

Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies

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# ORTHODOX TRADITION

*Published with the blessing of His Eminence,  
Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

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**“The Old Calendar movement is neither a heresy nor a schism,  
and those who follow it are neither heretics nor schismatics, but  
are Orthodox Christians.”**

*Archbishop Dorotheos of Athens (1956-57)  
State (New Calendar) Church of Greece*

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# A GOOD WORD



## Its Healing Power

*by Archimandrite Cyprian*  
Secretary of the Holy Synod

An address delivered in honor of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, President of the Holy Synod, at a tribute commemorating his Nameday (October 2 [Old Style]), convened on October 6, 2003 (Old Style), at the Convention Center of the Novotel in Athens, Greece.

*Our Most Reverend Metropolitan and Much-Revered Spiritual Father; Holy Hierarchs; Revered Fathers and Brothers; Honorable Company of Monastics; Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

### I

Trusting in your good wishes and prayers, unworthy as I am, I beseech you to allow me to present the theme of our gathering this evening very concisely and in a straightforward and simple fashion.

I have no desire to prolong my remarks, for our only competent—indeed quintessential—teachers and guides to the genuine ethos of the Church are our Bishops, the living Icons of Christ, whose persons are the very embodiment of the local Church.

Invoking, then, the assistance and guidance of our All-Holy Mother and of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, whose memory we are honoring, I will virtually make so bold, ever so warily, as to set forth just as much as is necessary for a brief introduction to the value and healing power of a good word.

We humbly pray and hope that, on a suitable occasion, our Most Reverend Metropolitan will, in his truly charismatic manner of address, expound on this so important and salutary subject at length and in depth.

For the time being, may our spiritual Father permit us, we beg him, to cast a small seed into the hearts of our well-disposed brethren in Christ. This seed is quite literally his own, since it was he who first sowed it in our hearts, where it has yielded “thirty-fold” in some, “sixty-fold” in others, and “a hundredfold” in yet others.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, it is on account of this abundant harvest that we have selected our theme this year; we wanted, above all, to express

our gratitude to our spiritual Father for the beneficial effects of his good words in our hearts.

## II

Let us, therefore, approach this beautiful and, at the same time, profound theme on the basis of one of the most vivid examples in our Tradition, one which fills one with compunction and which bears direct witness to the value of a good word and to its healing power:

Abba Makarios of Egypt and his disciple were once going up from Sketis to Mount Nitria.

As they approached their destination, the Elder told his disciple: 'Go on a short distance ahead.' The disciple, as he went on ahead, encountered an idolater. The latter was a priest and was walking hurriedly, holding a staff.



'Hey, Satan, to where are you rushing?' the monk impetuously exclaimed.

At that moment, the priest was so incensed, that he turned towards the monk and thrashed him relentlessly. He ended up leaving him half-dead. Thereupon, he took his staff and made haste to depart.

A little while later, Abba Makarios saw this priest. He at once began to greet him with profound kindness: 'May God bless you, you busy fellow. May it be well with you, O man of toil. May you be saved, may you be saved.'

The idolater was perplexed. He approached the Saint and asked him: 'What good did you see in me, Abba, that you

wished me to be saved?'

'I see you toiling and rushing,' replied the Saint, 'and you are not aware, O blessed man, that you are laboring in vain.'

'My heart was softened and mellowed by your greeting,' said the pagan priest, who had by now regained his composure. 'I realize that you are a man of God. But someone else, some wretched monk, insulted me when he met me a short time ago, and I really sorted him out. I left him half-dead from the blows he received.'

He then immediately fell at the feet of Abba Makarios, clasped them, and said to the Elder: 'I will not let you go unless you make me a monk.'

The Saint raised him up, and together they went to the place where his disciple was lying. They lifted him up and carried him to the Church on Mount Nitria.

When the monks saw the pagan priest with the Abba, they were astonished.

Eventually, after Baptizing him, they made the priest a monk, and because of him many pagans became Christians.

Abba Makarios, thereupon, said: 'An evil word makes even a good

man evil, whereas a good word turns even an evil man into a good one.’

An evil word makes even good people evil, and a good word makes even evil people good.<sup>2</sup>

My initial observation, which I think expresses the general sense of this compunctious narrative, is that it is permeated by the following very strong antitheses: the language of the impetuous disciple and the language of the mature Elder; the evil word and the good word; the language of disdain and the language of acceptance; that language that arouses to anger and that language that becalms; that language that darkens another person and that language which enlightens him.

Now, do words, in and of themselves, possess such properties? Is language endowed with such powers, powers that are, in fact, simultaneously antithetical? What kind of language, finally, is this? What secret does it conceal? Psychology could certainly offer profound answers to these questions;<sup>3</sup> but this incident, this small drama of the Egyptian desert, obliges us to give answers of a different order.

Let us, therefore, examine this issue more closely, with the blessing of the Holy Fathers. In the first place, we notice that the pagan priest recognized at once, in the person of Abba Makarios, a genuine man of God, whereas in the person of the disciple he saw one who was a man of God only on the surface.

In other words, it seems that the effectiveness of a man’s speech depends directly on the spiritual state of his heart. In truth, if our speech emanates from a heart in which the Incarnate Word of God dwells and reposes, then our speech becomes a conveyor and vehicle of the illuminating and peace-bestowing Grace of God. Contrariwise, if our speech proceeds from a life dominated by the activity of dark passions, then our speech conveys to others the murk and confusion of evil spirits.

We may, therefore, arrive at this initial and basic conclusion: when St. Makarios converted the idolater by means of his good words, he did not employ a technique or a method that involved any kind of proselytizing; rather, he gave spontaneous expression to the outpouring of his heart, which was inundated with the Grace of the Holy Spirit and the love of Christ.

### III

But now, let us transport ourselves to the slums of Athens, where, at the beginning of the previous century, the blessed presence of Papa-Nicholas Planas diffused hope and holiness.

This holy Priest of the Most High would very often visit a family which had rented an area of its courtyard to a certain cobbler. The hapless cobbler was an atheist and a prominent member of the Communist movement. As the ever-memorable Eldress Martha, a disciple of Papa-Nicholas, tells us:

[The]...hatred [of this cobbler] towards all, and especially towards Priests, knew no bounds. In the place where he worked, he would talk to himself and rant about where he and his comrades would begin slaughtering Priests.



He would say: 'To start with, we'll slaughter the Priests of the [Church of] the Life-giving Spring.' And he would go on to talk about the others in turn.

The blessed Papa-Nicholas, with his characteristic kindness, approached the man and said to him: "Good evening, my child."

Without raising his head from his work, he muttered something. Father went there again the following Saturday and said to him: 'Good evening, my dear Luke.' The cobbler replied, 'Good evening,' again without raising his head.

On his third visit, Father again said to him: 'Good evening, my dear Luke; how are you doing, my child?' Luke was obliged to say: 'I'm doing well, Father.'

Father continued to visit him at his place of work, until the ice was broken.

The cobbler [at last] stood up from his work and respectfully kissed the Father's hand.'

Then, addressing himself to those who had accompanied the Priest, he declared:

'When they start killing the Priests, I'll speak up for Papa-Nicholas, so that they won't

kill him. And I won't just speak up for him, I'll protect him!'

Thereafter, whenever Father would come, Luke would hasten to meet him and kiss his hand.

It is worth noting that Papa-Nicholas, whose goodness was unsurpassed,

...did not know what the cobbler's intentions were, had no idea what Communism was,\* and was unaware of the change that had taken place in Luke—or so we suppose. Who knows what he saw with the clairvoyant gift of his soul?

Anyway, no matter how many sermons this Communist might have heard, no matter how many admonitions he might have been given, none of them could have had as much influence on his indurate soul as the goodness of this gray-haired little Elder, who would conscientiously visit him time and again, indifferent to the fact that he had been scorned at the outset.

But the ending of this story is even more striking:

As a result of Father's simple greetings, the cobbler repented, and when, after a short while, he fell ill with a disease (paralysis of the lower extremities of his legs) and died at the age of thirty, he reposed as a good Christian and certainly without...having killed anyone.

Father's personality exerted the same influence on all who knew him, and for this reason he had no enemies, except Satan; but Father reduced even him to nothing, through the Grace of the Holy Spirit, Who had come to dwell in his soul.<sup>4</sup>

In this compunctious account, we see again the essence and the source of the healing power of a good word: the Grace of the Holy Spirit had come to dwell in the heart of the blessed Papa-Nicholas and imparted illuminating and peace-bestowing power to his words.

However, let us examine this point more closely.

Papa-Nicholas Planas, by virtue of having the God of love in his heart, did not see "anything insignificant or contemptible"<sup>5</sup> in this hapless cobbler; rather, in this man's face he saw the very image of God, which had to be treated "with reverence, regardless of his sorry state."<sup>6</sup>

This profound and fundamental evangelical truth helps us to reach our second basic conclusion: "No matter what plight a man might be in, he continues to be the image of God, he continues to be one"<sup>7</sup> who was redeemed by the priceless Blood of our Savior Christ. Consequently, our attitude towards him should not be either stiff or informal, nor should it simply express a sense of social obligation; rather, it should be, first and foremost, an attitude of Christ-centered reverence and love.

In conclusion, we ought to be aware that the efficacy of our speech towards another person "is always proportionate to the amount of genuine love for our fellow man that nestles in our hearts."<sup>8</sup>

#### IV

Now, in order to remain faithful to my promise of "a brief introduction" to our subject, I will bring my meager thoughts to an end with another compunctious story, as well as a third and final conclusion:

Tradition tells us that the Holy Apostle James, the brother of St. John the Evangelist, at the time he was being led out to martyrdom, encountered on the way the man who had betrayed him.

He stopped the man, kissed him sincerely, and said to him: 'May you have the peace of God, my brother. May the Lord bless you.'

On seeing such forbearance, the Apostle's betrayer marvelled and exclaimed with enthusiasm: 'I, too, am a Christian from this day forth!'

After this profession of faith, he was beheaded together with the Apostle.<sup>9</sup>

In this wondrous event we discover, first, the expression of a truly Divine love: when a man is endowed with such forbearance that he loves his enemy and sincerely blesses him, then such a man undoubtedly becomes God by Grace.

Next, we see that the good word which issued from this most Divine love was of such like power, that it not only healed and transformed the other, but also led him to martyrdom for the sake of Christ.

Alas, are we not far away from such genuine, such sublime, and such Divine love, when our heart is in turmoil and is darkened because someone has offended the idol that we have made of ourselves? When our tongue is aquiver to crush the worth of our brother, the very image of God?

*Our Most Reverend Metropolitan and Much-Revered Spiritual Father:*

We thank you again, because good words have never ceased to flow from the goodness of your heart and to irrigate our own hearts, which are, to a greater or lesser extent, barren.

We are witnesses of the innumerable miracles which Divine Grace has accomplished through the good word of your love, a love which resides in you and overflows freely from within you and gives your word the power to heal, transform, and enlighten us.

Allow us, O our spiritual Father beloved of Christ, to offer you our heartfelt wishes on the occasion of your Nameday and thereby to conclude this artless talk:

May the Immaculate *Theotokos* and the Holy Patrons of our monastery preserve you “in safety, honor, health, and length of days,” and may they also maintain an unceasing flow of good words from you, for the edification, transformation, and salvation in Christ of your rational flock. Amen.

#### Notes

1. Cf. St. Matthew 13:8; St. Mark 4:8.

2. Abba Makarios 39, in *Τὸ Γεροντικόν* (Athens: “Astir” Publications, 1961), p. 71ab.

3. See Papa-Philotheos Pharos, *Ὁ Διάλογος—Ἀρχές καὶ Μέθοδοι* [*Dialogue: Principles and Methods*] (Athens: “Akritis” Publications, 1983). “This work is based above all and primarily on the first-hand psychotherapeutic, pastoral, and teaching experience of its author, and also on certain simple texts which proved useful to him and his pupils,” one of which—and the most fundamental—is the episode involving Abba Makarios.

4. Nun Martha (†), *Ὁ Παπα-Νικόλαος Πλανάς* [*Papa-Nicholas Planas*], §42, “The Tamed Beast” (Athens: “Astir” Publications, 1967), pp. 62–63.

5. Papa-Philotheos Pharos, *Ὁ Διάλογος*, p. 17.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

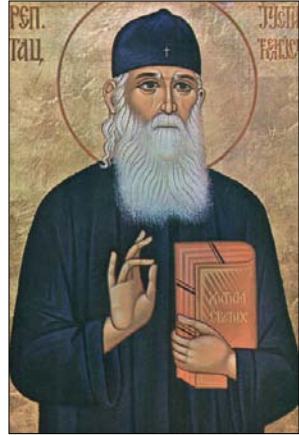
9. Cf. Abbess Theodora Chambakis, *Γεροντιζόν* (Thessaloniki: “Lydia” Brotherhood), 7th ed., pp. 43–44. The original version of this story is found in Antiochos Pandectis, Discourse 116, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXXXIX, col. 1796B; cf. *The Evergetinos*, Vol. IV of the Second Book, Hypothesis XXXVII, §B (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2002), pp. 11–12.

\* A married Priest who lived in virtual monastic asceticism, Father Nicholas Planas was an abstemious individual, an exceedingly simple man, and, though wise in the spirit, limited in his knowledge of worldly things. It is often said that when he read the difficult Greek of the Gospel during Liturgy, he made frequent errors. Nonetheless, he was a “living example of the Gospel,” grasping its profundity in a noetic manner and living in spirit what many understand only in empty letters. It is worthy of note that his humble life of contrition and inner vision attracted many of the religiously-inclined Greek intellectuals of his day, including noted theologians and writers.

# The Blessed Father Justin of Čelije

by Reader George Pejnović

DURING THE TIME THAT FATHER JUSTIN was living at the convent in Čelije, there was a nun who served him as his cell attendant. When this nun wished to speak with Father Justin while he was in his cell, she would approach the door of his room in the customary monastic fashion, knocking on the door and saying the words, “Through the prayers of our Holy Master, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.” She would then wait for his reply, “Amen,” knowing then that she could enter his cell.



It happened one day that a certain gentleman went to see Father Justin. After speaking to the nun in question regarding his request to see the Elder, she went to knock at Father Justin’s door, in order to convey the message. But as she was about to knock on the door, she heard Father Justin speaking with someone whose voice she didn’t recognize. She immediately became concerned, since she was always, again, the one who arranged all of the visits from those who wished to see him. Indeed, no one could enter Father Justin’s cell without her first knowing.

Still wondering how it could have happened that someone had entered Father Justin’s cell without her having known, she left his cell, only to return sometime later to inform Father Justin, once more, that there was someone waiting to speak with him. She approached the door of his cell, knocked, as before, and recited the usual invocation, waiting for his reply. But again she heard Father Justin conversing with the man with an unfamiliar voice.

When, later, she approached the Elder’s cell for a third time, she knocked, recited the usual prayer, and waited for his reply. This time, there was silence. She heard neither Father Justin’s voice nor the voice of the stranger whom she had distinctly heard speaking the two previous times. Becoming frightened, she began knocking on the door much harder, saying, “Father Justin! Father Justin!” But there was still no reply—only silence. Concerned, now, for his safety, and thinking that the stranger might have been an enemy of Father Justin—because he was, at one time, placed under house arrest at the monastery by the Communist authorities—, the nun opened the door and saw Father Justin sitting at his desk—*stunned*.

“Father Justin! Father Justin, what is wrong? What is wrong? Who was in your room? I heard you speaking with a man. Who was it? Who was it?”

Father Justin turned to her ever so slowly and said, “The Holy Apostle Paul.”\*

\* This event is very similar to one recorded in the accounts of the life of St. John Chrysostomos, to whom the Apostle Paul appeared while the Saint was writing a commentary on the writings of the Apostle.

# “The Passion of the Christ”

## Symptomatic of a Distorted Western Christology

by *Father Gregory Telepneff*

EARLIER THIS YEAR, a movie on the Crucifixion of Christ, directed and largely financed by the actor Mel Gibson, was at the center of a virtual media frenzy. It occasioned accusations of anti-Semitism, was the subject of popular commentaries in the press and on radio and television about the historical significance of the Gospels, and, of course, made a great deal of money. Both the controversy and commentaries surrounding the movie were largely superficial and of little interest from a serious theological standpoint. However, the movie did bring to light a rather interesting issue for Orthodox Christians; that is, a basic divergence between the Orthodox Church's understanding of the Natures of Christ and that of Western Christianity, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism alike. I am referring to what the late Protopresbyter Georges Florovsky, *Emeritus* Professor of Eastern Church History at Harvard University and Visiting Professor of Religion at Princeton University, called the ascendancy of a certain “crypto-Nestorianism” in modern Western theological thought about Christ. In his attempt to portray Christ's human suffering with what some have called excessive gore, Mr. Gibson brings into focus the Western penchant for understanding Christ, His life, and His witness in human terms and in stark human imagery, often overstating or distorting His Humanity—as though Christ “the man” were simply a human being like all of us—and thus succumbing to a crypto-Nestorian image of Christ that misrepresents his Person, His Humanity, and ultimately His Divinity. I would like to use this imagery from the film in question to make a few comments about the actual Nature of Christ from an Orthodox standpoint and to address some Christological themes which have been too often dismissed as matters of “semantics” by less-cautious contemporary theological writers.

In attempting to make Christ fully human in its portrayal of His suffering on the Cross, “The Passion of the Christ” risks presenting, as in the case with Nestorianism itself, an overly humanized *psycho-*

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logical portrayal of Christ—showing us that Christ, a human *just like us*, suffered in a vividly *human* way. This notion is, again, reinforced by the extraordinary emphasis that the movie places on Christ's physical suffering: on the beatings that He endured and the copious blood that He shed. And the effect of this emphasis is to de-emphasize, albeit unwittingly, the Divinity of Christ and the delicate and special relationship between Christ's Humanity and Divinity. In fact, Christ, while He was a human, was Perfect Man. And this human perfection cannot be separated from His Divine Perfection, since He was also Perfect God. Thus, His suffering, His Humanity, and His kinship with us are of a special kind. We, in our fallen state, are in fact not "fully" human; that is, human in the sense that we were first created by God to be. It is only by rising "above human nature," through the activity of Divine Grace and the restoration of mankind by the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, that we are made truly human and can, thus, in any way relate to the Humanity of Christ. Likewise, though Christ assumed "human psychology," His psychology was perfect and purified. The innocent weaknesses (righteous anger, sadness, and suffering) that He shared with us He shared for the purpose of restoring us and teaching us. Only with this understanding in mind can we grasp the mental experience of Christ during His earthly life and His efficacious suffering on the Cross for our sake.

Let us examine the foregoing summatory points in a more detailed way. In general, Western Christianity is, as I noted above, characterized by a subtle form of Nestorianizing Christology, the basic error of which (in common with Arianism) rests in a rejection of the fact that, in the Incarnation, it was God Himself—Christ, or the Second Person of the Holy Trinity—Who became Man (and, once more, *Perfect Man*). There is always, somehow, a sense in most of the historical Christological heresies that the "man" Jesus became fully united with God the Word through a *gradual* process. By some reckonings, the consummation of this process occurred at Theophany, when the Holy Spirit, *for the first time*, as it were, fully descended upon Jesus. Indeed, the words of the Gospel of St. Luke ("...and Jesus advanced (προέκοπτε) in wisdom and stature, and in favour [χάριτι; more accurately than the word 'favor,' 'Grace'] with God and man" [2:52]) were traditionally invoked by Nestorians and Arians as a proof-text of this "moral growth" and "growth in union with God" of Jesus—again, a sentiment very dear to many Western Christians today. Of course, such interpretations are soundly rejected by the Fathers, who maintain: a) that there is only one "subject" or "ego" in Christ, that of the Second Person of the Trinity; b) that this union with God was always perfect and complete, from the very Conception of Christ; c) that at Theophany, a manifestation of the Trinity, there was simply the revelation of a pre-existent, eternal fullness of Divinity in

Christ; and finally, d) that the only “growth” of which one can speak in Christ is the normal growth to maturity of His (sinless) human mind and body, inasmuch as He was Perfect Man and Perfect God. (It is also useful to observe, at this point, that all of the Church Fathers teach that Christ took on human nature as it existed before the fall of Adam, a teaching that helps to clarify His Human Nature).

Father Florovsky, in addressing the crypto-Nestorian tendencies of Western Christian Christology, further suggests that the West has succumbed to a kind of “anthropological maximalism” in understanding Christ, whereas to the Orthodox Church Fathers he attributes an “anthropological minimalism.” In other words, he asserts that the two Natures of our Lord, Divine and Human, must be understood asymmetrically, and not purely symmetrically. This is an extremely important point, since it is a symmetrical understanding of Christ’s Natures that is characteristic of nearly all modern Western Christology, as far as I can determine. I have yet to read, in fact, a modern Western Christian theologian who fully understands the Patristic teaching on the Hypostatic Union (that the two Natures of Christ are united in His One, Divine, and pre-existing Person). There may be some Western scholars, of course, who have an inkling of the Orthodox view, but I have yet to find evidence thereof. I must also say, with some dismay, that Orthodox thinkers in the West very often show similar deficits in their understanding of the Christological theology of the Fathers. This point is obvious when one examines the inchoate and astonishing “common statements” that have emerged from ecumenical exchanges between Orthodox and Western Christians on matters ranging from the *Filioque* to soteriology and from dialogues between Orthodox and the Non-Chalcedonians on the very Person of Christ.

Let us consider, now, some of the broader theological implications—in terms of Christian soteriology and the doctrine of redemption—of what I have said about the Western misunderstanding of the Person of Christ. How many Orthodox are aware of the fact that, because of crypto-Nestorian tendencies, historical Roman Catholicism, as well as most forms of Protestantism, would regard it a heresy to say that at the Crucifixion of Christ, “One of the Trinity was Crucified in the flesh for our sake,” even though this is an underpinning principle of Orthodox soteriology? It was in his intellectual and spiritual genius that St. Cyril of Alexandria invoked this very phrase (originally used by St. Proclus) as a brilliant theological and psychological litmus test for exposing Nestorian and crypto-Nestorian tendencies. (The Monophysites had their extreme way of understanding this expression, to be sure; but this is an entirely different issue.) Its orthodox meaning we can easily grasp by citing a statement by St. Gregory the Theologian: “What is not assumed (by God) is not healed”; thus, unless the Second Person of the Trinity (God) suffered and died on the Cross for our

sake, “we are not sanctified and renewed by the Blood of God.”

It is also the case that the juridical model of soteriology that obtains in the West goes hand in hand with a soteriology that does not correctly place the Incarnation—the birth, not of the “baby Jesus” of “anthropological maximalism,” but of God Himself in human form—in proper perspective. From an Orthodox view, God the Word was made flesh in order to transform and transfigure human nature ontologically, ultimately bringing man into close union with God by participation in the Divine Life itself. In Western theology, by contrast, one uncovers a subtle denial of the magnitude of the Incarnational event (in which *God Himself, a Person of the Holy Trinity, became man*) and a rejection of the Uncreated Nature of Divine Grace. This is a direct result of its crypto-Nestorian leanings. One might also rightly accuse Western Christianity of failing to appreciate adequately the Trinitarian Nature of God. It pays theological lip-service to the idea, of course, but underestimates the importance of affirming that the Three Divine Persons also have their unique Hypostatic properties. It is, indeed, because of this affirmation that the Incarnation is possible at all; i.e., that God could remain transcendent and unknowable at the very same time that He took human flesh and form.

The “Nestorianizing” (or “Arianizing”) of the Nature of Christ, finally, has tremendous psychological appeal for the anthropocentric ethos of the contemporary world. In this view of salvation, Jesus is “one of us” and one of the “brethren,” related to man in a way that Scripture and the Fathers never envisioned Him. The Anglican scholars Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh wrote an interesting book on this idea some years ago (see their volume *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981]). Little did they apparently realize that many of the concepts which they ascribed to Arianism are, on many levels, to be found in much of modern Western Christianity. (Or perhaps they *did* understand this point, and for this reason were able to treat their subject so sympathetically.) Indeed, what I have described in ancient Nestorianism (recall their watchphrase: a rejection of the term “Mother of God”) is still very true of modern Protestantism: a virtual abhorrence of the idea that God Himself, quite literally (though without violating her virginity), was born to a woman. And though contemporary Catholicism preaches a more subtle form of crypto-Nestorianism, it speaks for itself that, while many Roman Catholic theologians will affirm the Divinity of Christ, their refusal to accept the Theopaschite language of the Fathers—“One of the Trinity was crucified...”—betrays a misunderstanding of the nature of the Incarnation. Even for Roman Catholic theological thinkers, Christ’s Divine Nature is in a sense separated, for them, from His Human Nature. Hence the stupendous success of a very human movie, “The Passion of the Christ,” among Western Christians.

# Critical Thoughts on a Recent Book About the Church Calendar

by Hieromonk Patapios and  
Archbishop Chrysostomos

IN A RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK ENTITLED, *Neînțelegerea În-dreptării Calendarului* [*The Misunderstanding of the Calendar Emendations*],<sup>1</sup> Nicolae Popescu, a graduate of the Orthodox Faculty of Theology at the Ovidius University in Constanța, Romania, ardently defends what he calls the “correction” of the Julian Calendar by the Orthodox Church of Romania, when, in 1924, that body—and several other local Orthodox Churches—adopted the the Papal, or so-called “New” or “Gregorian” Calendar, for the calculation of the cycle of the Church’s liturgical Feasts. (The Romanian State had already adopted the Gregorian Calendar for secular use on April 1, 1919.) Misunderstanding the calendar issue himself, the author wrongly equates the Julian Calendar with the Church Calendar, which, employing the Julian Calendar in its calculations, achieves a clever and complex arrangement of the ecclesiastical festal year around various solar and lunar events and the centrality of the Feast of Pascha. It was the scrapping of this Church Calendar—universally used in the Orthodox Church since the First Œcumenical Synod of Nicæa (325) and still used by the vast majority of Orthodox Christians worldwide—, and *not* a correction of the Julian Calendar, that was at the heart of the 1924 calendar reforms. It was this breach with Church tradition that also accounted for the widespread reactions against the innovation by many Orthodox clergy and believers, the “*Anticalendariştii*” (or “Anti-Calendarists,” a rather vacuous epithet) and “*Stiliştii*” (or “Styl-ists,” a pejorative term derived from references to Julian Calendar dates as “Old Style” dates), as the author refers to Orthodox believers who refused to adopt the Papal Calendar and who are more commonly known as “Old Calendarists.” Though an alleged defense of the calendar reform, Mr. Popescu’s book is essentially an attack against what he sees as the obstinate refusal of the Old Calendarists to accept the calendar change, ending with a list of somewhat gratuitous, crudely-crafted, ill-advised and somewhat intemperate measures that he believes ought to be taken by the “official” State Church of Romania to restore the erring Old Calendarists to the bosom of the Romanian Patriarchate.

We have no desire to call into question the author’s sincerity or his motives for writing such a book. He obviously believes very strongly that the Old Calendarists have misunderstood the reasons which led the Ro-

manian Church to relinquish the Julian Calendar and to adopt the Gregorian (or Papal) Calendar for the *Heortologion*, that is, the cycle of fixed ecclesiastical Feasts, albeit retaining the formula set forth at the First Synod for calculating the date of Pascha. However, his treatment of the calendar question is marred by numerous distortions, omissions, and other inaccuracies, some of which we will endeavor to address within the confines of this brief article.

Needless to say, as Old Calendarists, we are not at all sympathetic to the ideas set forth in the present book or to its sometimes polemical approach. Nevertheless, like other Old Calendarists who espouse a moderate ecclesiology, we are not opposed in principle to an open, eirenic, and charitable debate of the issues surrounding the Church Calendar. After all, as Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, Chief Hierarchy of the moderate Old Calendarist resisters in the Orthodox Church of Greece, points out, “the Orthodox Church today, by reason of ecumenism and the calendar innovation, is divided and in need of being united.”<sup>22</sup> And the very purpose of our resistance, His Eminence suggests, is to convoke a general unifying Synod, in order to enable those in error to return to right belief. When we fail to keep the prospect of such a general Synod uppermost in our minds, he notes, “quietism and an unhealthy ecclesiological introversion and self-sufficiency prevail, with all of their tragic and painful consequences on the theological, pastoral, and spiritual levels.”<sup>23</sup> If we are to avoid becoming introverted, we must not only endeavor to present an articulate defense of our stand against ecumenism and the calendar innovation, but must also be willing to listen to our opponents and to respond in a balanced and fair-minded way to their criticisms of us. By the same token, however, we may reasonably expect New Calendarists to display a similar balance and fairness when writing about us. Unfortunately, Mr. Popescu’s book is neither balanced nor fair, and it thus does nothing to promote a better understanding among his fellow New Calendarists of a movement which, since its inception in the 1920s, has been the object of so much vitriol, violence, and repression on the part of the powers that be, both temporal and ecclesiastical.

In the first part of the first chapter of his book, Mr. Popescu offers a reasonably competent summary of the origins of the Julian Calendar and notes its deficiencies, from an astronomical point of view. Of course, the Julian calendar, like any other calendar (and especially the Gregorian Calendar), is not absolutely perfect; but it is not as significantly flawed as proponents of the Gregorian Calendar would have us believe. In support of this point, we might adduce the high regard which the renowned German mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss had for the Julian Calendar. Gauss, who derived the mathematical formula for the calculation of the Orthodox *Paschalion*, was fascinated by the antiquity and the sophistication of the Julian Calendar, which he considered to possess far greater scientific worth than the Gregorian Calendar.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the eminent Russian astronomer E.A. Predtechensky has opined that, whereas the Church Calendar (which, again, rests on the Julian Calendar) “was so ex-

ecuted, that till now it remains unsurpassed," the Gregorian Calendar is, by comparison, "ponderous and clumsy to such a degree, that it reminds one of a cheap print alongside an artistic depiction of the same subject."<sup>5</sup>

In the second part of this chapter, furthermore, Mr. Popescu's limitations as a historian become quite evident. According to Vasile Gheorghiu, whose book on the calculation of Pascha Mr. Popescu cites, Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople wrote a letter to Pope Gregory XIII, in August of 1583, maintaining that it was impossible for the Eastern Churches to accept the Pope's calendar reform, which had been introduced without consulting the Eastern Churches, since it might provoke misunderstanding among the Orthodox Faithful. This is an astonishing oversimplification. In fact, the major concern for the Patriarch and the Eastern Orthodox Church was the Pope's claim that the imposition of his New Calendar was a sign of his power over time and eternity. And, indeed, this claim was also rejected by Protestants, and even the American colonies—originally settled by Protestant dissenters—did not adopt the Gregorian Calendar until the mid-eighteenth century, originally considering it an impossible acknowledgement of Papal authority. It is thus a matter of further amazement that Mr. Popescu misses Patriarch Jeremiah's mild chastisement of the Pope's claim to authority over time and eternity in his proposal that, to determine whether the calendar was "pleasing to God," it be submitted to all of the Patriarchs and be implemented only "with the mutual consent of all."<sup>6</sup> This appeal to Patriarchal conciliarity was not, as Popescu tries to argue, an endorsement of the reform by the Patriarch; it was, rather, a challenge to Papal prerogatives.

More to the point, Mr. Popescu performs this act of historical leg-erdmain in the very face of the well-known condemnations of the Gregorian Calendar that were issued when, ultimately, Patriarch Jeremiah submitted the question of calendar reform to the Eastern Patriarchs. Mr. Popescu could hardly be unaware of the very forceful language of the anathemas contained in the *Sigillion* signed by Patriarch Jeremiah, Patriarch Sylvester of Alexandria, and a representative of Patriarch Sophronios IV of Jerusalem at a Synod held in November of 1583 to discuss the Pope's request that the Orthodox Church adopt his calendar. The following excerpt from the *Sigillion* in question makes it very clear just how antipathetic the three Patriarchs were towards the Gregorian Calendar and any notion of Papal primacy:

Again the Church of Old Rome, swayed by the proud vainglory of her astronomers, recklessly changed the most honorable decree concerning Holy Pascha, established by the 318 Holy Fathers at the First Œcumenical Synod of Nicæa and held in great esteem by all Christians throughout the world as something inviolable..... If anyone does not follow the traditions and the customs of the Church as ordained by the Seven Œcumenical Synods regarding Holy Pascha, but rather desires to follow the Gregorian *Paschalion* and Papist Calendar, like the atheist astronomers, contravening all of the decisions of the Holy Synods and trying to weaken and change them, let him be anathema, banished from the Church of

Christ and from the assembly of Christians. You, the Orthodox and right-believing Christians, remain steadfast in what you have learned, in that into which you were born and educated. And when it becomes necessary, shed your very blood to preserve the Faith and confession of your Fathers. Guard and protect yourselves from reformers, so that our Lord Jesus Christ might help you, and may the prayers of our Faith be with you all. Amen.<sup>7</sup>

Nowhere in Mr. Popescu's discussion, in fact, is there so much as a hint of this and other clear conciliar rejections—and with adamant resolve—of the Papal calendar. Instead, he merely notes, rather lamely, that “the Patriarch of Constantinople affirmed that the Eastern Church would abide for the time being by the rules for calculating Pascha that had been in use up until then.”<sup>8</sup> He makes absolutely no mention, moreover, of the two Synods convened by Patriarch Jeremiah in 1587 and 1593 in order to reaffirm this earlier decisive rejection of the Gregorian Calendar by the Orthodox Church. In 1587, for example, “the correction of the calendar was condemned as being perilous and unnecessary,”<sup>9</sup> while in 1593, no fewer than four Patriarchs—Jeremiah of Constantinople, Joachim VI of Antioch, Sophronios of Jerusalem, and Meletios (Pegas) I of Alexandria—condemned the reformed calendar, declaring that anyone found violating the prescriptions of the traditional Orthodox *Paschalion* be “excommunicated and rejected from the Church of Christ.”<sup>10</sup> It is, once again, hard to believe that Mr. Popescu, in his study of the calendar reform, was unaware of these very staunch repudiations of the Papal calendar by no less than three pan-Orthodox Synods. Thus, his insistence that the Orthodox Church “was aware of the need to correct the calendar,”<sup>11</sup> rings quite untrue. So, too, does his baseless claim that the Church was unable to implement this change because, *inter alia*, it was impossible to convene a pan-Orthodox Synod under the Turkish Yoke!

Mr. Popescu goes on naively to enlist, among supposedly pious and serious Orthodox supporters of the reform of the Church Calendar, such figures as Nicephoros Gregoras, an unrelenting opponent of St. Gregory Palamas, who was kept under house arrest in a monastery, for several years, after refusing to accept the vindication of St. Gregory by the pro-Palamite Synod of 1351;<sup>12</sup> George Gemistos Plethon, the eccentric Byzantine humanist who advocated a return to pagan Greek polytheism; and, incredibly and astoundingly enough (if we have understood Mr. Popescu aright), St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite. One is left bewildered enough at his placement of St. Nicodemus in such ignominious company; but does he actually believe that St. Nicodemus favored the correction of the calendar? Did he fail to read the very sources which he cites? It is true, as Mr. Popescu asserts, that in the *Pedalion* (the *Rudder*, or collection of Church Canons) St. Nicodemus “noted that the equinox of the Julian Calendar was now lagging behind the celestial calendar by twelve days.”<sup>13</sup> However, he makes this observation in the following context:

Let [the Latins] know that the Œcumenical Synods held after the First Synod, and the rest of the Fathers, wise as they were, could see, of

course, that the equinox had deviated a great deal [from where it was previously]; nevertheless, they did not wish to change its position from March 21, where the First Synod found it, because they preferred the agreement and union of the Church to accuracy in the matter of the equinox, which causes no confusion in fixing the date of our Pascha, nor any harm to piety.<sup>14</sup>

In the light of this citation in context, it is wholly disingenuous for Mr. Popescu to insinuate that St. Nicodemus believed that it was necessary to alter the Church Calendar. In like manner, he fails to note that all of the sources to whom he attributes a desire for calendar reform (e.g., the monk Isaacios and the Canonist Matthew Blastaris) were *simply ignored* by the Church. They were outside the ecclesiastical consensus and did not express the conscience of the Church.

Continuing his “historical” case for Orthodox sympathy for calendar reform, the author informs us that, during the years 1863-1864, the Romanian Prince Alexandru Cuza attempted to revise the Church Calendar. This is quite true, but to be more specific and accurate, the Prince

convoked a Church Synod, at which he recommended that the Romanian Orthodox Church change from the Julian Calendar to the Gregorian Calendar. Also present at this Synod was St. Calinic of Cernica (1787-1868), one of the most dauntless strugglers for the triumph of the truth and for the preservation of the True Faith. He was categorically opposed to the calendar innovation and exclaimed as he was leaving the hall in which the Synod was meeting: ‘I will not be reckoned with transgressors!’ Thus, the Prince did not succeed in implementing this recommendation, which had been imposed on him by Freemasons.<sup>15</sup>

This is not a ringing endorsement for the author’s vision of a Church pinning for a reform of its Church Calendar. Equally questionable is the force of his claim that, after 1900, many Orthodox Hierarchs and academics demanded that the Church Calendar be corrected—without telling us, incidentally, who these Hierarchs and academics were. The facts, it seems, make for quite a different scenario. For example, in 1902, the Œcumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople rejected a memorandum from the Greek mathematician, Epaminondas Polydoris, concerning calendar revision; in 1903, the Jerusalem Patriarchate maintained that any attempt to alter the Church Calendar would be to the detriment of Orthodoxy; and, in the same year, the Romanian Patriarchate declared that it was impossible to change the calendar without violating the Canons of the Church.<sup>16</sup>

In the first paragraph of the second chapter of his book, Mr. Popescu refers to what he calls the “*sinod interortodox*” (“inter-Orthodox Synod”) convened in Constantinople in 1923, which approved the “correction” of the Julian Calendar. Two pages later, with greater accuracy, he calls this meeting a “*congres*” (“congress”), and elsewhere he terms it a “*conferință*” or “*consfătuire*” (“conference”). To his credit, he also admits that the 1923 congress did not have the authority of an Œcumenical Synod, or even a pan-Orthodox Council, and that it was not representative of all the

autocephalous Orthodox Churches.<sup>17</sup> The second chapter is in general, therefore, reasonably objective and much less marred by snide polemics against the Old Calendarists.

However, we must on two counts take Mr. Popescu to task for his comments in this chapter. First, like many other apologists for the New Calendar, he argues that the Romanian Patriarchate did not adopt the Gregorian Calendar—“as some enemies of the corrected calendar simplistically say”<sup>18</sup>—but rather “recommended all of the Orthodox Churches to correct the Old Calendar by a new method, and one much better than that used for the Gregorian reform.”<sup>19</sup> This specious argument is clearly refuted by Hieromonk Cassian in his important treatise, *A Scientific Examination of the Orthodox Church Calendar*. Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakis) sought to allay the qualms expressed by Patriarch Damianos of Jerusalem, who immediately perceived that the so-called “Revised Julian Calendar” was nothing other than the Gregorian Calendar in disguise, with arguments that show his absolute ignorance of matters astronomical. As Father Cassian justly observes, Patriarch Meletios deliberately omitted to mention that “the ‘New [that is, “Revised”] Julian’ Calendar fully coincides with the Gregorian Calendar until 2800, when, admittedly, a difference of one day will occur in leap years.” However, this temporary difference “will disappear in 2900, when, once again, the two calendars will fully coincide.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, those who introduced the New Calendar were engaging in a form of *astronomical* legerdemain in claiming that they had simply “corrected” the Julian Calendar. They had, in fact, created a veritable mongrel by combining the Orthodox *Paschalion* with the Gregorian reckoning for the festal calendar.

Secondly, in his brief reference to the meeting of inter-Orthodox representatives commissioned to prepare the agenda for a new Œcumenical Synod—held in June of 1930 at the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos—, Mr. Popescu leaves the impression that this meeting was sympathetic to the calendar reform. This is not so. St. Nikolai (Velimirović) of Ohrid, for one, warned that the Serbian Orthodox Church would boycott the meeting “unless it was assured that the inter-Orthodox commission would have nothing in common with the ‘Pan-Orthodox’ Congress at Constantinople, which adopted resolutions concerning the calendar change. ‘If this condition is not met, the Serbs will condemn the Œcumenical Patriarchate.’”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the representatives of the Polish and Serbian Churches attending this meeting refrained from worshipping with delegates from those Churches which had adopted the New Calendar, on grounds that the latter were essentially schismatics. From this we can see that it was not only the Old Calendarist resisters, but also prominent figures in what would nowadays be called the “official” Orthodox Churches, who objected to the calendar change well into the past century.

In the third chapter of his book, Mr. Popescu abandons any objectivity that might have survived his historical errors and misrepresentations; unfortunately, in this chapter he gives way to blatant revisionism. After

extolling the Orthodox Church as a powerful source of spiritual support for the Romanian nation and a treasury of culture and education for the people, Mr. Popescu assures us that the pre-Communist Romanian State guaranteed freedom of religion and legal protection to all faiths, as long as their exercise thereof did not infringe on public order, good morals, or the laws of the land. Thus, he argues *a priori* that the Romanian Old Calendarists were not, when their movement first began to gain momentum, persecuted, except, of course, to the extent that they violated social order, behaved immorally, or become transgressors of the secular legal system. (It should be noted that the author conducted not an *iota* of original research for this section, but based his remarks on a book—by one Constantin Vulpescu, a public prosecutor commenting on the first few years of the Old Calendarist resistance—entitled *The Error of the Old Calendarists*.<sup>22</sup>) In an array of grandiloquent outbursts about the alleged malefactions of the Old Calendarists, Mr. Popescu attributes their persecution *wholly* to unscrupulous agitators who, using freedom of conscience as a pretext, took advantage of weak laws meant to protect their religious freedom to stir up trouble, thereby making of the Patriarchate a laughing-stock.

In the frenzied abuse of their rights as Romanian citizens, we are led to believe, the Old Calendarists attacked the “official” Romanian Church with impunity. They published spiritually poisonous attacks, flinging mud and filth at the State Church. Covering themselves under the protection of secular law, they circulated their tracts and books freely. And indeed, they had the audacity to claim that they were Orthodox Christians. The “Stylist” agitators, we read, erected churches without official authorization and for no reasonable purpose; and when these illegal churches were closed, they would commit outrages and insult and rebel against the authorities. People who were previously indifferent to religion were transformed into fanatics through the malign influence of the Old Calendarists, who, according to Mr. Popescu, were not only troublemakers and mudslingers, but also—as incredible as his language may seem to a reasonable person—scoundrels, idiots, mentally ill, crazy, and individuals devoid of faith and culture. It is difficult to believe that anyone with a modicum of civility would resort to such a farrago of accusations or so disingenuously whitewash the horrendous persecution of the Romanian Old Calendarists, which has gone on in various forms for more than seven decades.<sup>23</sup> In response, we will simply cite but two of hundreds of such examples of the persecution unleashed against the Romanian Old Calendarists in the 1930s, during the very period which Mr. Vulpescu, whose work Popescu uses as his sole source, was purportedly describing:

[First, in 1936,]...the commune of Rădășeni, Suceava County, was surrounded by several battalions of gendarmes brought all the way from Cernăuți, Cernăuți County. These gendarmes blocked all of the access roads to the village and gathered most of its inhabitants into the City Hall. Those found to be on the New Calendar were ordered to go home. The Old Calendarist Faithful were advised to change to the New Calen-

dar if they wanted to return home. When they refused to comply, the police took all of the men to the local school, where they were stripped and told to lie on the floor. They were savagely clubbed, and some of them suffered for the rest of their lives from the wounds they received. The women and the youngsters, who remained in the City Hall and stood fast in their confession of the True Faith, were forced to run between two rows of gendarmes who beat them ferociously with clubs. These violent actions had a twofold purpose. The authorities attempted, on the one hand, to force the clergy and Faithful to switch to the New Calendar out of fear, and, on the other hand, to limit their resistance by the destruction of their Churches. For example, the church of Rădășeni was dismantled and moved to another locality, where it was used as a New Calendar church.<sup>24</sup>

[Secondly, in Brusturi, in 1935,] ...[i]n order to prevent its pillage or burning, the [Old Calendar] Church was guarded at night by Petre V. Ignat, then thirty years of age. Likewise, all of the Faithful who lived in the village were ready to intervene if the need arose. The New Calendarist Priest was not only dissatisfied with this *status quo*, but even wanted to destroy the Church by any means, regardless of what it would take. He organized, with the help of the Gendarmerie and the principals of the local schools, Sturza from Brusturi and Dumitrescu from Groși, a gang that, dressed as gendarmes, jumped over the fence during the night and beat Petre Ignat, who was guarding the Church. He was saved by the intervention of another believer who saw the attack and sounded the alarm bell. When the people gathered, one of the gang fired several pistol shots to enable all of the assailants to withdraw. A few days later, the commune was taken by surprise and surrounded by an enormous number of gendarmes armed with rifles and machine guns, and all of the access roads in and out of the area were blocked. At nine o'clock in the morning, the gendarmes entered the locality and forced the inhabitants to go to their post, where they were kept under close guard. In addition, Father Vasile Lupescu, the New Calendarist Priest, was at the entrance gate. The gendarmes confiscated Church books from the pockets of the Faithful and other items found on their persons after a body search. The Faithful were warned to renounce their beliefs, but they stood their ground. The gendarmes then took ten people at a time (men or women) into a room, forced them lie face down, and savagely beat them with cudgels so severely that blood gushed through their clothing. ...The same question was repeated over and over again: 'Are you still keeping the Old Calendar?' Among those brutally beaten were the parents of Archimandrite Timotei of the Slătioara Monastery.<sup>25</sup>

In the second part of the third chapter of his book, Mr. Popescu enumerates what he perceives to be violations of Church Canons by the Old Calendarists, who have, oddly enough, always prided themselves—and quite rightly so—on their strict adherence to these same Canons. We will not attempt to refute all of these allegations of canonical infractions, for the simple reason that not one of them has any relevance to the situation faced by the Old Calendarists. However, in the interest of truth and honesty, we must deal with five of these allegations. In the first place, Mr.

Popescu asserts, without any evidence whatsoever, that the Old Calendarist clergy serve the Divine Liturgy using *Antimensia* (a cloth, into which sacred Relics have been sewn, upon which the Divine Liturgy is celebrated) not given to them with the blessing of the local Bishop, and that in other cases they even use stolen *Antimensia*. This, in his opinion, constitutes a violation of the Seventy-Third Apostolic Canon. In actuality, this Canon states that no one should ever appropriate for his own use any gold or silver vessel, or any cloth, that has been blessed for Church usage. According to St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite and other canonical commentators, this Canon is meant to prohibit the promiscuous (that is, profane) use of sacred things. He illustrates this by citing the example of King Baltasar, who used the sacred vessels seized by his father, Nabuchodonosor, from the Temple of Jerusalem for a banquet.<sup>26</sup> Quite obviously, even if the Old Calendarist Priests had stolen *Antimensia* from New Calendar Churches—for which there is not a single shred of evidence—they would not have been using them, like Baltasar, for profane purposes.

Secondly, Mr. Popescu cites numerous Canons pertaining to clergy who, having shown contempt for their Bishops and thus having excommunicated themselves from the Church, proceed nonetheless to form their own congregations and set up their own altars, in defiance of the local Bishop.<sup>27</sup> None of these Canons has any application at all to those traditionalist clergy who opposed the uncanonical imposition of the New Calendar. All of these clergymen were deposed in a spirit of revenge for objecting to an innovation which introduced discord and division into the body of the Church. The Canons that Mr. Popescu cites are directed against Priests who separate themselves from communion with their Bishops for purely personal reasons or for purposes of self-aggrandizement. More to the point, we might note that the Canons enjoining obedience to one's Bishop always presuppose that the Bishop in question is right-believing. A Bishop who openly preaches heresy or introduces innovations such as the New Calendar, which provoke confusion and division among the Faithful, is no longer a properly-functioning Orthodox Hierarch and is, therefore, not entitled to demand obedience from the members of his flock.

Thirdly, Mr. Popescu asserts that Old Calendarists do not have Priests to celebrate services for them. He evidently means by this curious, if provocative and rather presumptuous, remark that, since they are, in his eyes, schismatics, their clergy are mere laymen masquerading as Priests. He then goes on to claim that they permit non-Ordained monks and laymen to perform Baptisms and funerals and to hear confessions. This is simple poppycock and an artless retreat into cheap ridicule and slander. Using the Church Canons to adorn his loutish charges, Mr. Popescu adduces, of all things, the Fifteenth Canon of the First-Second Synod (861) to support his view. There is, as any canonical scholar knows, no reference anywhere in the text of this Canon to illicit lay celebrations of Divine services. In fact, this Canon is the very *locus classicus* of lawful re-

sistance to theological error and the kind of resistance undertaken by the Old Calendarists; indeed, it asserts that those who wall themselves off from a Bishop who teaches false doctrine “have not sundered the unity of the Church through schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions.”<sup>28</sup>

Fourthly, Mr. Popescu berates the Old Calendarists for their belief that the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Synod devised a *Paschalion* in perpetuity—which, of course, they did—and goes on to argue, on the assumption that the proceedings of the Synod have been completely lost, that there is no evidence that the First Synod issued any regulation concerning the date of Pascha. This is an inane position, given the fact that the Orthodox Church has, in fact, accepted the pronouncements of this Synod in calculating the date of Pascha to this day—including, of course, the New Calendarists, who, even in reforming their Church’s Festal Calendar, have not abandoned Her traditional *Paschalion*. Mr. Popescu is also evidently unaware—a curious lapse for a student of theology—that proceedings of the Synod of Nicæa are, in fact, preserved in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Gelasios of Cyzicus.<sup>29</sup>

Fifthly and finally, Mr. Popescu claims that the chief founder and inspirer of the Old Calendar Church of Romania, Hieromonk (later Metropolitan) Glicherie and his co-ascetic, Hierodeacon David, along with ten other monks, were “expelled from monasticism”<sup>30</sup> by the Metropolis of Moldavia in April of 1931, and that, by virtue of this “deposition,” were deprived of the canonical right to celebrate the Divine Liturgy or any other Church services. This is absurd, since a monk cannot be “deposed” from the monastic state, though this fact is little understood by modernist Churchmen. Mr. Popescu also fails to explain what bearing this putative expulsion from monasticism has on someone’s right to exercise his Priestly faculties. Moreover, as St. Maximos the Confessor explains in his commentary on the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* of St. Dionysios the Areopagite, “If a Hierarch excommunicates anyone contrary to God’s purpose, Divine judgment does not come upon that person; for the Hierarch ought to apply these measures in accordance with Divine judgment and not in accordance with his own will.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, depositions issued in a spirit of malice and pettiness, for political reasons, or for the purpose of revenge and merely making some point, have no binding force.

The final chapter of Mr. Popescu’s agonistic volume contains some recommendations, primarily for New Calendar Priests in Romania, on how to “enlighten” the misguided “Stylists.” Much to his credit, the author makes some rather civil comments in this chapter, in contrast to his odiously crude and sometimes pantagrulian remarks in the foregoing chapter. Among other things, Mr. Popescu suggests that New Calendar Priests comport themselves in a morally irreproachable manner, so as to avoid furnishing Old Calendarists with additional pretexts for remaining separated from the official Church. In essence, he suggests that Patriarchal clergy employ the “velvet glove” rather than the “iron fist,” when dealing with Old Calendarists. This would certainly constitute an im-

provement over the policies pursued by the Romanian Patriarchate and State in the 1930s and subsequently. He also proposes that New Calendar clergy engage in eirenic public debates with representatives of the Old Calendar movement and that the “correction” of the Church Calendar be clearly explained in religion classes at the nation’s schools. In fact, the Romanian Patriarchate has assiduously avoided such confrontations and would no doubt avoid an objective consideration of the Old Calendar in public schools, since the issue, as we have pointed out, is not quite as Mr. Popescu and others have claimed.

Indeed, in any open forum with competent representatives of both the Old Calendar and New Calendar factions of the Romanian and other local Churches, the calendar issue would emerge as something far more significant than most would think. Much in the same way that the Iconoclasts mocked the Iconodules, in the eighth and ninth centuries, for believing that Icons were an integral part of Holy Tradition, so Old Calendarists are mocked, today, for “worshipping a calendar” or attributing “dogmatic significance” to mere days. Yet, just as when the matter of Iconoclasm was carefully examined by the whole Church, it proved to be an issue of immense moment, so the calendar issue, when examined in a careful and intelligent manner, rises to a level of critical importance. The following quotation brings that fact into focus:

Concerning this question, Father Paul, a monk of the Holy Sepulchre, remarked most justly that a board, before it has the countenance of our Saviour portrayed upon it, is but a common piece of wood which we may burn up or destroy. From the moment, however, that we paint the Icon of Christ, the King of All, upon it, this wood becomes sanctified and a source of sanctification for us, even though the wood be of inferior quality. Likewise, the solar calendar, insofar as it is a calendar of days and months is, in itself, nothing to be esteemed. But from the moment when the Holy Church placed Her seal upon it and organized Her life upon this foundation, even though it has become astronomically erroneous, still it remains holy! The calendar is no longer *Julian*, but *ecclesiastical*, just as the board is no longer a simple piece of wood but an Icon.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, it is further clear that the traditional Church Calendar is so intimately bound up with the liturgical life of the Church—and, in particular, with the *Typikon*, or the rules and rubrics governing the Church’s worship services—that when the New Calendar was introduced it gave rise to numerous liturgical anomalies. For example, even the somewhat innovative revised *Typikon* of the Great Church (of Constantinople), compiled by George Violakis and published in 1888, provides rules for combining the Feasts of Pascha and the Annunciation (*Kyriopascha*). Yet, this “unique concelebration of salvific events”<sup>33</sup> is altogether precluded by the New Calendar. Likewise, the Feast of the Forty Holy Martyrs of Sebaste can fall, according to the New Calendar, as early as the Tuesday of the Week of the Prodigal Son, and so New Calendarists find themselves chanting the following hymn while partaking of non-fasting fare: “O

Prize-winners of Christ, ye have rendered the most honorable Fast more radiant through the commemoration of your glorious suffering; for, being Forty in number, ye sanctify the forty days of Lent, through your own suffering for the sake of Christ emulating His saving Passion.”<sup>34</sup> Finally, there are certain years in which the Apostles’ Fast is simply eliminated, if one adheres to the New Calendar. In 1983, for example, the Bulgarian New Calendarists celebrated the Apostles’ Fast by fasting for one day during the week after Pentecost, when fasting is actually prohibited by the *Typikon*.<sup>35</sup>

Again, in an open forum, where the Old Calendarists may objectively confront the vacuous polemics of critics such as Mr. Popescu, no reasonable individual could argue that the Church Calendar is not a part of Holy Tradition; that the New Calendar has not introduced confusion into the liturgical life of the Church; or that the calendar reform is, in fact, anything but an ill-conceived innovation. Thus, in response to the claim, in the preface of this volume, by the late Deacon Father Petru David (a rabid critic of the Romanian Old Calendarists<sup>36</sup>), to the effect that the author has succeeded in clarifying the situation created by the calendar change, we would say just the opposite: he has obfuscated the issue and misrepresented myriad facts. Father David’s hope that the author will produce other works “in the realm of learning and truth” we can only confront with our sincere hope that, for the sake of accuracy, he does not do so in the realm of theology or Church history. Mr. Popescu being, as we are told in this book, a student in the Law Faculty at the University of Constanta, we, on our part, strongly urge him to pursue a legal career and to leave the task of writing theology to those who are not only better qualified than he, but who are also perhaps a bit more disinterested and less rectitudinous in their approach to ecclesiastical matters.

#### Notes

1. Constanța: Europolis, 2002. Unfortunately, this at times odiously polemical book claims an imprimatur from the New Calendar Romanian Orthodox Church.

2. *The Heresy of Ecumenism and the Patristic Stand of the Orthodox*, tr. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna and Hieromonk Patapios (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1998), p. 44.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

4. Hieromonk Cassian, *A Scientific Examination of the Orthodox Church Calendar*, ed. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna and Hieromonk Gregory (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1998), pp. 73-74.

5. *Church Chronology and a Critical Review of the Existing Rules for Determining Pascha* [in Russian] (St. Petersburg: 1892), pp. 3-4. Cited in Ludmila Perepiolkina, “The Julian Calendar: A Thousand-Year Icon of Time in Russia,” tr. Daniel Olson, *Orthodox Life*, Vol. XLV, No. 5 (September-October 1995), p. 14.

6. *Noțiuni de Cronologie și Calcul Pascal* (Bucharest: Editura Cartilor, 1936), p. 59, cited in *Neînțelegera*, p. 22.

7. Cited in Constantin Bujor, *Resisting Unto Blood: Sixty-Five Years of Persecution of the True (Old Calendar) Orthodox Church of Romania (October*

1924–December 1989), tr. Deacon Father Ioan Comanescu (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2003), pp. 36-37.

8. *Neînțelegera*, p. 22.
9. Father Basile Sakkas, *The Calendar Question*, tr. Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1973), p. 23.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
11. *Neînțelegera*, p. 23.
12. Curiously enough, Mr. Popescu calls him “one of the great Patrologists.”
13. *Neînțelegera*, p. 23.
14. *The Rudder*, tr. D. Cummings (Chicago: Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1957), p. 10 [We have made some slight terminological amendments to this translation, based on the Greek original].
15. *Resisting Unto Blood*, p. 10.
16. Cited in Sakkas, *The Calendar Question*, p. 26.
17. *Neînțelegera*, pp. 28-29.
18. *Neînțelegera*, p. 27.
19. *Neînțelegera*, pp. 27-28.
20. *Scientific Examination*, p. 54.
21. Bishop Photii of Triaditza, *The Road to Apostasy: Significant Essays on Ecumenism* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1995), p. 35.
22. *Rădăcire Calendaristică* (n.p.: Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei, 1935).
23. See a full recounting of this persecution in Constantin Bujor, *65 de Ani de Persecuție a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române de Stil Vechi: Octombrie 1924–Decembrie 1989* (Slătioara: Editura “Schimbarea la Față,” 1999).
24. *Resisting Unto Blood*, p. 64.
25. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.
26. *The Rudder*, p. 131; Daniel 5:1-4.
27. E.g., the Thirty-First Apostolic Canon, the Fifth Canon of the Synod of Antioch, and the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Canons of the First-Second Synod.
28. *The Rudder*, p. 471.
29. Book 11, ch. 37, §13. See also Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book I, ch. 9 (*Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXVII, cols. 81B-84A), and the excellent article by Archimandrite Sergius, “The First Œcumenical Synod and the Feast of Pascha,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XIV, Nos. 2-3 (1997), pp. 2-8.
30. *Neînțelegera*, p. 42.
31. *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. IV, col. 181B.
32. Sakkas, *The Calendar Question*, p. 11.
33. *Scientific Examination*, p. 116.
34. March 9, Matins, *Doxastikon* at the Praises.
35. *Scientific Examination*, p. 132.
36. See Archbishop Chrysostomos, “An Orthodox Auto-da-Fé: Critical Comments on a Recent Book on Sects,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XX, No. 1 (2003), pp. 5-20. Also in Romanian, “Un Autodafé Ortodox,” tr. Ioana Ieronim, *Dilema*, XI (2003), nrs. 522, 523, & 524.

# Synod News

## Baptisms

In late Autumn 2003, with the blessing of Metropolitan Cyprian, the Orthodox community in Etna, CA, celebrated the Baptisms of two additions to its numbers: Jordan Mavromatis, the infant son of Father George Mavromatis (who serves the Convent of St. Elizabeth the



Grand Duchess) and his wife, Presbytera Alypia; and Leah Grassel, infant daughter of Jeremy and Cathlin Grassel and granddaughter of Protopresbyter David Cownie (one of the Priests serving the parish of Sts. Cyprian and Justina) and his wife, Presbytera Juliana.

The Baptism of Jordan Mavromatis was performed by Archimandrite Akakios, the Abbot of the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery, on November 9, 2003 (Old Style), at the parish Church. (*See photograph above.*) The sponsor was Reader Jameel Abraham, from our Exarchate parish of St. John the Baptist in Cedar Rapids, IA. After the Baptism, the parents—who, in traditional style, stood outside of the Church during the ceremony—joined the community for a reception honoring the newly-enlightened Jordan, hosted by his paternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Jordan Mavromatis, and his maternal grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Elias Britton.

At the special request of the parents, Archbishop Chrysostomos performed the Baptism of Leah Grassel, also at the parish Church (*see photograph at right*), after which Father David and Presbytera Juliana hosted a dinner for the parish community in honor of their newly-enlightened granddaughter. The sponsor was Diakonissa Catherine Chee. In addition to local guests, also present at the Baptism was the child's great-grandmother, Mrs. Rita Cownie, from Arizona.



### Tonsures to the Great Schema

With the blessing of Metropolitan Cyprian, Bishop Auxentios of Photiki tonsured two nuns at the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess, in Etna, CA, to the Great and Holy Schema on the Feast of St. Nicholas (December 6, 2003, Old Style).



The first of the two new Schema-nuns, Mother Olga, then the oldest nun in the sisterhood, reposed almost exactly six months after her tonsure. (*A short biographical note and photographs of her funeral appear below.*) The second of the new Schema-nuns, Mother Kassiane, is a convert to the Orthodox Faith and, before embracing the monastic life, was a practicing architect. Pictured at left is the tonsuring service. At Bishop Auxentios's left is Mother Kassiane and directly in front of His Grace, seated in a wheelchair, is Mother Olga. Pictured below is the entire Sisterhood of the Convent of St. Elizabeth, together with their Abbess, Mother Elizabeth (*at center*), and the Reverend Father George Mavromatis, the married Priest who serves daily and Sunday Liturgy at the convent.



## Mission in South Africa

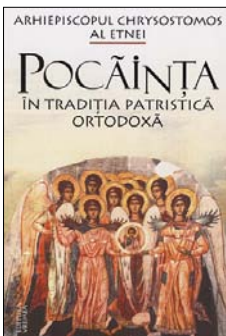
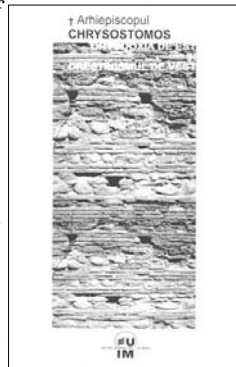
The Monastery of the Descent of the Holy Spirit in Laezonia, South Africa, recently completed its monastery Chapel, dedicated to St. Demetrios and Consecrated, with the blessing of Metropolitan Cyprian, on November 8, 2003 (Old Style), by Bishop Ambrose of Methone. (*See photograph below*). The Monastery of the Descent of



of the Holy Spirit is the center of our Church's missionary activity in South Africa. In addition to the monastery, the Superior of which is Archimandrite Nazarius (Pribojan), there are parishes under our Synod of Bishops in Pretoria and Johannesburg, as well as two missionary communities in Cape Town and Namibia.

## New Publications by Archbishop Chrysostomos

In 2003, the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest, Romania, published a new book by Archbishop Chrysostomos, *Ortodoxia de Est și Crestinismul de Vest: O Reevaluare a Supozițiilor Noastre Istoriografice și Teologice (The Orthodox East and Western Christianity: A Reevaluation of Our Historiographical and Theological Suppositions)*, translated by Deacon Father George Balaban and edited by Professor Augustin Ioan. This book will be used as a textbook in the graduate program in Church Architecture at the Ion Mincu University, Romania's chief school of architecture, where His Eminence taught as a Fulbright Scholar and is now an adjunct faculty member.



In January 2004, the Romanian publisher, Editura Vremea, also published a book by Archbishop Chrysostomos, *Pocăința în Tradiția Patristică Ortodoxă (Repentance in the Orthodox Patristic Tradition)*, translated by Remus Rus, Professor of Theology at the Patriarchal Faculty of Theology in Bucharest. This brings to eight the number of His Eminence's Romanian-language books in print. Two more volumes are scheduled for release later this year.

### Visit by Bishop Johannes of Makarioupolis

In late December 2003, His Grace, Bishop Johannes of Makarioupolis, Exarch of our Church in Sweden, paid a one-week visit to the



St. Gregory Palamas Monastery and to the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess, where his daughter is a nun. His Grace, 74, is an indefatigable worker in the missionary field, an accomplished iconographer, and a struggler for traditionalist Orthodoxy under very difficult, if not quite daunting, circumstances in Sweden, where he immigrated from Holland.

On his arrival in Etna, Bishop Johannes was warmly received at the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery as pictured at left, where he is particularly beloved by the Brotherhood. He was later similarly welcomed, with great warmth, by the Sisterhood at the Convent of St.

Elizabeth. During his stay in California, His Grace also visited San Francisco, where he venerated the Relics of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, whose name he took when he was tonsured a monk, following the death of his wife, Mother Parthenia, who reposed after being tonsured to the Great Schema.

### Florovsky Theological Fund Awards

On January 14, 2004 (New Style), the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies and the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, trustees for the Florovsky Theological Fund, announced that Dr. Rodica Mihaila, Director and Founder of the Center for American Studies at the University of Bucharest, was the recipient of the Fund's "Award for Teaching Excellence in Theology and Religion-Related Studies," which carries with it a one-thousand-dollar *honorarium*. Professor Mihaila is a distinguished Romanian educator and former Fulbright Scholar. She has taught, among other schools, at the University of Bucharest, the Free University of Berlin, Duke University, and the University of Wisconsin and has been the recipient of numerous prestigious scholarly awards and honors. An expert in American literature, she has placed significant emphasis, in the American Studies curriculum at the University of Bucharest, on the rôle of religion in the historical, social, and cultural development of the U.S. In fact, she ap-

pointed Archbishop Chrysostomos a Visiting Lecturer in the Center's program, while he was directing the U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania, in order to expand the students' familiarity with Orthodox populations in the U.S. Dr. Mihaila is the author of more than eleven books on American literature and literary figures, twelve volumes of translations of English literary works into Romanian (from Henry James to Kurt Vonnegut), and more than eighty scholarly chapters and articles on American literature and culture.

On January 15, 2004, the C.T.O.S. and the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery also announced the award of a one-thousand dollar "Dissertation Grant" to Professor Mario Marinov, Assistant Professor of Sociology in the Faculty of Law and History at the Neofit Rilski Southwestern University in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, a specialist in the sociology and psychology of religion who is writing his doctoral thesis on new religious movements in Bulgaria. Professor Marinov received his undergraduate education at the Central European University in Prague, Czech Republic, and his M.A. in sociology at the University of Sofia. He has also participated in post-graduate research programs and seminars at the London School of Economics, the University of Lund (in Sweden), the University of Essex, and the Central European University. The recipient of numerous scholarships and honors, including scholarships and awards from the Soros Foundation, the European Union Erasmus Teaching Mobility Program, the University of Sofia, and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Professor Marinov has published numerous studies, in Bulgarian and English, on such diverse topics as the sociology of the family, women in society, and religion in post-Communist Bulgaria, as well as entries for various standard reference works.

The Florovsky Theological Fund, originally established at Princeton University by students and colleagues of the late and distinguished Russian Orthodox theologian, historian, and thinker, Protopresbyter Georges Florovsky, *Emeritus* Professor of Eastern Church History at Harvard University and Visiting Professor of Religion and Slavic Studies at Princeton University, awards a number of prizes, including the annual Florovsky Theological Prize, to scholars of outstanding credentials and accomplishments who have contributed to an understanding of the rôle of theological inquiry and religious studies in human culture, with particular emphasis on the Eastern Orthodox theological tradition and special consideration for Eastern Orthodox scholars. A board of internationally-known Orthodox scholars from a wide array of academic fields oversees the awards and the selection of recipients.

### **Consecration of New Bishop**

On Cheesefare Sunday, 2004, Archimandrite Silouan, Abbot of

the Monastery of St. Seraphim of Sarov in Pistoia, Italy, was Consecrated Bishop of Luni at the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Fili (Athens), Greece (*see below, left, with His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian*). His Eminence, Bishop Silouan, a convert to the Orthodox Faith, holds a degree in theology *summa cum laude* from the Studio Teologico Fiorentino, which is an affiliate of the Pontifical Gregorian University; a doctoral degree in philosophy from the University of Florence; and post-graduate credentials in psychology and human sciences.



His Eminence was born in Pistoia, Italy, into a distinguished Roman Catholic family in 1947. At an early age, he developed an intense interest in theological matters and later became a cleric in the Roman Catholic Church. After his conversion to Orthodoxy in 1985, Bishop Silouan was Ordained a Priest under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. In 1993, disturbed by the ecumenical activities of the Patriarchate and its lack of support for his missionary endeavors, he began

working with the Serbian Church in Italy. When its ecumenical activities increased, leading to a similar lack of enthusiasm for missionary activities, His Eminence sought refuge in our Synod, which has warmly encouraged his missions. Εἰς πολλὰ ἔτη, Δέσποτα!

### **Elevation to the Rank of Protopresbyter**

With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, Father Gabriel Lee, pastor of the Church of the Dormition of the *Theotokos* in Port Townsend, WA, was elevated to the rank of Protopresbyter by Archbishop Chrysostomos at an Hierarchal Liturgy celebrated at the parish on St. Thomas Sunday, 2004. His Grace, Bishop Auxentios concelebrated the Divine Liturgy with His Eminence, assisted by Father Gabriel and Father Joseph Miller, assistant pastor of the parish.

At the close of the Liturgy, Archbishop Chrysostomos conveyed Metropolitan Cyprian's congratulations to Father Gabriel, his wife, Presbyteria Akylina, and the parish community. The Archbishop, noting that the rank of Protopresbyter is the highest honor traditionally bestowed on a married Priest, praised Father Gabriel's efforts in the construction of a beautiful new parish Church, much of which was done by the clergy and parish members themselves. His Eminence

and His Grace presented Father Gabriel with a pectoral Cross, as a sign of their appreciation and with their congratulations. (*Below, left to right, Archimandrite Akakios, the newly-elevated Protopresbyter Gabriel Lee, Hierodeacon Father Nectarios, Archbishop Chrysostomos, Bishop Auxentios, Deacon Father George Chee, and Father Joseph Miller.*)



### Professor Augustin Ioan Lectures

On the evening of May 18, 2004, Dr. Augustin Ioan, Associate Professor of the History and Theory of Architecture and Dean of Research and Graduate Studies at the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism in Bucharest, Romania, delivered a lecture on sacred space at the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies in Etna, CA. (*See photograph on next page.*) The lecture, which was followed by refreshments and informal discussions, was enthusiastically received by the some sixty persons in attendance. Professor Ioan, accompanied by his wife, Dr. Simona Ioan, was in California for a Fulbright-sponsored lecture tour that included the C.T.O.S., the University of California, Los Angeles, and Pomona College. Dr. Ioan is a

Fulbright Scholar, this academic term, at the University of Cincinnati and Harvard University's Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection in Washington, DC.

Archbishop Chrysostomos, Senior Scholar at the C.T.O.S., but then a Fulbright Scholar in Romania, taught a course on the theology of Orthodox art and architecture with Professor Ioan in 2001. This collaboration continued, two years later, when His Eminence was appointed Executive Director of the U.S. Fulbright Commission in Romania and his former colleague was elected to the governing board of the Romanian Fulbright Alumni Association. It was this Fulbright connection that led to an invitation for the distinguished Romanian professor and scholar to visit the C.T.O.S. and the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, to which the center is attached. Dr. Ioan was also recently named to the Board of Advisors of the C.T.O.S.



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### **Feast Day of Ascension Parish**

On the Feast of the Ascension, 2004, with the blessing of Metropolitan Cyprian and Archbishop Chrysostomos, Archimandrite Akakios, Abbot of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, travelled to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, where he took part in the Feast Day celebrations of our Exarchate parish there, which is dedicated to the Feast of the Holy Ascension. On the Eve of the Feast, an *Agrypnia*, or Vigil with Divine Liturgy, was served by Father Akakios and the pastor of the parish, Father Demetrios Sarlakes.

Father Akakios remained in Winnipeg through the Sunday following the Feast of the Ascension, when he once again concelebrated with the parish's pastor. He also conveyed the warm festal greetings

of Metropolitan Cyprian, Archbishop Chrysostomos and Bishop Auxentios to the parish, which received him with exemplary hospitality and kindness. *(Below, a group of the parish Faithful with Archimandrite Akakios and their Pastor, following Sunday Liturgy.)*



### Cathedral Church in Fili

Pictured below, progress on the new Cathedral at our Mother Monastery in Fili, Greece. If you wish to contribute to the ongoing construction work—which is being carried out by the Fathers and Faithful—, send a check or money order to: *The Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, T.Th. 46006, 133 10 Ano Liosia, Greece.*



### Repose of Schema-nun Olga

In the late afternoon of May 20, 2004 (Old Style) Mother Olga, 92, the oldest member of the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess and the grandmother of the convent's youngest nun, quietly reposed in her sleep. She was buried the next morning in the convent cemetery, next to its foundress, Mother Kypriane, who reposed twenty years earlier to the day. Mother Olga was born in Russia, from which she fled with her family after the Bolshevik Revolution. As a young child, she had been cared for in the hospice attached to the convent founded by St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess in Moscow. Mother Olga was trained in law and art in Belgrade, Serbia, before emigrating to the U.S., where she served for some time as secretary to St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco and, later, to Bishop Nectary of Seattle. *Αἰώνια ἡ Μνήμη*—Eternal Memory!



- Above, the sisterhood and the funeral procession from the convent Church to the convent cemetery.
- At left, the funeral bier and the remains of Mother Olga—prepared in traditional manner for burial—lying in state at the convent Chapel.

### Rest of Abbess Seraphima

On the Eve of All Saints, 2004, a virtual giant of the Orthodox resistance, Mother Seraphima, the revered Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Protection of the Mother of God, in the Knyazhevo district of Sofia, Bulgaria, reposed after a short illness of little more than one day. Mother Seraphima (Liven), 90, was born in Moscow on November 16, 1913, into a prominent Russian family.



A spiritual daughter, from her youth, of St. Seraphim (Sobolev), the Wonder-Worker of Sofia, she served the convent in Sofia—which was established by St. Seraphim—for more than fifty years, with her labors of prayer, faith, and patience. With graceful magnanimity, Matushka comforted and warmed countless souls. Her saintly and wise counsel was the source of comfort and spiritual benefit

to an entire generation of Orthodox émigrés from Russia and for Faithful in Bulgaria and, quite literally, throughout the Balkans. To her nuns, she was a beloved *Amma*.

When, in 1968, the Church of Bulgaria adopted the New Calendar, four Hieromonks—including two professors of the Theological Academy in Sofia, Archimandrites Seraphim and Sergius—resisted the innovation and, facing persecution from the Communist government and the Bulgarian Patriarchate, took refuge at the Protection Convent. Thus, the indefatigable Abbess Seraphima and her nuns, now numbering more than sixty, played a pivotal rôle, at tremendous risk and sacrifice, in preserving traditional Orthodoxy in Bulgaria. For these efforts, no less a figure than the great Serbian Confessor, the Blessed Archimandrite Justin (Popović), hearing of the persecution of the Bulgarian Old Calendarists, heartily commended them.

In 1988, one of Mother Seraphima's spiritual children, the First Hierarch of the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, Bishop Photii of Triaditza—then an assistant professor at the University of Sofia and a graduate of the Theological Academy—was secretly Ordained a Priest by Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, whom, in Bishop Photii's words, the Bulgarian traditionalists knew for his "moderation, his...gentleness, [and] his love for the works of the Holy Fathers." In 1993, with the fall of Communism, Bishop Photii was Consecrated a Bishop, much to the joy of Mother Seraphima, who continued her service to the Church in assisting him. Her sad loss, for the whole of True Orthodoxy, is immeasurable. *Memory Eternal!*



## Book Reviews

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VLADIMIR TSURIKOV (Ed.), *Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, 1782-1867: Perspectives on the Man, His Works, and His Times*. Chicago: Variable Press, 2003. Pp. 207.

This book, the first volume in a new series of scholarly studies entitled “Readings in Russian Religious Culture,” is based on a colloquium held on November 3-4, 2003, at Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary in Jordanville, New York (the primary theological training center of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad). As Deacon Father Vladimir Tsurikov, the editor of the series, observes, there has been a rapid growth of research into Russian religious history and culture during the past decade, that is, since the fall of Communism in that country. The new political climate in Russia has not only made Russian archival collections relating to Church history more accessible to the scholarly world, but has also made it possible for Russian academics to travel freely to the West. Indeed, two of the presentations printed in this collection were delivered by scholars who traveled from Moscow to participate in the colloquium at Holy Trinity Seminary.

St. Philaret of Moscow, who served as Metropolitan of that See for many years, was undoubtedly one of the most illustrious Churchmen in nineteenth-century Russia. He was also held in high esteem throughout the Orthodox world. The six papers in this volume discuss St. Philaret from a variety of perspectives. In the first paper, Robert Bird provides a very useful overview of the Saint and his efforts to build bridges between the Orthodox Church and the secular culture of his day. One famous example of these efforts is a poem which the Metropolitan wrote in response to a poem by Alexander Pushkin. Vadim Liapunov offers a very detailed analysis of both poems in the second paper. My only reservation about this interesting paper centers on the fact that Liapunov does not include an English translation of either poem. This same criticism with regard to translation also applies to the next three items in this collection: a lengthy paper by Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany entitled, “The Significance of Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov) in the Context of the History of Sermons in the Russian Church”; two previously unpublished sermons by St. Philaret, with an introduction by A.A. Petrov; and a paper by Alexander Iakovlev on the rôle played by St. Philaret in the state life of the Russian Empire. This is not linguistic chauvinism on my part, since I realize that Petrov and Iakovlev are both Russian and presumably felt more at ease in delivering their respective talks in their native language. It would, nevertheless, have been desirable to provide English versions of all of the materials and the lectures originally delivered at the colloquium, at least for the purposes of this publication.

The final paper is a lucid study by Gregory Freeze of Metropolitan Phi-

laret's attitude towards the issue of reforming Russian society, and in particular towards the so-called Great Reforms of 1856. In defense of St. Philaret, Freeze argues that he was far from being a reactionary, as many of his detractors have claimed. For example, in 1856 he persuaded the Holy Synod of the Russian Church to authorize a Russian translation of the Bible, while in 1861 he used his great influence to allay the alarm felt by landowners over the emancipation of the serfs. For all this, however, he was, as Freeze puts it, a "skeptical reformer" and a "staunch *Tserkovnik*" (Churchman). Not only was he deeply troubled by what he perceived as the anti-religious and anti-hierarchical trends in the Great Reforms, but he also had grave misgivings about "ambitious plans for the radical reconstruction of Russian state and society" (p. 155), plans which he considered altogether utopian. His primary concern was to preserve the independence of the Church from the State

Finally, I have three minor criticisms of this otherwise useful publication. First, I noticed quite a few errors, such as "OmigrO" (p. 198) instead of "émigré" and "*KirchenKte*" (p. 179) instead of "*Kirchenrechte*," which, though probably the result of problems in the conversion from one font to another, are annoying. Secondly, a bibliography and an index of names and subjects should certainly have been included in the volume. Thirdly, now that the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad has Glorified St. Philaret, it would surely have been more in keeping with traditional piety to entitle this book, *St. Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow*. These and other reservations notwithstanding, I strongly recommend this first volume in what promises to be, if it proves consistent in quality, a fascinating new series.

HIEROMONK PATAPIOS

Center for Traditionalist  
Orthodox Studies

JEFFREY BURTON RUSSELL, *Dissent and Order: The Search for Legitimate Authority*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992. Pp. xi + 128.

Professor Russell, one of the foremost medievalists of our day and one of Archbishop Chrysostomos' most valued mentors, very kindly sent us a copy of his popular introduction to the subject of medieval heresies. In this concise but exceedingly informative and readable book, he has distilled the results of some four decades of intensive research into medieval dissent.

The first chapter constitutes a very helpful general introduction to the study of heresy. In the second chapter, the author discusses some of the principal doctrinal heresies in both the East and West—such as Nestorianism, Monophysitism, Pelagianism, and Iconoclasm—and then touches briefly on the Eucharistic disputes of the ninth century and rise of the Bogomils in the following century. In the ensuing chapters, he ranges very widely and with the greatest lucidity over such movements as Waldensianism, Catharism, the Beguines, and the Lollards, individual figures like Joachim of Fiore, Francis of Assisi, John Wyclif, and Jan Hus, and discusses the response on the part of the religious and temporal authorities to dissent, which often involved harsh prosecution and, at times, even the execution of those who were classified as heretics or who were otherwise con-

sidered a threat to the stability of Church and society. Professor Russell also covers the rise of anti-Semitism and the persecution of witches, dispelling some common misconceptions about the Inquisition. In reality, as he points out, there was no such thing as *the* Inquisition; rather, there were many “inquisitions” or investigations, which dealt not only with heresies, but also with sins and crimes.

In general, Professor Russell focuses on developments in Western Christendom, which is only to be expected, given that almost all of the heretical movements in question arose in the West. From an Orthodox perspective, though, I am pleased to note that Bishop Wazo of Liège (c. 985-1048) strongly opposed the persecution of heretics, arguing, in a manner reminiscent of St. John Chrysostomos, that the wheat (orthodoxy) and the tares (dissent) should be allowed to grow together “until the Lord comes to separate and judge them” (p. 23). It is also a relief to know, as the author avers, that there were at least some Western prelates and theologians, including Bernard of Clairvaux, who spoke out against the appalling brutality and degradation to which Jews were treated in the Middle Ages, as well as the lurid but almost universal accusation of blood libel commonly made against them in the medieval West. Though, on the whole, Jews in Byzantium fared somewhat better than their counterparts in Western Europe, they were also subjected to certain legal restrictions in the East.

As an aside, I must sadly note that the same cannot be said about the Orthodox East in more recent centuries. The second half of the nineteenth century saw a rising tide of just such accusations in Greece and Russia. In our own day, too, such texts as the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* still hold sway over some Orthodox believers in Greece and other traditionally Orthodox countries. One may be thankful that our Byzantine forebears were relatively tolerant of Jews. However, a regrettable spirit of anti-Semitism has now taken root in the East; and no matter how irrational this may be, there are few indications, if any, that it will soon loose its grip on the popular imagination. We would all do well to reflect on the saner voices heard with regard to this pernicious problem from Western Christendom—and of which Professor Russell reminds us—, as well as the voice of warning from the great Patristic voices of the East.

This book is both rich in content and incisive in its analysis of a very complex phenomenon, and its value is enhanced by a chronology and a detailed bibliographic essay. It certainly deserves to become one of the standard introductions to the topic of medieval heresy and dissent. I confidently recommend it to anyone interested in learning more about a fast-growing area of study and research, if not to anyone who is interested in seeing a model of superb scholarship done as scholarship should be done.

HIEROMONK PATAPIOS

Center for Traditionalist  
Orthodox Studies

CONSTANTINE CAVARNOS, *Greek Letters and Orthodoxy: Their Relations During Two Millennia*. Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2004. Pp. vii + 60.

This superb book is a tribute to the historical and cultural percipience of a scholar who has, for many decades now, employed his learned mastery of matters philosophical, theological, and linguistic to the explication and understanding of the Orthodox Faith and its Saints and principal clerical and secular expositors and apologists—and this in a catholic, inclusive way, writing on Orthodox figures from every national tradition. In the work at hand, a much appreciated gift which the author personally inscribed, Professor Cavarnos concentrates on the particular traditions of the Greek Church and the “significant relations,” to quote the subtitle on the title page of the volume, “of Orthodox Christianity to the Greek language and to ancient Greek philosophy, rhetoric, and poetry.” As such, the work is not in the genre of those naive essays putting forth the anserine idea—a by-product of the ethnic myopia of Phyletism—that this-or-that language is “divine” and somehow endowed with the inherent ability to convey theological and spiritual truths which, in keeping with the apophatic traditions of the Christian East, are actually contained in knowledge that is not knowledge and which, quite obviously, transcend human language. Rather, in a respected intellectual tradition, Dr. Cavarnos intelligently, persuasively, and clear-sightedly argues that the richness of the Greek language, ancient Greek literature and philosophy, and the rhetorical traditions of the classical Hellenic world served to capture and express the knowable aspects of Christianity, from Scripture itself to the credal and Synodal pronouncements of the Church and the writings of the Greek Fathers.

In two chapters on classical Greek philosophical models and rhetoric, the author demonstrates that the Christian Church, in setting out its revealed truths through the vehicle of Greek letters, was selective and careful in how it adopted, adapted, and “baptized,” as it were, the cultural elements of classical Hellenism to the service of Christian apologetics and theology. He notes, for example—citing St. Basil the Great—, that one must be discriminating and eclectic in taking from the Classical poets that which is conducive to good comportment of a Christian kind and avoiding that which constitutes “base conduct.” Nonetheless, he points out that the very intellectual structure of Orthodox Christianity was formed and molded around these elements of Classical thought and literature. Dr. Cavarnos goes on, in his third and final chapter, to affirm that Greek letters are “relevant” to our day, since the Greek language is helpful in understanding, and in the hermeneutical expatiation of, Scripture (for which reason it is almost always studied in the theological seminaries in every Christian country). Greek philosophy also assists theology, in helping to form ideas and thoughts with analytical precision—the hallmark of such Greek philosophy. As for Greek rhetoric and poetry, the richness of the Church’s liturgical and hymnographic traditions, alone, attests to this and to what the author calls the “perennial value” of these ancient literary devices.

This is a wonderful book worthy of a thorough reading.

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## CATECHESIS X



That martyrdom is attained not only through shedding  
one's blood, but also through living a Godly life

*by Our Holy Father Theodore the Studite*

*Brothers and Fathers:*

Holy Pentecost, which we have been vouchsafed to celebrate, is the Feast of Feasts; but the Solemnity of All Saints, at which we have now arrived, is also a feast. Now, since it is characteristic of a feast that we acquire some additional blessing through reflecting on higher things, consider, if you will, how many recorded Saints there are and how great they were. Who could enumerate the stars of the sky or the sand that is spread out by the seashore? So many are the Martyrs throughout the world, who prevailed through faith against adverse powers, girded themselves to confront the serried ranks of tyrants, and went forward to endure fire, the sword, wild beasts, and every kind of vexation, reckoning torments as delights and the shedding of their blood as an occasion of gladness. Armed with this conviction, they walked on coals of fire, quenched blazing pyres, and achieved in the body things beyond nature, astonishing tyrants and kings. To what were they bearing witness? That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that in His Name is eternal life, as Scripture says. Can it be that the only Martyrs are those who shed their blood? Not at all. Those who live a Godly life are also Martyrs. For, the Apostle says: "They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented (of whom the world was not worthy); they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Hebrews 11:37-38). And a little farther on, he says: "Seeing that we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith" (Hebrews 12:1-2). Do you see that he collectively calls Martyrs all those who long for holiness and who through patience lead lives of affliction? Therefore, brothers, we, too, are included in this martyrdom; for in cherishing and enduring the many tribulations of the Cross-bearing life, in preserving our profes-

sion of virginity and the irrevocability of martyric obedience, we testify that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; we testify that there is a judgment and a recompense; we testify that we will give an account at the dread judgment seat of Christ for how we have lived, having resisted the Devil, the enemy of Christ, who punishes and scourges us, as it were, by assailing us with a succession of thoughts and transient pleasures to make us deny that there is a God; for indeed, those who are corrupt in their ways yield to and comply with the Adversary, saying, in reality, that there is no God, as the Holy David puts it: "The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God" (Psalm 52:2, *Septuaginta*). For unless he creates forgetfulness and even denial of God in the souls of men, he cannot persuade the mind to give in to a desire for the flesh, to the dissipation of sin, to drunkenness, profligacy, reveling, carousing, greed, idolatry, and every other kind of wickedness; and, taking the soul captive by these means, he leads it behind him, having snatched it away from God and therewith stoking the unquenchable fire of eternal torment. How pitiful is this deception, and yet more terrible the outcome of it!

But as for us, brothers, as Martyrs for Christ, let us continue to offer the good testimony, let us continue to make the good confession, rejoicing with all the Saints that we have been counted worthy to bear witness for the sake of Christ, not bowing the knee to Baal (Romans 11:4) (I mean to the lust of the flesh and the other pleasures of life); and let us not be persuaded by him who suggests negative thoughts about obedience, but let us contend every day as if in an arena, wounded, but not slacking off, fighting bravely, and not terrified.

Accordingly, you know the gain that comes from martyrdom: that witnesses who stand by someone in this life become participants in his gladness and are made sharers in those things for which they have borne witness. From this, we may infer that the Martyrs of Christ, who bore witness to Him in all circumstances and endured intolerable torments for their testimony of the truth, will prove to be fellow-heirs with Him in the age to come; for, the Apostle says: "When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4). May we, by continuing to bear witness throughout our lives, be vouchsafed to enjoy the eternal rewards and rejoice together with Christ unto the ages. Unto Him be glory, honor, and worship, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

\* Translated from the Greek original in St. Theodore the Studite, *Μικρὰ Κατήχησις*, ed. Archimandrite Nicodemos (Skrettas) (Thessaloniki: "Orthodoxos Kypsele" Publications, 1984), pp. 35-37.



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