



His Holiness Patriarch Cyril Tells Parliament What Keeps Him Up at Night

OE Watch Commentary: The Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), Patriarch Cyril, has accompanied President Putin side by side in the latter's long residence in power. Cyril's presence has been widely noted in both the Russian press and in the West, firmly indicating the President's preference for the ROC. While stopping short of declaring it a state religion, the President's "silent" endorsement for the ROC, was on display again as he participated in the annual ROC ice-hole plunge celebrating Christ's baptism, shown live on television.

In his 25 January 2018 address to the upper house of Russian Parliament, at the opening of the Sixth Annual Christmas Parliamentary Meetings, Patriarch Cyril lauded the event as an opportunity for lawmakers and Russian Orthodox Church leaders to exchange ideas. He also took the opportunity to remind the audience he had spoken at the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (an international body made up of members of the Commonwealth of Independent States) earlier in the year. His primary message at both events was that the law is based in morals and a proper spiritual mindset.

It is difficult to know who his actual intended audience is, given his emphasis on the connection between the lawmaking process and lawmakers' faith. Perhaps in an attempt to inspire lawmakers, he says lawmaking is not just about finding compromise and legalizing the existing norms, rather, lawmakers are obligated to make laws that create conditions for people to have the best life possible. He also bemoans the state of "freedom" as a value, saying it has been stripped of the other side of the coin, responsibility, and is now left a more hedonistic value that one belonging to a moral society.

In addition to contravening the conventional wisdom that morality cannot be legislated, Patriarch Cyril echoes President Putin in imploring his audience to remember, "We are one people". He hews to a more commonly heard concern in noting that technological progress, especially electronic means, are both useful and potentially harmful. Leaving no doubt which side he comes down on, he states unequivocally, "A side effect of new technologies is a complex dehumanization of social relationships." This, ostensibly, paves the way for the government to sell how "safe" its new monitoring and information collection technologies are – keeping its citizens safe from terrorism and preventing crime by making financial transactions (forcibly) transparent.

Cyril concludes by declaring lawmakers can only be guided by one thing: their conscience. His words will serve as a backdrop for lawmakers' actions to come. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hall)**

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Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Cyril.

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Source: “Доклад Святейшего Патриарха Кирилла на VI Рождественских парламентских встречах” (His Holiness Patriarch Cyril's speech at the Sixth Annual Christmas Parliamentary Meetings), www.patriarch.ru, January 25, 2018. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5136914.html>

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A new conceptualization of freedom, as a value that exists separately from responsibility and obligation, is squeezing out morality... Guided by this understanding of freedom, people do not gain new opportunities for self-realization, just the opposite – they move into a shameful condition of being slaves to their desires.

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I am compelled to talk about a phenomenon that not just worries a lot of people, it has also caused many to suffer. Recently, the world has seen the spread of co-called cryptocurrencies, including Bitcoin... The Church sees its task as teaching people not to be slaves to their desires and to strive to do righteous work, which will be justly rewarded. But the government, too, is called upon to protect people from extreme risk and even straight-out lies, including by means of legal regulation.