



## The CIA's Man in Constantinople

### Description

**US : Everyone knows that the Moscow Patriarchate is in bed with the Kremlin. Few realize that the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople is deeply beholden to the United States government.**

This ignorance is surprising, given that many Greek Orthodox leaders are quite proud of the fact.

In 1942, Athenagoras Spyrou—the Archbishop of America for the Greek Orthodox Church—wrote to an agent of the Office of Strategic Services.

“I have three Bishops, three hundred priests, and a large and far-flung organization,” Athenagoras wrote. “Every one under my order is under yours.

You may command them for any service you require. There will be no questions asked and your directions will be executed faithfully.”

In 1947, the OSS was rechristened as the Central Intelligence Agency, or CIA. One year later, Athenagoras was elected Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the spiritual leader of Eastern Orthodoxy.

One might point out that, when Athenagoras reached out to the OSS, his native Greece was under Nazi occupation. It is understandable that a Greek bishop in America would support the American war effort. But it was more than that. Athenagoras was a strong supporter of American exceptionalism and encouraged Washington's militarist foreign policy.

**The U.S. Consul in Istanbul recounted a conversation with Athenagoras in 1951:** “As usual, he talked at some length of his belief that the United States must remain in the Near East for several centuries to fulfill the mission which had been given it by God to give freedom, prosperity and happiness to all people.”

(These quotes, by the way, are pulled from a talk given by an Orthodox historian called

Matthew Namee at Holy Cross Hellenic College, the Greek seminary in Boston. These are not malicious forgeries peddled by Russian propagandists—the Greek Orthodox are quite proud of their association with the American deep state.)

Athenagoras was not merely an Americanist. He was also known as a renovationist, as liberal Orthodox are known.

In 1964, he met with Pope Paul VI in Jerusalem; together, they officially lift the mutual excommunications placed by their predecessors in 1054.

This gesture sparked outrage across Orthodox world. Athenagoras was accused of compromising the Orthodox Faith for the sake of a paper union with Rome.

The current Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew, is cut from the same cloth as Athenagoras. He is very close to Pope Francis; the two share a passion for mass immigration and environmental activism.

Also like Athenagoras, Bartholomew shares a close relationship with the U.S. government—a partnership that has proven mutually beneficial.

The Ecumenical Patriarch is the spiritual leader of Orthodoxy. However, he only has direct jurisdiction over a few thousand Orthodox Christians in Turkey.

The rest of the Greek Orthodox world are autocephalous, or self-governing. This includes the Church of Greece, the Church of Cyprus, and the American metropolises (or dioceses).

Many look to Bartholomew for leadership, but they are not directly under his authority. It is also worth noting that a large majority of Orthodox Christians around the world belong to the Russian Orthodox tradition.

These churches do not look to Bartholomew for leadership in any meaningful way. Some, like the Patriarchate of Moscow, are in schism with Constantinople.

Bartholomew is not the “pope” of Orthodoxy—although he would like to be. Over the last few decades, the ecumenical patriarch has also worked to consolidate hard power over the various Greek Orthodox churches.

This effort has proven most fruitful in the United States.

In 2014, Elpidophoros Lambriniadis, the current Archbishop of America and Bartholomew’s heir apparent, published a short essay called “First Without Equals.”

Its name was a play on the phrase *primus inter pares*, or first among equals.

This title originally referred to the Pope of Rome, but was transferred to Patriarch of Constantinople by the Orthodox following the Great Schism of 1054.

Of course, the Schism itself was caused in no small part by a sense that the Roman Pontiffs failed to respect the rights and privileges of their fellow bishops, especially in the Christian East.

Clearly, the Archbishop was signaling his desire to cultivate a more authoritarian, centralist ecclesiology within the Orthodox Church, a philosophy which has been dubbed Greek papism.

In 2022, during an interview with the Greek newspaper Ta Nea, Elpidophoros was asked if he expected to become the next Ecumenical Patriarch.

Elpidophoros demurred, claiming that “the succession will be decided by God.” This, too, is a radical departure from Orthodox tradition.

In fact, it goes beyond Greek papism. Even the Roman Catholic Church explicitly denies that the Pope is chosen by God.

Nevertheless, the United States government officially supports the doctrine of Greek papism, as will be shown. Strengthening the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s position within global Orthodoxy serves two purposes.

First, it necessarily subtracts from the influence of Constantinople’s rival, the Moscow Patriarchate. Washington regards Russian Orthodoxy as a tool for Kremlin propaganda and, therefore, a legitimate target for counterintelligence operations.

Secondly, the renovationist Ecumenical Patriarchs are willing partners in Washington’s campaign to spread liberal, democratic values across the globe.

Consider, for example, the schism in the Ukrainian Church. In 1990, the Patriarchate of Moscow granted self-governing status to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC).

It was not, however, given full autocephaly. However, a group of Ukrainian nationalists led by then-president Minister Petro Poroshenko organized an “independent” Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU).

With the support of Western media, these nationalists successfully branded the canonical UOC as the “Russian Church.”

In 2018, when asked about the Orthodox Church of Ukraine’s bid for autocephaly, Kurt Volker—then Special Representative of the United States Department of State for Ukraine—appeared to wave the question off.

He insisted that the U.S. government does not take a position on such matters and would respect the decision of Bartholomew and his synod.

Make no mistake: By declaring that the decision belongs to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the U.S. government is taking a position.

First of all, autocephaly cannot be granted unilaterally by any patriarch or bishop. Second, if the decision belonged to anyone, it would be the Patriarch of Moscow, the spiritual leader of Slavic Orthodoxy.

Even the great Kallistos Ware denounced the Ecumenical Patriarchate for meddling in the Ukrainian Church:

Though I am a metropolitan of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, I am not at all happy about the position taken by Patriarch Bartholomew.

With all due respect to my Patriarch, I am bound to say that I agree with the view expressed by the Patriarchate of Moscow that Ukraine belongs to the Russian Church.

After all, the Metropolia of Kiev by an agreement of 1676 was transferred from the omophorion of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to that of the Patriarchate of Moscow. So, for 330 years Ukraine has been part of the Russian Church.

Third, just days before Volker gave his interview, Joe Biden—then only the former vice president—flew to Ukraine to express his support for the OCU.

As soon as Bartholomew ruled in favor of the OCU church, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo expressed the Trump administration's firm support for his decision.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, our government has implicitly supported Ukrainian president Vladimir Zelensky's policy of seizing property (including church buildings) from the UOC and transferring them to the OCU.

In one particularly egregious episode, a nationalist mob attacked a UOC church in the middle of a funeral, dispersed the worshippers and beat the celebrant-priest so badly he had to be hospitalized.

The kicker? It was a funeral for a Ukrainian soldier who died fighting against Russia.

This one detail cannot be emphasized enough: Whatever the media claims, the canonical UOC is not an arm of Russian influence.

Its members are not "pro-Russia"; much less are they Russian collaborators. They, too, are giving their lives to defend their homeland against Russian aggression.

But that doesn't matter to Washington or Constantinople. By supporting the separatists, Bartholomew is undermining Moscow's influence within global Orthodoxy. And that's good for the Russophobes in our foreign-policy establishment.

In 2019, the State Department gave \$100,000 to the Orthodox Times, a news site strongly aligned with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The purpose? "

To counter entities spreading fake news and misleading believers in Orthodox communities"—in other words, Russian disinformation.

It's ironic that Trump's State Department pursued this pro-Constantinople agenda given that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is openly and proudly aligned with the Democratic Party. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America boasts:

President Truman often emphasized the pro-American convictions of Patriarch Athenagoras and the importance and influence of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, along with the Greek Orthodox community in the U.S., as vital to American foreign policy objectives.

Indeed, Truman saw the Patriarchate and Athenagoras as crucial to bolstering the pro-Western resolve of both Greece and Turkey, as well as to promoting stability in the Middle East.

In 2020, Patriarch Bartholomew wrote to congratulate his old friend Biden for defeating Donald Trump in the presidential election.

“You can only imagine my great joy and pride for your successful election as the 46th president of your distinguished nation, the United States of America.”

Archbishop Elpidophoros, in that same interview with Ta Nea, also offered a thinly-veiled endorsement of Joe Biden:

In America, the issue of abortion has been completely politicized.... It is as if the only qualification for being a good Christian or a good politician depends on one’s stance on the issue of abortion.

All other principles and doctrines of Christianity do not matter; you can be a crook, a liar, a swindler, a warmonger, violent, or a misogynist, but if you are against abortion, then you are a politician suitable enough for “pious people” to support.

As Rod Dreher pointed out, this little-noticed interview contains quite a few shocking revelations.

**For instance, Elpidophoros is not simply concerned that abortion has been “politicized”:** he is openly pro-choice.

“Women bear the full burden in giving birth and raising their children, while men, otherwise directly involved in the pregnancy, do not bear the same burden,” he told Ta Nea.

“Therefore, we must support women’s right to make reproductive decisions of their own free will.”

Elpidophoros also discusses how proud he was to support the protests which erupted after the death of George Floyd, as well as the infamous “gay baptism.”

For those who aren’t up on their Orthodox church politics: In 2022, Elpidophoros baptized the sons of two wealthy Greek-Americans, Evangelo Bousis and Peter Dundas.

(The children were conceived through surrogacy.) The baptism was performed in Vouliagmeni, a suburb of Athens.

This set off a firestorm in world Orthodoxy for two reasons. Firstly, it is wrong to baptize a child if there is little to no chance of their being raised according to the Church’s teachings.

The parents are making a commitment to their child to the Christian faith without giving them the tools to fulfill that commitment.

Second, visiting clergy (including bishops) must receive permission from the local metropolitan before publicly celebrating the sacraments within their jurisdiction.

In this case, the local metropolitan was Antonios of Glyfada. Elpidophoros requested and was granted permission to baptize the children of an American couple, but did not inform Antonios that the parents were a same-sex couple.

Elpidophoros was condemned by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece as well as the monks of Mount Athos, but he didn't care.

The Archbishop was simply giving the Orthodox world a taste of how he'll do things once he becomes Ecumenical Patriarch.

There's more. In 2019, Elpidophoros appointed Father Alexander Karloutsos as vicar-general for the Archdiocese of America.

Father Alexander is, for all practical purposes, the Biden family's pastor. He sits on the board of the Beau Biden Foundation and serves as a spiritual advisor to the President.

In 2015, Father Alexander attended a (now infamous) dinner hosted by Hunter Biden at the Café Milano in Georgetown.

The dinner was a private reception for several Eastern European oligarchs, including Yury Luzhkov, the profoundly corrupt former Mayor of Moscow.

This was the night that Hunter introduced his father to Vadym Pozharskyi, an executive at Burisma, allegedly fulfilling the deal for which Baturina had paid Hunter \$3.5 million the year before.

More troublingly, Father Alexander is also close to John Poulos, the Greek-Canadian founder of Dominion Voting Systems.

Father Alexander has been credibly accused of serving as a go-between for Poulos and the Bidens during the 2020 election scandal.

It is said that the priest relayed information between the two parties, but cannot be subpoenaed due to New York's clergy privilege laws.

Though all parties admit that Father Alexander was in frequent communication with both parties during that time, they also insist that he was simply offering them spiritual counsel. Undoubtedly both Poulos and Biden spent those difficult months in prayer and fasting.

As it happens, in 2018, Father Alexander also found himself at the center of an \$80 million financial scandal, which was probed by the U.S. government.

The federal government's investigation to the matter was dropped shortly after it began, despite the

fact that no explanation was ever unearthed.

When President Biden awarded Father Alexander the Presidential Medal of Freedom last year, he jokingly warned, “I’m going to ruin your reputation by talking.”

Unfortunately, such allegations of corruption are fairly widespread in the Archdiocese of America. The Greek Orthodox Church is by far the wealthiest denomination in this country relative to its size.

(A Roman Catholic priest can expect to make no more than \$45,000 per year; a Greek Orthodox priest can earn upwards of \$130,000.)

There are many well-established second-generation families who still feel a deep loyalty to the Church even if they tend not to practice very faithfully.

In other words, the Archdiocese of America is in roughly the same position that the Catholic Church was under Kennedy.

It is rich in capital and assets but largely beholden to secular, liberal donors. Hence why the Hellenic College Holy Cross, the Greek Orthodox seminary, refers to former congressman Michael Huffington as a “faithful Orthodox Christian” despite the fact that he’s a practicing homosexual who publicly dissents from the Church’s teaching on sexuality.

Happily, most Greek Orthodox jurisdictions are not renovationist; neither are they in the pocket of the American government or beholden to liberal, secular donors.

In fact, when the Greek parliament voted to ratify same-sex marriage, the Church of Greece called the decision “demonic” and excommunicated several of the “immoral lawmakers” who voted for the bill.

But whatever our government may claim, it will promote Bartholomew and his successor, Elpidophoros, as “Greek Popes” in order to liberalize Greek Orthodoxy and counter Russian Orthodoxy.

This is the policy of the U.S. government. There are State Department personnel (and taxpayer dollars) dedicated to achieving this exact goal.

It is discussed—openly; gleefully—in the major institutions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Archdiocese of America.

And yet anyone who suggests that this is a gross betrayal of both the American people and the Orthodox faithful is immediately accused of being a “Russian asset.” Go figure.

**BY Michael Warren Davis**

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