

## Holy Synod in Resistance

### Ecclesiological, Juridical, and Pastoral Issues\*

#### I. What are your differences with the official Church of Greece?

1. The Orthodox Church as a whole, under the leadership the Patriarchate of Constantinople, officially inaugurated relations with the so-called ecumenical movement in 1920.

2. Ecumenism, as a movement for union among divided Christians, which first manifested itself in the bosom of much-divided Protestantism during the nineteenth century, clearly had a syncretistic identity from the outset. That is to say, the different Christian confessions, in spite of their dogmatic differences—in which they remain unshakeable—, decided to coöperate at all levels for an alleged “common witness.”

3. This syncretistic coöperation, especially as it was later institutionalized, with the founding of the World Council of Churches (1948) and subsequent ventures of the ecumenical movement, is antithetical, from an Orthodox standpoint, to the Synodal and Patristic Tradition of our Church.

4. The change in the Church Calendar should be placed within this syncretistic framework. Both the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920 and the so-called Pan-Orthodox Congress of 1923, in Constantinople, saw the calendar reform as an instrument of rapprochement among Christians. The adoption of a common calendar was to lead to festal concelebration in the East and West; that is, it was to promote a federal—and certainly a superficial—kind of Christian unity.

5. When the first practical step of the ecumenical movement, that is, the calendar change, was taken in 1924, the overwhelming majority of Orthodox (including those outside Greece) rejected the reform.

6. The Old Calendar Orthodox Community of Greece was born within the domain of this pan-Orthodox reaction.

7. This community, like its counterpart in Romania, was subjected, from 1924 onwards, to very severe pressure, bloody persecution, and inhuman degradation from the state police, by order of persons belonging to the so-called official Church.

8. It is clear that our fundamental difference with the so-called official Church of Greece consists primarily in its participation in the ecumenical movement and all that this entails.

9. That is to say, the calendar question is one particular question among others. Moreover, it is precisely on account of ecumenism that we are not in communion with those local Orthodox Churches which, while they observe the Julian Calendar (Jerusalem, Russia, Georgia, Serbia, Holy Mountain, Sinai, *et al.*), nonetheless participate in the ecumenical movement, whether

directly or indirectly.

## II. What are your differences with the rest of the Old Calendarists?

1. Up until 1985, when the Orthodox in Resistance appeared on the scene, there were two main currents within the Old Calendar Church in Greece.

2. The first current was that of the so-called Matthewites. The Matthewites believe that through the calendar change of 1924, the official Church of Greece automatically fell away from Grace and became completely and actually heretical; that is to say, that it is deprived of sanctifying Mysteries. This community is few in numbers and is now facing a serious internal crisis in the form of a schism.

3. The second current was that of the so-called Chrysostomites. The Chrysostomites share a common ecclesiological outlook with the Matthewites, but were more moderate, at least in the past, and less consistent in their stand against the New Calendarists. In any case, in 1998, by synodal decree, they anathematized the ecumenist New Calendarists, an action which the Matthewites had previously taken (1985). This community, which is greater in numbers, is passing through a still more serious crisis, having split into numerous mutually antagonistic factions.

4. The Orthodox in resistance (1985–), under Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, are the only ones to have dissociated themselves from the rest of the Old Calendarists for exclusively ecclesiological reasons.

5. The Holy Synod in Resistance has provided theological substantiation for the view that the innovating ecumenists, insofar as they have not yet been brought to trial, are ailing members of the Church. The healthy part of the Church, that is, the anti-ecumenists, are in resistance against ecumenism and have broken communion with the ecumenists for the time being.

6. The aim of Orthodox resistance is to awaken the synodal conscience of the Church in order to confront the innovation of ecumenism and to reunite the divided Church in the Orthodox Faith.

7. In conclusion, what distinguishes us from the other Old Calendarist communities is that we have a different ecclesiological basis for our struggle against ecumenism.

## III. It is well known that you maintain communion with Old Calendarist communities outside Greece. What kinds of contacts do you have with them, and to what end?

1. The Holy Synod in Resistance maintains full ecclesiastical communion with anti-ecumenist communities of Old Calendarists in Romania and Bulgaria and with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, under His Eminence, Metropolitan Laurus.

2. It should be noted that it was from the canonical Russian Orthodox Church Abroad that the Old Calendarist Community of Greece received its Episcopacy in 1960 and 1962.

3. At the same time, however, the Holy Synod in Resistance has developed a very broad range of Old Calendarist missionary communities in Europe (Italy, Austria, Sweden, and the Czech Republic), Africa (Kenya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, and South Africa), America (the U.S.A. and Canada), Australia, and Georgia.

4. This large network of activities, which is being continually expanded, is making a decisive contribution to the pan-Orthodox awakening of anti-ecumenism and to the overthrow of the ecumenist *status quo*, which aims to establish and consolidate inter-Christian, not to mention interfaith, syncretism within the Orthodox Church.

5. Furthermore, the internationalization of Orthodox resistance, precisely because it shows that our struggle is emerging from the confines of a sterile emphasis on thirteen days [the gap between the Julian Calendar and the Gregorian Calendar] and is confronting ecumenism in a sober and responsible way, has caused great unease among innovating ecumenists at a pan-Orthodox level.

6. The vision of the Orthodox in resistance is clear and unwavering: the restoration of Church unity. We published an important article on this subject at the time of the election of Archbishop Christodoulos [of the State Church of Greece]: “Τὰ σοβαρώτατα ὄπαρλαιπόμενα ἔ τοῦ Ἐνθρονιστηρίου Λόγου” [“Very Serious Omissions in the Enthronement Speech”] (see *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 284 [May-June 1998], pp. 59-60, 67).

#### IV. What is your financial situation, that is, how many churches, monasteries, and other foundations do you have under your jurisdiction?

1. Our jurisdiction, as an autonomous and independent ecclesiastical community, although it has been in existence for just seventeen years, by the Grace of God includes in its fold, within and outside Greece, two hundred parishes, churches, and chapels, thirty-five monasteries and *Hesychasteria*, and also fifteen educational institutions.

2. The community of Orthodox in resistance does not, as a whole, possess legal standing, that is to say, it is not recognized as a single organizational unit by the Greek Government,

3. Each monastery or church, as far as Greece is concerned, if it is not a dependency, is permitted to function as a nonprofit legal entity in terms of private law, with complete accountability in its obligations to the State.

#### V. What are your financial resources? How do you maintain your monasteries and churches?

1. We do not have financial resources at our disposal. We are not supported by wealthy individuals, we do not receive any remuneration, and we are not subsidized by the State.

2. For us, this is an especially great blessing, because, in this particular respect, we vividly experience the Apostolicity of the Church.

3. Our Lord blesses our humble handiwork and the humble offerings of His blessed paupers, that is, our Faithful.

4. Our clergy are supported in part by our central Monastery and in part by our Faithful. Some of the clergy also have their own professions.

5. At the Monastery of St. Cyprian in Fili, Attika, which is the headquarters of the Metropolis of Oropos and Fili, and also of the Holy Synod in Resistance, there are three mutually intersecting levels of activity: the Monastery, the Metropolis, and the Synod. Thus, the Monastery provides essential support for this demanding and complex enterprise.

6. The greater part of our revenues is absorbed by foreign missions, especially in Africa.

**VI. It is said that you have the “protection” of politicians in the electoral district of the rest of Attika. What are your comments on this?**

1. It is a fact that, in the past, the Old Calendarist community, more broadly conceived, was “tapped” by various politicians in their customary efforts to gain votes.

2. The Holy Synod in Resistance, during its brief history to date, has never involved itself in such proceedings.

3. It is, however, true that its work is supported by politicians, not only from the rest of Attika, but also from other districts and from the entire spectrum of political parties. From time to time these politicians visit our Monastery, for which they have especial esteem.

4. This support is expressed in more concrete terms: primarily in the area of constructing churches (the Ministry of the Environment, Land Planning, and Public Works), the exemption of clergy and monastics from military service (the Ministry of National Defense), and the recording of Mysteries at registry offices (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior).

5. Let it be noted, while we are on the subject, that after repeated court battles, with God’s help we have succeeded in refuting the accusation directed by the New Calendarists against our clergy of allegedly usurping their authority.

6. We are certainly not usurping any authority, since we exist as an autonomous and independent Church community, and we do not carry out our activities in the name, or on behalf, of the so-called official Church of

Greece; and our Priesthood derives canonically from the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (see §III.2)

7. The State recognizes us in practice as an “Orthodox Church Community,” whose Mysteries are formally recorded in registry offices on the basis, indeed, of a proclamation made by the Ministry of Education and Religions. This statement forms part of the Greek Constitution (1975): “The True Orthodox Christians, as they call themselves, or Old Calendarists, may perform their liturgical duties without any hindrance.” (See “Επίσημα Πρακτικά τῶν Συνεδριάσεων τῆς Βουλῆς τῶν Ἑλλήνων” [“Official Minutes of Sessions of the Greek Parliament”], 5th Amendment, First Meeting, Session 76, Wednesday, 23 April 1975, p. 2140.)

## VII. What is your opinion of exorcisms? And why do the Faithful predominantly prefer you to the clergy of the Church of Greece?

1. Exorcisms are special prayers of the Orthodox Church that are read over those suffering from any kind of demonic influence.

2. The prayers of exorcism are not read without sufficient reason, and they do not work “magically,” that is, independently of our spiritual condition. A period of preparation for these prayers is required of both the sufferer and his family, if they are to be efficacious.

3. The sufferer and his family should participate in the prayers of exorcism with fervent and heartfelt faith, which is expressed towards God and His Saints through sincere repentance, forthright confession, communion of the Immaculate Mysteries, fasting, love, humility, and in general, through all of the holy evangelical virtues.

4. A constant increase in people who are Christians only in name, as well as the tremendous existential emptiness brought about in the heart by the absence of God, and, finally, the heightened promotion of occult practices by numerous “merchants of hope,” in our days, have led to a precipitous increase in the number of those suffering from various forms of demonic influence.

5. St. Cyprian, as a former sorcerer, has received from God the special gift of driving out evil spirits and destroying the wiles of their hapless minions.

6. The Faithful do not have recourse to our monastery because there are certain specialist exorcists here, but simply and solely because St. Cyprian has the gift of exorcising demons.

7. We endeavor, with God’s help, to perform this weighty service of Christian love towards our neighbor in an altruistic, sober, and responsible manner, in accordance with Orthodox Tradition.

\* The present text was given as an interview to the Athens newspaper *Κυριακάτικη Έλευθεροτυπία* in April of 2002. In the end, instead of this interview, an article was published in *Κυριακάτικη Έλευθεροτυπία* (2 June 2002, p. 53), containing many inaccuracies and certainly bearing absolutely no relation to the interview.