

The Calendar Question or the Heresy of Ecumenism? Part V*

A Critical Review of Three Articles by Elder Theokletos of Dionysiou



The third visit of the ecumenist Patriarch Bartholomew to the Vatican (2004; the first was in 1995, and the second in 2002), which culminated in his anti-Orthodox liturgical hobnobbing with the heretical Pope John Paul II at the Patronal Feast of the Church of Rome (29 June),

- contributed yet further to “**the gradual loss of any sense of the essence and power of heresy**”;
- underscored the “**dangerous tendencies and the reckless inter-ecclesiastical overtures of the Dialogue of Love, which, by the cut-and-slice ‘salami’ method, lead us, time after time, to new and unpleasant surprises**”;
- brought to mind the “**gradual exhaustion and weakening of the immune system of the Orthodox ecclesiastical organism.**”

These “observations” form part of the “symptomatology” of the “**contemporary ecclesiological epidemic**” of ecumenism, which “**relentlessly assails many segments of Orthodoxy,**” as the ever-memorable **Professor Andreas Theodorou** correctly pointed out sixteen years ago.¹

IX

Knowingly “Communing With the Advocates of Darkness”

So far, by the Grace of God, we have demonstrated and fully substantiated the direct and incontrovertible connection—indeed, the causal connection—between the calendar reform of 1924 and the ecumenical movement, which officially began in 1920, and, in light of this connection, the existence, since 1924, not of New Calendarists and Old Calendarists, but, to be precise, of ecumenists and anti-ecumenists.

Elder Theokletos of Dionysiou, when he dissociates the **calendar question** from the **ecumenical movement** and, likewise, when he essentially denies the existence of anti-ecclesiastical **ecumenism** after 1972, demonstrates, on the one hand, that he is either suppressing the historical truth or does not understand it, owing to some deep and incurable prejudice; and, on the other hand, that he is very profoundly alienated by the corrosive influence of his communion with the innovationist **New Calendar Church**.

St. Gregory Palamas, that true and paradigmatic Athonite Hesychast, who was replete with light and Grace, rightly underscores the ruinous consequences, at a spiritual level, of direct or indirect communion with heresy and convicts **Elder Theokletos** of knowingly communing with the “advocates of darkness,” that is, the innovating **ecumenists**.

Elder Theokletos, who for nearly sixty consecutive years (1941-2004) has been “**in communion with heretics**,” gives “**the upstart teachers**” of ecumenism, “**who distort Orthodox dogmas**,” “**occasion to speak arrogantly**”² against the Truth and is becoming, at the same time, ever more “**lukewarm**”; that is, he aligns himself with those who “**do not cleave ardently to the truth of Orthodoxy**.”³

“**It is no small matter to commune with the advocates of darkness**,” says the Herald of Grace; “**it is no small matter**

to give occasion to men such as these to speak arrogantly”⁴ against Orthodoxy.

Elder Theokletos, who has manifestly been given over “to a reprobate mind,”⁵ since he knowingly “communes with the advocates of darkness,” vehemently attacks the weaker **Old Calendarist** Faithful, exploiting their actual or putative shortcomings in order to hide his own flagrant guilt and that of his superiors.

“For, since there is no strength in their own dogmas,” as St. Gregory the Theologian said, “they hunt for it in our weak points, and for this reason they apply themselves to our—let me say ‘mistakes’ or ‘sins’?—like flies to wounds.”⁶

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1. **Elder Theokletos** surely cannot be unaware that, *inter alia*, on the eve of the **1924 reform**, the Patriarchate of Constantinople was gripped by dismay, because “it sensed,” even after the adoption of the New Calendar by the so-called **Pan-Orthodox Congress of 1923** (Constantinople, 10 May/6 June 1923), the “continuing effect” of the arguments demanding adherence to the **New Calendar** and the “endless scrutiny of those things related to” this “issue.”

As Metropolitan Germanos of Sardis (†1945) observed,

‘the goal that we are pursuing, that of pan-Christian unity, at least in the simultaneous celebration of the Nativity and the Resurrection of the Lord, continues to remain unfulfilled,’ ‘even after the response of the Churches to the resolutions of the Pan-Orthodox Congress.’⁷

2. Likewise, **Elder Theokletos** surely cannot be unaware of the “fear and disquiet of many Orthodox” over ecumenism, as the late Professor Andreas Theodorou (†March 2004) wrote in this connection in 1988.

Ecumenism, “like a contemporary ecclesiological epidemic relentlessly assails many segments of Orthodoxy,” as the ever-

memorable professor correctly pointed out, and the “symptoms of this disease” contribute to the “*gradual exhaustion and weakening of the immune system of the Orthodox ecclesiastical organism,*” “*representing a real danger and a deadly entanglement for Orthodoxy, a fact which we should never let slip from our visual field.*”⁸

• However, in the “visual field” of Elder Theokletos there has never existed either the “contemporary ecclesiological epidemic” of ecumenism, which was inaugurated in **1920** and which gave rise to the **calendar reform of 1924**, or the “*real danger and deadly entanglement*” occasioned by ecumenism, which, according to Father Theokletos, consists in “*relations and encounters of a social nature*” and “*certain acts of politeness and courtesy towards the heterodox*” (Article I)!

X

The Letter of Father Gervasios (Paraskevopoulos)

Since Elder Theokletos regards the **Old Calendarist Faithful** as “simple-minded cretins and schismatic brethren” (Article III), he has, as usual, devised a fictitious and tedious “dialogue,” invoking a letter to himself (6 May 1957) from the ever-memorable **Father Gervasios (Paraskevopoulos)** (†1964) of Patras, in his effort to prove that the “motives of the ringleaders in the schism were ignoble” (Article III); in addition, he endeavors to besmirch in the worst possible way the memory of the saintly **Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina** (†1955), in particular, lapsing into an hysterical tirade, entirely in keeping with the tradition of Athonite invective.

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1. In the first place, any sober reader will immediately realize that the publication of this letter of **Father Gervasios** irredeemably compromises **Elder Theokletos**.

- **Father Gervasios**, as a truly spiritual man, is courteous and moderate in his manner of expression, whereas **Elder Theokletos** is distinguished by his discourtesy and immoderation.

- **Father Gervasios** states clearly and unequivocally that he regards “*the action of our Hierarchy as reckless*” and the **calendar change implemented in 1924** by “**the Greek Church as not being in conformity with Holy Tradition, and all the more so because it was not a pan-Orthodox decision,**” whereas **Elder Theokletos** declares that “*there is nothing improper in the leap of thirteen days, other than the inept way in which [the reform] was carried out*” (Article III).

- **Father Gervasios**, in referring to the “*motives*” of the leaders of the **Old Calendar** movement, does not adduce unswerving assumptions, but talks in merely **theoretical** terms, on the basis of well-known rumors and his own personal judgments, albeit sparingly; whereas **Elder Theokletos** outdoes himself by means of his well-known—and risible—*psychoanalytic method*, thereby showing himself to be unfair, slanderous, ill-informed, and a consummate sophist.

2. In the second place, **Elder Theokletos** commits a major blunder when, while appealing to the very short letter of the ever-memorable **Father Gervasios**, he simultaneously and reprehensibly **neglects to mention, or suppresses**, the very detailed epistolary essay which the saintly **Father Philotheos (Zervakos; †25 April/8 May 1980)** sent to him from Paros on **16 August 1979**.⁹

In this momentous letter,

- **Father Philotheos** writes with especial zeal and candor about the “*unvarnished truth*” regarding the innovationist **Archbishop Chrysostomos (Papadopoulos)** and his culpable rôle in the **1924 reform**, demonstrating the mendacity of all that he says in his booklet *Ἡμερολογητικῶν Κατηγοριῶν Ἐλεγχος* [*A Refutation of Accusations by the Calendarists*] [*sic*] (1st edition; Athens: 1937).

- **Father Philotheos** regards the introduction of the **New Calendar** as “*uncanonical, unlawful, and reckless.*”

- **Father Philotheos** asserts that the innovationist Archbishop,

by “endeavoring to prove [through his booklet] that Old Calendarism is [supposedly] an outright error, proves only this: *his unstable character and his delusion of mind and intellect.*”

- **Father Philotheos** unambiguously and unreservedly links the 1924 reform with ecumenism when he says that **Chrysostomos (Papadopoulos)** “suffered from delusion of mind and intellect because he followed—deplorably enough—the *modernist, innovationist, and Freemason Metaxakis,*” “along with whom he opened the doors of the rational sheepfold to *Athenagoras, Meliton of Chalcedon, and Iakovos of America, who entered the rational sheepfold and tore to pieces the rational sheep and the Ecumenical Patriarchate.*”

- **Father Philotheos** asserts that “*Metaxakis led [Papadopoulos] into other errors, which I shall pass over.*”

- **Father Philotheos** describes, as an eyewitness and an ear-witness, that historic and truly tragic moment when the repentant Archbishop Chrysostomos, traumatized by the threats of fanatics,

began to beat his head forcefully with both hands and to say, with groans and tears: ‘Perish the moment, perish the moment I accepted the New Calendar! It was he, that perverse Metaxakis, who led me down the garden path.

XI

An Incomparably Greater Blunder

This great blunder of **Elder Theokletos**, that is, his suppression of what is, in essence, a letter of refutation to him from **Elder Philotheos**, becomes incomparably greater when we take into account the following points:

1. **Elder Theokletos**, although he has always been persuaded that “*it is possible for us to have yet another Philotheos in the Hagiologion [calendar of Saints—Trans.] of the Church,*”¹⁰ and although he is convinced that “*God will reveal his [Father*

*Philotheos's] sanctity through miracles,”*¹¹ has never adopted the “*unvarnished truth*” set forth by **Elder Philotheos** concerning the **1924 reform**. Not only does he never appeal to this truth, but he has even **fought against it!**

2. Elder Theokletos, *qua* biographer of the venerable **Philotheos of Paros**, admits that “*no one has ever been so concerned or written so much*” about the calendar question “*as the wise Philotheos*”;¹² Father Philotheos, however, always wrote such things with the expectation that the **Old Calendar would be restored**, for the sake of bringing peace to the Church.

• For example, on **7 September 1964**, **Father Philotheos** wrote the following to the Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Dionysiou, **Father Gabriel** (†1983), the Elder of **Father Theokletos**:

It is now becoming an urgent necessity—and the times demand it—that we all intensify our efforts and work unanimously and assiduously for the restoration of the Old Calendar. This, as we all know, is required for the very unity of our glorious and much-suffering Greek Church, which unity was rent asunder from the moment the Papal Calendar was arbitrarily and sinfully introduced.¹³

3. **Father Theokletos**, in his biography of **Elder Philotheos**, makes the following comments on the Elder’s well-known prozealot work, *Ἡ ἐν Ἁγίῳ Ὄρει προσύνδος* [*The Pre-Synodal Conference on the Holy Mountain*]:

Basing himself on the dogmatic teaching of the Church and her age-old Tradition, he never accepted any innovations. For this reason, he opposed every attempt at modernization and hastened to rebut the innovationist proposals of modernist theologians or Church officials. This booklet, therefore, serves such a purpose with forceful language and very strong arguments.¹⁴

• However, the booklet in question, which was written by Elder Philotheos in **1926**, is unreservedly and unequivocally **anti-ecumenical**:¹⁵

—It staunchly opposes the **Pre-Synodal Conference** that was scheduled to convene on the Holy Mountain, and which eventu-

ally convened in **1930** as a **preparatory commission** and as a sequel to the so-called **Pan-Orthodox Congress of 1923**. This conference is viewed as preparing the ground for the so-called **Pan-Orthodox Consultations** (Rhodes, 1961-), in anticipation of the transparently ecumenist **“Holy and Great Synod.”**¹⁶

—It vehemently condemns the preoccupation of Bishops specifically **“with the Sun and the Moon, with the elements (winds and water), with calendars and Paschalia,”** which cause **“confusion, disturbance, conflicts, disputes, enmities, hatred, and other kinds of evil,”** when the Church is facing so many other truly serious problems.

—It courageously proposes, *inter alia*, to the “Ecumenical Synod that is about convene,” **“that it restore the Church Calendar as the Holy Fathers handed it down to us.”**

XII

He Wars Against the Saints and Contradicts Himself

Moreover, **Elder Theokletos** condemns himself when he invokes the non-existent authority of a very brief and superficial letter of **Father Gervasios (Paraskevopoulos)**, while he fails to accept the clarifications and recommendations of the venerable **Elder Philotheos (Zervakos)** and does not imitate the latter’s holy zeal for the peace and unity of the Church through the restoration of the **Old Calendar**:

1. **Elder Theokletos**, in fact, acts completely to the contrary: as someone **“lukewarm”**¹⁷ (or **“non-fanatical,”** as he puts it in his writings¹⁸). He fights with unwonted passion against the pellucid ideas of Elder Philotheos, thereby becoming a **warrior against the Saints**, insofar as:

—he has reprinted the booklet by **Archbishop Chrysostomos (Papadopoulos)**, *Ἡμερολογιτικῶν Κατηγοριῶν Ἐλεγχος* [*A Refutation of Accusations Made by the Calendarists*] [*sic*] (2nd edition; Thessaloniki: 1979), which was condemned by Elder Philotheos;

—he published as an appendix to this booklet the aforementioned letter of **Father Gervasios (Paraskevopoulos)**, while studiously suppressing the views of **Elder Philotheos**, which are diametrically opposed to his own;

—he literally **explodes** at the mere thought of restoring the **Old Calendar**;¹⁹

—he trumpets the idea that “*there is nothing improper in the leap of thirteen days*” (Article III), and that the Church simply “*called one day the twenty-third instead of the tenth*” (Article II);

—characterizes those in resistance to the ecumenist innovation of 1924 as “*simple-minded cretins and schismatics*” (Article III), as “*heterodox pseudo-monastics*” (Article II), and as constituting the “*inhuman schism of the Old Calendarists*” (Articles II and III), and the like!

2. Furthermore, **Elder Theokletos** not only **contradicts himself**, but is also the cause of his own terrible undoing, when we take into consideration the following additional and **totally damning** evidence from two of his early articles:²⁰

—In 1957, expressing agreement with Elder Philotheos, he stated categorically that he was aware of “*the insincerity of the late Archbishop Chrysostomos Papadopoulos of Athens*” in all that he wrote “**in a booklet entitled ‘Ἡμερολογητικῶν Κατηγοριῶν Ἐλεγχος,’ published in 1937,**” and also of his efforts “*to entice the other Churches to join him in this venture, in order to lend legitimacy to his uncanonical action*” [i.e., the calendar reform]!

—In 1957, expressing agreement with Elder Philotheos, and even outdoing him, he regarded the **1924 reform** as “an uncanonical action,” as “something fundamentally uncanonical,” as “an incalculable evil for the Church,” which “compromises the [Greek] Church before the rest of the Orthodox world and before foreigners,” as “an uncanonical wound that still remains unhealed,” as a “perilous innovation,” as “an innovative trend” that leads to the “slippery slope of innovations,” as an “incongruity” in need of correction, as a matter on which “*the Church of*

Greece, since she is not covered from a canonical standpoint, is not justified in demanding obedience,” as “the calendar question which has split the Church,” a question which “*we should not view only within the narrow limits of thirteen days, but in relation to the catholic life of the Church*”; on the basis of all this, “it becomes obvious that we must resolve the uncertainty generated by the calendar question, *which, if prolonged, will perpetuate confusion in the Church, will destroy the foundations of Orthodox ecclesiology, leaving her without adequate protection, will adulterate her spiritual identity, and will thwart her goals*”!

—In 1957, expressing agreement with Elder Philotheos, Father Theokletos in essence made a direct link between the **calendar question** and **ecumenism**—the first-fruits of which were the so-called **Pan-Orthodox Congress of 1923** and **Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakis)**—, by emphasizing the relationship between the calendar and the “*other dangerous innovations being concocted in Constantinople,*” “*when the Patriarch of the Œcumenical Throne was the pernicious Meletios Metaxakis, who was influenced more by progressive Anglicanism than by the ‘antiquated’ dogmas of Orthodoxy*”!

—In 1957, Elder Theokletos accurately and correctly characterized the “Old Calendarists” as “*farseeing*” and “*justified in their protests,*” as “*brethren who practice their religion conscientiously,*” as “*a multitude of people, scrupulous in their observance of the Faith, who keep watch over Orthodoxy and are ready to sacrifice themselves for her glory and good,*” and as “*the people of God*” who prefer “*to suffer hardship than to enjoy a transitory and ill-conceived peace*”; it is wrong to call them a “rabble”: “**this word is inappropriate and most un-Christian; Christ abode among this ‘rabble’; for its sake Paul laid down laws; for its sake the Fathers formulated dogmas; to put it briefly, these are the true elect.... Let us remember who it was that reacted against Iconoclasm.**” They are wrongly accused of being “**disobedient**”: “**this accusation is unjust**”; they are worthy of honor: “*we ought to honor them, as history will assuredly*

do”; they are “*an example worthy of emulation for the Greek Orthodox Church,*” deserving to be accorded “*respect, affection, and love.*” They are a “*living reality, like that of the early Church,*” and they are devout children “*of the Greek Orthodox Church,*” “*whose rebirth is guaranteed by their spirit and way of life*”!

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We must, however, continue our critical analysis of the errors of Elder Theokletos, because his successive falls cannot be explained other than by means of a spiritual perspective, in that they represent the truly tragic phenomenon of abandonment by the illuminating Grace of our Savior, the Giver of light.

“It is no small matter to commune with the advocates of darkness”; “**it is no small matter to give occasion to men such as these to speak arrogantly**”²¹

(to be continued)

* **Source:** Άγιος Κυπριανός, No 321 (July-August 2004), pp. 66-71, 75.

Notes

1. See *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια* (16 December 1988), p. 7.
2. St. Gregory Palamas, *First Refutation of Akindynos*, Ch. XII, §61.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. Cf. Romans 1:28.
6. St. Gregory the Theologian, Oration 27 (“First Theological Oration”), §5, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXXVI, col. 17B.
7. †S.G., “Ἐορτολόγιον–Νέον Ἡμερολόγιον” [“The Festal Calendar and the New Calendar”] *Ὁρθοδοξία*, No. 4 (3 July 1926), p. 108.
8. Andreas Theodorou, “Letter to the Editor,” in *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια* (16 December 1988), p. 7.
9. Archimandrite Philotheos Zervakos, “Ἐνδιαφέρουσα ἐπιστολὴ διὰ τὸ ἡμερολογιακόν” [“An Interesting Letter Concerning the Calendar Question”], *Ὁ Ὅσιος Φιλότητος τῆς Πάρον* [Thessaloniki] (January-April 2001), pp. 50-57.
10. *Ἀθωνικοὶ Διαλόγοι*, Nos. 73-74 and 75-76 (1980), in Stylianos N.

Kementzezides, Ὁ Γέρον Φιλόθεος Ζερβάκος-Ὁ Οὐρανοδρόμος Ὁδοιπόρος (1884-1980) [*Elder Philotheos Zervakos: The Heavenward Wayfarer (1884-1980)*] (Thessaloniki: “Orthodoxos Kypsele” Publications, 1988), Vol. II, pp. 35, 38.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Monk Theokletos of Dionysiou, Ὁ Ὁσσιος Φιλόθεος τῆς Πάρου. Ἐνας ἔνθεος Ἀσκητῆς-Ἱεραπόστολος (1884-1980) [*Elder Philotheos of Paros: A God-Inspired Ascetic and Missionary (1884-1980)*] (Thapsana, Paros: 1999), p. 318, n. 37.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, p. 203 and p. 315, n. 15.

15. For the full text of this booklet, see Kementzezides, Ὁ Γέρον Φιλόθεος Ζερβάκος, Vol. II, pp. 43-49.

16. See Evangelia Barella, *Διορθόδοξοι καὶ Οἰκουμενικαὶ Σχέσεις τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως κατὰ τὸν Κ' Αἰῶνα* [*Inter-Orthodox and Ecumenical Relations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople During the Twentieth Century*] (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, 1994), pp. 98-143 (“The Path Towards the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church”).

17. See note 2.

18. Archbishop Chrysostomos (Papadopoulos) of Athens, *Ἡμερολογιατικῶν Κατηγοριῶν Ἐλεγχος* [*A Refutation of Accusations Made by the Calendarists*] (Thessaloniki: 1979), 2nd ed., p. 4 (“Introductory Remarks”).

19. See the “note” by Father Theokletos in a letter to him from the Archbishop of Athens (23 June 2003), *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 1554 (11 June 2004), p. 3.

20. Monk Theokletos of Dionysiou, “Σχόλια ἐπὶ τῆς Πανορθοδόξου Προσυνόδου” [“Notes on the Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Conference”] and “Ἡμερολογιακῶν Παραλειπόμενα” [“The Untold Story of the Calendar Question”], two articles from the Athonite periodical *Ἅγιος Παῦλος Ξηροποταμίτης* (January and April 1957), in *Ἀθωνικά Ἄνθη* [*Athonite Flowers*] (Athens: “Aster” Publications, 1962), pp. 191-199, 203-211.

21. See note 2.