all Orthodoxy, all Christianity and all humanity.”





“Love is not sentimentality, but sacrifice.” -Archimandrite Vasileios

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