



# Statement on the Supposed “Anti-Patristic” Nature of Our Ecclesiology of Resistance

## A Response to the Orthodox Christian Information Center Website<sup>1</sup>



The Deficient Scholarship of Monk Basil’s Comments on the  
Allegedly Anti-Patristic Stand of the So-Called  
“Old Calendarist Zealots”

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### I. Part One: Introductory Remarks to the O.C.I.C. Webmaster, Patrick Barnes

*Dear Patrick,*

*May God bless you.*

*I hope that you will allow me, as you did once before in answering some rather ill-conceived reactions by one of your readers to Archbishop Chrysostomos’ comments on Jewish traditions (“Menstruation, Emissions, and*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.orthodoxinfo.com>.

Holy Communion”), to respond to your recent posting about the ecclesiology of resistance.

The article by Monk Basil of the Gregoriou Monastery on Mt. Athos, which you reproduce and extensively introduce in this posting (rather awkwardly translated and entitled “Anti-Patristic: The Stance of the Zealot Old Calendarists”<sup>2</sup>) is well known to us. Inchoate, polemical, insulting, bereft of any real scholarly substance, drawing half-truths from the misuse of historical and Patristic texts, and posturing as a Patristic commentary, it does little to address the real issues of so-called Old Calendarist zealotry. In his observations, which are basically a response to an earlier article (written in 1999) by Father Nicholas Demaras on the ecclesiology of resistance (criticizing the Gregoriou Monastery for not walling itself off from the Orthodox ecumenists), Father Basil (a former “zealot” who, I am told but have not confirmed, is now an Archimandrite in Crete) comes to sweepingly broad conclusions drawn from difficult canonical, historical, and Patristic texts that he presents in a naive and, of course, self-serving way, grinding his axe on a soft stone. This is unworthy of an educated man and a clergyman.

We, in our Church, have for some time been studying and responding to Father Basil’s vociferous polemics, which deserve attention only because of the way in which, like many others, he distorts the canonical, historical, and Patristic witness by approaching our resistance as though it were formed as an abstraction. He thus, in Protestant-like fashion, invokes Patristic proof texts or, in the style of Latin legalism, applies canonical precedents and interpretations to dispute the theological or historical foundations of resistance. (The official website of our Synod of Bishops features some of our responses to his attacks in a yet-unfinished series that we have, unfortunately, still not had the time to translate into English. Those conversant in Greek should see the website of the Synod in Resistance [**Resistance Documents; Responses**]: “The ‘Walling-Off’ and ‘Zeal’ of a Former ‘Zealot’: A Response to the Former ‘Zealot’ Monk Basil Gregoriates,” Parts I<sup>3</sup> and II. <sup>4</sup>)

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/anti-patristic-stance-old-calendarist-zealots.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.synodinresistance.org/Administration\\_el/1a5d002aZelos1-OE37.pdf](http://www.synodinresistance.org/Administration_el/1a5d002aZelos1-OE37.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.synodinresistance.org/Administration\\_el/1a5d002bZelos2-OE38.pdf](http://www.synodinresistance.org/Administration_el/1a5d002bZelos2-OE38.pdf).

*Our responses to Father Basil quite adequately demonstrate that our ecclesiology of resistance, first articulated by Metropolitan Cyprian, is not an abstract ideology, but is drawn from years of study and circumspect deliberation, attempting to work within the spirit of the law and not according to some contrived notion of administrative order; to theologize from the “mind of the Fathers”; and to draw from the action of the Holy Spirit within history. We did not set out to formulate a theory of resistance, but drew from the Fathers precepts and guidelines that led us to that resistance. This kind of spiritual inquiry is diametrically opposed to the efforts of those who seek to exonerate an ideology or direction (or one’s change in ideology or direction) by post-factum justifications of a priori assumptions and opinions spawned by the pursuit of comfort or ambition, rather than a commitment to a posteriori principles that reflect obedience to the experience and ethos of the Church.*

*When we contrast our notion of resistance as a “discovery” with the methodology of those who call us anti-Patristic zealots (an epithet with little real meaning), we see how far the latter methodology, drawn from a presumptuous use of the Fathers and Canons of the Church and the abuse of nuanced historical precedents, is from the idea of spiritual searching and a freedom of the spirit. Father Basil’s would-be scholarship clearly demonstrates that his knowledge of the Fathers is too limited, his historical perspective too deliberately self-serving, as we have previously said, and his desire to disavow his former zealotry too overwhelming to allow him that impersonal, impartial, and judicious evaluation that avoids polemics and overstatement in the service of self-justification.*

*If you will allow me a comment, meant not so much as a criticism as it is intended as counsel, your own endorsement of Father Basil’s article also shows some indeliberation, and especially as you apply his dated and imperfectly and poorly formed arguments to recent events in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. In the interest of a somewhat deeper assessment of the resistance movement and these recent developments, I would ask, as I said above, that you allow me, for the purpose of fairness, to post a few subtilized rejoinders to your observations, which, like those of Father Basil, do not adequately, I believe, capture the Patristic, canonical, and historical wholeness necessary for a proper discernment of resistance ecclesiology (or “Cyprianism,” as the vulgar street language of the Internet would have it). That ecclesiology, once more, emerges only from within the catholic experi-*

ence of the Church and from the consensus of the Fathers. I say this with every appreciation for the valuable resource that your website so often is.

There follow, then, your comments and my interspersed responses (in fact, my own responses and lengthy contributions by Archbishop Chrysostomos and Bishop Auxentios), in turn. I sincerely thank you, again, for generously allowing me this opportunity to respond. You set an example, in this sense, that others would do well to follow.

Hieromonk Patapios

## Part II: Analysis and Commentary

### Section A

*Patrick Barnes (P.B.): It is hoped that the following article [vide supra, Monk Basil of the Gregoriou Monastery—F.P.]—translated several years ago, but not posted until now—will be of some help to Orthodox Christians who are wrestling with whether they should remain in communion with their Bishop or “jump ship” to one of the Old Calendarist groups. It may also help those who are struggling with whether the recent reconciliation between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia means they should leave the ROCOR for one of the break-away churches opposed to the reunion.*

**Father Patapios (F.P.):** The issue of so-called “Old Calendarist zealotry” has little to do, I suspect, with the recent reconciliation of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate, or with those who have expressed opposition to that union. As well, your use of the term “break-away” (*sic*) and the phrase “jump ship” is both tendentious and rather ungentlemanly. The latter metaphor could easily be misunderstood to mean that you believe that those who have left the ROCOR, in protest over its union with Moscow, have, in doing so, abandoned “the one and only True Ark of Salvation established by the Lord Jesus Christ,” as you have characterized the Orthodox Church in

your own writings.<sup>5</sup> Just as I do not believe that you actually meant to use the term “jump ship” as it might be construed, or in an ungentlemanly manner, I am equally sure that your lack of care in using such caustic, essentially non-theological terminology as “break-away” was unintentional. However, I feel obliged, at the same time, to suggest, in a charitable way, that you put greater thought into comments such as the foregoing.

Following the union of the ROCOR with the Moscow Patriarchate, there have been some anti-unionists who have expressed themselves in a most insulting and regretful way, just as many pro-unionists, some simply justifying their weakness in abandoning the difficulties, rigors, and divisions of the resistance, have also used language that should never have been used and made charges that should never have been made. But the majority of those who have severed communion with the ROCOR, seeking refuge in what you call “breakaway” jurisdictions, have done so purely for reasons of faith and conscience. For this, whether one agrees with their position or not, they merit praise and certainly not blame. Nor should anyone glibly overlook the fact that their protests have often cost them some of their flock, their livelihood, and their former reputations as good clergy. In the eyes of most of these individuals, had the ROCOR not charted a new course, but remained faithful to its legacy and traditions, they would have had no just cause to leave her; nor would they have suffered as they have.

In the end, the *onus probandi* lies with those who choose the path of compromise, not with those who now must traverse the hard and narrow path of resistance and confession. After all, those who abandon resistance suddenly enjoy the perquisites of “officialdom” and an end to the insults levelled against them by so-called “world Orthodoxy,” which also has *much to apologize for*, in the face of its actions against, and injuries to, Orthodox resisters. Those who have left the ROCOR, by contrast, are now threatened with suits and the loss of their properties and, in the case of clergy, as I have said, their livelihoods and salaries. As well, they come to enjoy in their acts of conscience, not only the insults visited upon the resisters by the extremists of “world Orthodoxy” (personal calumny and slander and the hackneyed accusations of

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick Barnes, *The Non-Orthodox: The Orthodox Teaching on Christians Outside of the Church* (Salisbury, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 1999), p. 1.

schism, heresy, and spiritual delusion), but, alas, also the opprobrium heaped upon them by their former brothers, who now declare them to be “outside the Church,” their Mysteries “without Grace,” and their ministrations “unto damnation,” to quote some actual statements from a Hierarchy of the ROCOR.

The matter of what constitutes deviation (whether the resisters have deviated from the path of those Church Canons governing administrative order, or whether those seeking union have sought union prematurely and by compromise, thus placing order above the prophetic spirit of the Church) is a moot issue. You obviously have your view, and we obviously have ours. However, let it be said that, from our standpoint, we do not consider the individuals who have sought refuge with us (at great cost and personal sacrifice) to have “jumped ship” or to have joined “breakaway” groups. I am rather surprised that you would use such contemptible language. Knowing you, I presume that you assuredly did it innocently and without pejorative implications, and without thinking about your words.

## Section B

*P.B. The article is not without some weaknesses, e.g., when the author writes “...precisely because [the zealots] also do not have reasons of faith for their schisms.” So-called zealots who read this will likely respond, “The Calendar per se is a canonical issue; but the motivation behind its uncanonical adoption was a wider Ecumenist agenda. The Julian Calendar is not dogma, and our struggle is not primarily over the Calendar. Rather, our struggle is against Ecumenism, which is an ecclesiological heresy, and thus a dogmatic issue. The Calendar change must be seen in the proper context.”*

F.P. First, this article, one must objectively say, is simply not good scholarship; indeed, it is not scholarship at all. The matter is, therefore, more than just one of “some” weaknesses in it. Second, your passage above is very good. I would, however, reinforce the central point in your eminently fair-minded attempt to present the “zealot” case; i.e., that the New Calendar was adopted precisely as part of an already ex-

isting ecumenist agenda. As Protospesbyter George Metallenos, a distinguished professor of theology at the University of Athens, pointed out in a lecture delivered at the historic “Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference” held in Thessaloniki, Greece, in September, 2004, the infamous 1920 Encyclical of the Church of Constantinople, “To the Churches of Christ Everywhere,” aside from advocating a common calendar with Western Christendom (the so-called “New” or, to use a bogus appellation, “Revised Julian” Calendar [in effect, the Gregorian or “Papal” Calendar, with a provision for the Orthodox *Paschalion*]), is manifestly based on ecclesial ideologies that today have morphed into so-called “Baptismal theology.”

As such, the calendar change contains at its core a denial of the primacy and unique authenticity of Orthodoxy. It is a species of ecumenist ecclesiology promoted with especial ardor by Metropolitan John (Zezioulas) of Pergamon, according to whom baptism “creates a limit to the Church,” such that “outside baptism there is no Church,” whereas “within baptism, even if there is a break, a division, a schism, you can still somehow speak of the Church.”<sup>6</sup> Rather than attribute to the resistance movement and this temporary division *within the Orthodox Church* such an appropriate boundary, the ecumenist theory of a *universal baptism* both within and outside Orthodoxy is determined, not by the wholeness of one’s confession and Faith, but by some contrived notion of an Orthodox “*form*” of baptism. (Thus, some New Calendarist ecumenists do not for a moment hesitate to re-Baptize Old Calendarists who join them [largely as a political act], but actually forbid the reception of converts by Baptism from heterodox bodies that baptize in the name of the Trinity, ignoring the errors in confession and Faith in these bodies. We see here the sad consequences of the calendar reform and the ideologies that spawned it.)

(Parenthetically, I should remark that it was this same Metropolitan John who, nearly twenty years ago, openly branded the Orthodox Church, in referring to “the Church of Christ in her totality” and “no longer to Orthodoxy alone,” as “narcissistic” for adhering to the notion that She alone constitutes the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

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<sup>6</sup> “Orthodox Theology and the Ecumenical Movement,” *Sourozh*, No. 21 (August 1985), p. 23.

Church.<sup>7</sup> I doubt that even some of those who naively accepted the calendar change in years past would ever have imagined that their actions would lead to a statement like this!)

## Section C

*P.B.* These are reasonable points which the author did not sufficiently address. The question is whether conceding these points undermines the author's argument. I do not think it does (see the closing bullet points). The author also assails the Studite "schisms," writing that they "were not recognized by anyone, but were instead condemned." This admittedly contradicts at least two Lives of St. Theodore the Studite. For example, The Synaxarion published by the Holy Convent of the Annunciation of Our Lady, Ormylia, Greece, the reception the Saint and his followers received after return from exile seems to indicate that his resistance was well regarded. Nevertheless, I do not think this possible error renders moot the author's points. There were Saints on both sides of this controversy: two successive Patriarchs of Constantinople, Tarasius (Feb. 25) and Nicephorus (Jun 2). In reading their Lives no conclusions can be drawn about how the Church ultimately viewed their actions as opposed to those of the Studite party.

F.P. Here, you are wooed into conclusions based on Monk Basil's poor and amateurish historical scholarship. You also fall to some theological errors upon which I do not think you have adequately reflected. We agree that, with only a *perfunctory* reading of these Saints' lives, one might conclude that "no conclusions can [or should—*F.P.*] be drawn" in the controversy in question. With study and by placing the lives of these Saints in historical and theological context, however, one comes to a very different position—and *rightly so*. What Father Basil presents to you is a typical scholarly fallacy: *illustratio nullius*; namely, seeming to make a point by illustrations that demonstrate nothing. This is because, as I said in my introductory remarks, many people in the Church today use Patristic texts as Protestants do, and not to lead them into "rightly dividing the word of the Truth," which is not just

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<sup>7</sup> *Ekklesia*, No. 7 (1 May 1988), p. 267a.

a responsibility for the Hierarchy but for laymen, too. They use the Fathers to support (or, in the case of the Monk Basil, to try to justify) their preconceived ideas. One does not, to reiterate another point that I made earlier, use the Patristic witness to support assumptions drawn from personal opinion (which in Orthodox theology *counts as nothing*, dogmatically), but uses the writings of the Fathers as a guide in finding the truth, supporting it, and acting on it, whether they support or, in fact, reject one's personal view. We use the Fathers to make decisions and draw conclusions in and about the Truth.

It is in this spirit that we must evaluate both historical and contemporary events in the Church. Thus, in the case of the Moechian controversy, it should be borne in mind that St. Tarasios was, according to most Orthodox (and many Western) historical sources, acting under duress. His attempts to have the Emperor Constantine's adulterous marriage annulled were thwarted because the Emperor "threatened that unless he [Patriarch Tarasios] bowed to his will, he would restore the heresy of his imperial predecessors and once again destroy the precious and holy Icons."<sup>8</sup> In short, St. Tarasios' stand with regard to the Moechian controversy does not place him in opposition to St. Theodore the Studite. Likewise, St. Nikephoros, though by no means a man "weak in character,"<sup>9</sup> was also similarly forced by imperial authority to reinstate the Priest who performed the illicit nuptials. This did not set him at odds with St. Theodore, either.<sup>10</sup>

Every instance in Church history where "there were Saints on both sides of...[a] controversy" must ultimately be evaluated in accordance with the yardstick of the *consensus* (or *consensio*) *Patrum*. Because the

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<sup>8</sup> See, among other sources, an historical document of unknown authorship from the Studite period, "Concerning the Holy Patriarchs Tarasios and Nikephoros," which can be found reprinted in the *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1852D.

<sup>9</sup> See John Travis, *In Defense of the Faith: The Theology of Patriarch Nikephoros of Constantinople* (Brookline, MA: Hellenic College Press, 1984), p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> As an aside, we can cite the lament of St. Nikephoros, which he expressed in a letter to Pope Leo III, with regard to acting "*kat' oikonomian*" in obedience to the imperial powers [and his words no doubt echo those of Patriarch Tarasios, too]: "[I]t is not easy to oppose the reigning powers, who are carried away by their own wishes and strive to fulfill their desires" (*ibid.*). As Father John Travis comments, "Unlike Theodore Studites, Nikephoros [and Tarasios, we might argue—*FP*] could not afford to act with complete disregard of these factors" (*ibid.*).

Holy Spirit is made manifest through the Church, there is no event in Her history that is without import and from which “no conclusions can be drawn.” In the case at hand, for example, one can draw the preliminary conclusion that, to the extent that both parties reflected the consensus of the Fathers in their general understanding of the theology and life of the Church, they were saintly. At the same time, their sanctity in this general sense does not mean that the controversies that divided them were of no consequence and that one should avoid evaluating those controversies. The personal sanctity of the parties involved does not obviate the declaration of one view in the controversies that separated them as correct and another as erroneous. It ultimately establishes a principle that you once so perceptively stated: “With all due sympathy to those trying to sort out the nuances of Orthodox ecclesiology, a consistent Orthodox position is definitely discernible, if only one resorts to a careful examination of Holy Tradition, and specifically, Sacred Scripture, the writings of the Church Fathers, and the Sacred Canons.”<sup>11</sup>

Beyond these rudimentary historical, theological, and spiritual facts, from a purely scholarly standpoint one must exercise caution before launching into arguments taken solely from the example of the Studites (and our own ecclesiology, which is based on a firm and very wide Patristic foundation, does not do so, even though some simplistic analyses of it have made that claim). This movement is complex, nuanced, beset by certain deviations from the norms set by St. Theodore, and the subject of scholarship, both amateur and professional, that is open to a great deal of criticism. Indeed, most Orthodox scholars have been formed by Roman Catholic historiography, and not by Patristic sources, in their understanding of the Studite period. They naively repeat conclusions about events, persons, and issues hastily drawn from an historical record that is often unclear. Indeed, even the writings of St. Theodore himself have not, until quite recently, appeared in a carefully edited and critical Greek text (by Professor George Fatouros), and at that only a small part of the full corpus of his works (primarily, his letters and some poetry). It speaks for itself, in support of what I have said, that the only significant annotated collection of St. Theodore’s writings to this day is the product of Jesuit scholarship (which gener-

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<sup>11</sup> *The Non-Orthodox*, p. 5.

ally opines that St. Theodore was a schismatic) dating to the sixteenth century. In all candor, neither Father Basil nor you has really studied the Studite period in such a fashion as to come to precise knowledge of this period that would justify your saying that “no conclusions” can be drawn from it. I say this with no insult intended, but simply as a statement of fact.

Finally, let me make a statement about Father Basil’s use of the term “schisms,” in referring to the Studites, by which term he apparently believes that he can impugn the nature of our resistance ecclesiology, as though, simply because we borrow the term “resistance” from St. Theodore, our ecclesiological position stands or falls on the Studite experience. Using this term (“schisms”) (so dear to Jesuit scholars, originally) to refer to the Studites immediately exposes the influence that Western sources have had on Father Basil’s grasp of their importance in Orthodox Church history. They, of course, did not consider themselves to be schismatics, neither when they undertook resistance during the Moechian controversy, nor later during the second wave of Iconoclasm. As St. Theodore affirms in a letter to St. Nikephoros: “We are not schismatics [*apochistai*] from the Church of God.”<sup>12</sup> The only “Studites” who might with some justification be called “schismatics” were those hard-liners who refused to cooperate with the legitimate Patriarch, St. Methodios, following the Iconoclastic Controversy, and who disallowed the application of *oikonomia* in the case of those who had renounced their previous adherence or capitulation to Iconoclasm. St. Theodore and the other Studites were simply in resistance, “Orthodox and God-pleasing resistance,”<sup>13</sup> and not in schism. The Orthodox Church has always supported this legitimate resistance, honoring St. Theodore as a great Saint. That Father Basil ignores this point, levelling against the Studites accusations of a very imprudent kind, is rather astonishing.

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<sup>12</sup> “Epistle I.25,” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 989A.

<sup>13</sup> St. Theodore, “Epistle I.39,” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1045D.

## Section D

*P.B. Moreover, even if we grant the praiseworthiness of the Studite schisms there still remains the fact that the key Canon cited by the zealots, Canon XV of the First-Second Synod, was established some sixty years later in order to clarify appropriate grounds for rupturing communion with one's hierarch: "The eastern patriarchs and more than three hundred bishops, including the papal legates, were in attendance [at the First-Second Synod]. All confirmed and ratified the proclamations of the Holy Seventh (Ecumenical Synod, and once more condemned the heresy of Iconoclasm. Patriarch Photios was accepted as the lawful and canonical patriarch. Also at this synod, seventeen holy canons were written with the purpose of bringing disobedient monks and bishops into harmony with ecclesiastical order and traditions. Disobedient monks were expressly forbidden to desert their lawful bishop under the excuse of the bishop's supposed sinfulness, that is, personal sins; for such brings disorder and schism in the Church. The holy synod also said that only by a conciliar decision could the clergy reject a bishop who had fallen into sin. This rule was adopted in direct response to those unreasonably strict monks who had erred by separating themselves from their new patriarch. (Holy Apostles Convent, trans., *The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, February, p. 195) Could it be that this Canon was partly motivated by the Moechian Controversy, which concerned certain Canons, not dogma?*

F.P. For one thing, your remark about the "key" Canon cited by the "zealots" ("resisters," more appropriately) is an overstatement. This is *one of many Canons* that we invoke. For another thing, you do not quote Canon XV of the First-Second Synod, the more important element of which, with regard to ecclesiology, is the issue of separating from a Bishop when he *openly preaches heresy*. What you quote above is a misleading introduction to the Canon as we use it. Moreover, that it was promulgated decades after the Moechian controversy is utterly irrelevant to its application to the ecumenical movement. Nor do we approach canonical matters with speculative statements such as, "Could it be that...?" This is not Patristic scholarship. We are not playing games, here, by which to outwit one another; our purpose is to find the catholic and universal meaning of the Canons and to apply them, with fear

of God, as we believe that the Fathers meant them to be applied. It is thus also utterly irrelevant whether its promulgation was motivated by a canonical rather than a dogmatic controversy. Even if this were so, it nonetheless has dogmatic dimensions. You are, in fact, arguing, here, for our position as resisters. You state that Canon XV “was established...to clarify appropriate grounds for rupturing communion with one’s hierarch.” Since our resistance stems from a dogmatic controversy—namely, our opposition to ecumenism as “an ecclesiological heresy,” as you yourself have characterized it<sup>14</sup>—rather than infractions of the Canons (which motivated the Studite resistance in the case of the Moechian controversy), it is clear that, in perfect accord with Canon XV, we have wholly valid and “appropriate grounds for rupturing communion” with ecumenist Hierarchs. As you stated earlier, correctly articulating our view as resisters, “our struggle is against Ecumenism, which is an ecclesiological heresy, and thus a dogmatic issue.”

Moreover, proof that our resistance neither oversteps nor abuses Canon XV, by which Orthodox are “expressly forbidden to desert their lawful bishop under the excuse of the bishop’s supposed sinfulness, that is, personal sins,” is the fact that we have never severed communion with a Hierarch because of his private sins (and where such things exist, we have never made them a matter of public discussion). In other words, we have consciously and conscientiously incorporated the constraints of Canon XV into our own resistance. Again, our criticisms of ecumenist Hierarchs have always been based on those statements and actions of theirs that support the notion that “followers of other Christian confessions” and “different churches” constitute, together with the Orthodox Church, “the whole Christian body” and “the whole body of the Church,” to cite the Protestant phraseology of the Encyclical of 1920.<sup>15</sup> This is a notion that completely undermines the very self-identity of Orthodoxy, and adherence to it grievously adulterates the vows that Orthodox Hierarchs make at their Consecrations: to be preservers and defenders of the dogma of the “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.”

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<sup>14</sup> *The Non-Orthodox*, pp. 4–5, 121.

<sup>15</sup> See *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902–1975*, ed. Constantin G. Patelos (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), pp. 40–43.

Having established that our resistance unquestionably involves issues of dogmatic significance, we nonetheless would not discount the canonical violations perpetrated by ecumenist Hierarchs as being valid grounds for breaking communion with them. In fact, as we will note shortly, your distinction, here, between matters doctrinal and matters canonical is, at best, tenuous and arbitrary. As I have observed, many Canons, even if they address certain administrative issues, are dogmatic rather than administrative in essence. As you have elsewhere rightly noted, “[f]ailure to grasp or acknowledge the ecclesiological significance of numerous Sacred Canons containing timeless dogmatic principles is one of the main reasons why certain people in the Church today attempt to argue for the ‘validity’ of heterodox sacraments and a whole host of related novelties.”<sup>16</sup> These novelties include, of course, the calendar innovation. Furthermore, the open and repeated violation of either a dogma or a Canon of the Church by a Hierarch *qua* Hierarch does not fall into the category of “personal sins,” to which the Canons of the First-Second Synod would have us turn a blind eye.

## Section E

*P.B. A third weakness of this article is the author’s placing all zealots in the same basket, failing to distinguish between the many groups which deny the presence of Ecclesial Grace in the New Calendar Churches, and those groups which are more moderate, such as the True (Old Calendar) Orthodox Church of Greece, Synod of Metropolitan Cyprian, and those in communion with him (True [Old Calendar] Orthodox Churches of Romania and Bulgaria). These moderate “resisters” do not deny the presence of Grace in the Mysteries of those Churches with which they are not in communion, nor do they consider the Clergy of these Churches mere laymen, if not outside of the Church altogether. They would likely share criticisms essayed by this author concerning the zealots.*

F.P. You are right. We moderate resisters do not consider “world Orthodoxy” to be devoid of Grace; nor do we claim that the ecumenical

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<sup>16</sup> *The Non-Orthodox*, p. 128.

activities of its clergy and theologians put them outside the Church. If only they would accord us the same courtesy and desist from their acrimonious and shocking characterizations of us (e.g., to quote a number of Orthodox ecumenists and clergymen, “[t]hese various Orthodox cliques” and “peasant ecclesiastical figures” who confront “the ecumenical movement with pusillanimity and maliciousness”; “[t]hese illicit assemblies, which lay claim to a monopoly over Orthodoxy, preach warfare against the ‘panheresy of ecumenism’ to just about any followers they can hunt down”; “a wretched, marginal group”<sup>17</sup>), perhaps some constructive dialogue could be envisioned. It would also behoove those who, like Monk Basil, have abandoned the world of “zealotry,” as he calls it, or “resistance,” as we call it, to cease justifying themselves by personal attacks against us and the kinds of polemical screeds that his paper on zealotry and resistance constitutes. They should simply say that they disagree with us and go their way.

With regard to your statement that we moderate resisters, “would likely share criticisms essayed [*sic*] by this author concerning the zealots,” this is not wholly true. While we may decry their extremism and lack of “wise zeal,” our purpose is to correct them and not, in the spirit of Father Basil, to denigrate them simply because we do not agree with them (or in his case, as I said, have abandoned a common witness with them). One would hope that peasants and malicious cowards that we may be, we are at least a wretched minority with some sense of propriety and Christian comportment.

## Section F

*P.B. Regardless of these and other weaknesses, I think the article is quite valuable. It provides many thought-provoking statements and important historical examples that call into question the position of the zealots today vis-à-vis the Orthodox Churches who tolerate, to one degree or another,*

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Archimandrite Cyprian, *Orthodoxy and the Ecumenical Movement* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1996), p. 96, and *Diocesan News for Clergy and Laity*, Denver Diocese of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Dec. 1996, Vol. 4 (No. 12).

*clergy who make ecumenist statements or violate the Holy Canons at ecumenical gatherings. The clear impression one gets is that Church history, especially during times of controversy, is not as “black and white” as many zealots today want others to believe. In the light of this article, some key arguments undergirding the zealot stance seem simplistic and wooden.*

F.P. Despite making a few valid points, Father Basil totally glosses over, *inter alia*, the 1920 Encyclical of the Church of Constantinople, which, in the words of Protopresbyter George Tsetses, “constitutes a definitive expression of Orthodox ecumenism and, also, a milestone in the history of the ecumenical movement.”<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, how can one justifiably tolerate “clergy who make ecumenist statements or violate the Holy Canons at ecumenical gatherings”? Since when is a violation of the Canons not a serious matter? St. Theodore the Studite, who did not reckon the Moechian controversy to be any less dangerous for the Church than the Iconoclast heresy, wrote to St. Nikephoros of Constantinople: “[W]e are Orthodox in every respect, rejecting every heresy and accepting every Synod, both Ecumenical and Local, that has been approved. But we also firmly maintain the sacred and Canonical regulations promulgated by them. *For it is not possible to teach the word of truth completely if one thinks that he has the right Faith, but is not guided by the Divine Canons.*”<sup>19</sup>

We resisters are aware, more so than most, that during times of controversy not everything is “black and white.” For precisely that reason, we do not make premature and injudicious statements about the presence or absence of Grace in the Mysteries of those with whom we disagree. Yet, these “flexible” ecumenists, courting the heterodox as brothers in Christ, do not hesitate to attack us personally, condemn us to sectarian status, and proclaim us to be *outside the Church even as they so liberally define it*. It is thus misleading of you to characterize the zealot stance, pejoratively, as “simplistic.” As for the charge that our position is “wooden,” that is, inflexible, we would remind you that, as St. Photios puts it, “[i]n matters of the Faith, even a small deviation is a sin

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<sup>18</sup> *The Ecumenical Throne and the Oikoumene: Official Patriarchal Texts* [in Greek] (Katerine: Ekdosisis “Tertios,” 1989), p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> “Epistle I.30,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1005D.

that leads to death,”<sup>20</sup> “for even a slight disregard for traditions is wont to lead to complete contempt for dogma.”<sup>21</sup> In a similar vein, St. Mark of Ephesus writes: “He is a heretic and is subject to the laws against heretics who deviates from the right Faith even to a small extent.”<sup>22</sup>

In the light of such stark statements by such revered Fathers of the Church, it is quite evident that we are not “black and white” in our pronouncements, but rather fair and generous with the New Calendarists and ecumenists. There is nothing simplistic about honesty. Let me restate what I said above, as well: we are not involved in some egotistical effort at self-justification or in a game by which we can somehow prove to ourselves that we are right. We are seeking the truth and are concerned with the souls of those who may be, through egotism and self-justification, leading themselves headlong into perdition. This is not a simple task and its concerns are not simplistic, even among those who may fall to extremism and lose track of wise zealotry and God-pleasing resistance.

## Section G

*P.B. For the record, I personally refrain from attaching the label of “schismatic” or “uncanonical” to these zealot groups. That is not a judgement I am willing to make. The issue of lawful resistance to heresy is sufficiently fuzzy that I would rather remain circumspect, awaiting a future Synodal decision.*

F.P. One can certainly be grateful to you for your commendably charitable and fair-minded attitude towards us resisters. Unfortunately, yours

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<sup>20</sup> “Epistle II, ‘To Pope Nicholas I,’” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CII, col. 604C.

<sup>21</sup> “Epistle XIII, ‘Encyclical to the Archiepiscopal Thrones of the East,’” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CII, col. 724D.

<sup>22</sup> *Nomocanon*, Title XII, ch. 2 (*Syntagma ton Theion kai Hieron Kanonon*, ed. G. Ralles and M. Potles [Thessaloniki: B. Regopoulos, 2002], Vol. I, p. 261), cited by St. Mark in his “Epistle to Orthodox Christians Everywhere on Earth and the Islands,” §4, ed. L. Petit, *Patrologia Orientalis* (Paris: Firmin-Didot et Cie, 1923), Vol. XVII, p. 452.

is a rare attitude. However, there is nothing remotely “fuzzy” about lawful resistance to heresy. For example, St. Basil the Great, as a Bishop, did not hesitate to sever his friendship with the Arian-minded Bishop Evstathios of Sebasteia and to break off all contact with him. Explaining his strict stance, he wrote: “However, if we now refuse to follow these [those in the circle of Evstathios] and shun all of like thinking, certainly we deserve to obtain forgiveness, ‘putting truth and our own firmness in the right Faith before everything.’”<sup>23</sup> I find nothing fuzzy here.

We should also point out, in this regard, that Father Basil argues that St. Gregory the Theologian did not break communion with his father, St. Gregory (who was also Bishop of Nazianzos), when the latter signed a Semi-Arian document. It may indeed be that, knowing his own father very well, the younger St. Gregory (who was at the time a layman) felt that the elder St. Gregory had guilelessly signed this document out of ignorance or simplicity (personal traits that his Life explicitly reveals). There is no historical record, however. Whatever the case, Father Basil conveniently forgets to mention that, in the funeral oration for his father, St. Gregory praises those who broke communion with his father (and whom he eventually reconciled to the Bishop) as the “more fervent part” (*thermoterou merous*, a phrase translated in some Western sources as the “overly-zealous part,” incorrectly suggesting something pejorative).<sup>24</sup> Moreover, St. Gregory the Theologian *was not in communion* with any of the mainstream Semi-Arian groups (nor was St. Basil, of course). There is no evidence here of a “fuzzy” resistance to heresy. Monk Basil’s claim is heavy-handed and fallacious.

St. Athanasios the Great, in his “Epistle to the Monks,” does not for a moment advise monastics, despite some putative “fuzziness” about opposition to heresy, to hesitate in their resistance:

Athanasios to those who practice a solitary life, and are settled in faith in God, most beloved brethren, greeting in the Lord[:] I thank the Lord Who hath given to you to believe in Him, that ye too may have with the saints eternal life. But be-

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<sup>23</sup> “Epistle 245, “To Bishop Theophilos,” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXXII, col. 925BC.

<sup>24</sup> See “Oration XVIII, ‘Funeral Oration for His Father,’” §18, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXXV, col. 1005C.

cause there are certain persons who hold with Arius and go about the monasteries with no other object save that under color of visiting you, and returning from us they may deceive the simple; *whereas there are certain who, while they do not hold with Arius, yet compromise themselves and worship with his party; I have been compelled, at the instance of certain most sincere brethren, to write at once in order that keeping faithfully and without guile the pious faith which God's grace works in you, you may not give occasion of scandal to the brethren. For when any sees you, the faithful in Christ, associate and communicate with such people, certainly they will think it a matter of indifference and will fall into the mire of irreligion.* Lest, then, this should happen, be pleased, beloved, to shun those who hold the impiety [of Arius], and moreover to avoid those who, while they pretend not to hold with Arius, yet worship with the impious. *And we are especially bound to fly from the communion of men whose opinions we hold in execration.* But if any pretend that he confesses the right faith, but appear to communicate with those others, exhort him to abstain from such communion, and if he promise to do so, treat him as a brother, but if he persist in a contentious spirit, him avoid. For, living as you do, you will preserve a pure and sincere faith, and that those persons, seeing that you do not join with them in worship, will derive benefit, fearing lest they be accounted as impious, and as those who hold with them.<sup>25</sup>

Here, too, there is nothing “fuzzy.” And these words of St. Athanasios fly in the face of Father Basil’s claim that “no sacred canon or holy Father ever imposed on the Orthodox *pleroma* the cutting off of communion with the heretics before a Synodical condemnation.” He has absolutely no idea what he is talking about. Moreover, Father Basil makes this statement at the end of a paragraph where, if he were to be precise in his logic, he is putatively arguing that only an Ecumenical Synod can break communion thusly. Neither of these ideas is correct. We see in the case of Nestorianism, for example, firstly, that the Orthodox in Constantinople severed communion with Nestorios as soon as they heard him preaching heresy—witness the action of St. Hypatios of the Routhianon Monastery, who, “when the Patriarch began to

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<sup>25</sup> See the English text in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*. Volume IV: St. Athanasius: *Select Works and Letters*, ed. Archibald Robertson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 564 (*emphasis mine*).

spread his heretical opinions, ...despite his bishop's fears, immediately removed his [Nestorios'] name from the diptychs in the Church of the Apostles"<sup>26</sup>—; and, secondly, that after Nestorios refused to be corrected, local Synods held in Rome and Alexandria condemned Nestorian theology, thus reaffirming, prior to the Third Ecumenical Synod, that those resisters who had broken communion with Nestorios and his followers had acted properly.

Moreover, with regard to your retreat into “awaiting a future Synodal decision,” there is no question that any such “future Synodal decision” concerning ecumenism, if it is to be recognized as the authentic voice of the Church, will necessarily involve its condemnation as a heresy (which, once again, you yourself have publicly acknowledged it to be), and not the imposition of such labels as “schismatic” or “uncanonical” on those who have lawfully striven to expose and confute that heresy. Here, your thinking betrays an error commonplace in contemporary Orthodox thinking: namely, that in the Orthodox Church, Ecumenical Synods are a *magisterium* (a misguided parallelism holds that what the Pope is to Roman Catholicism or what the Bible is to Protestantism, the Ecumenical Synods are to Orthodoxy) or a panacea. In Orthodoxy, we do not believe things to be true simply because a Synod has proclaimed them to be so. A genuine Synod proclaims and defends the truth that has already been articulated by the Divinely-illuminated Church Fathers. As Protopresbyter Georges Florovsky so eloquently puts it:

Catholic experience can be expressed even by the few, even by single confessors of faith; and this is quite sufficient. Strictly speaking, to be able to recognize and express catholic truth we need no ecumenical, universal assembly and vote; we even need no ‘Ecumenical Council.’ The sacred dignity of the Council lies not in the number of members representing their Churches. A large ‘general’ council may prove itself to be a ‘council of robbers’ (*latrocinium*), or even of apostates. And the *ecclesia sparsa* often convicts it of its nullity by silent opposition. *Numerus episcoporum* does not solve the question. The historical and practi-

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<sup>26</sup> Hieromonk Makarios of Simonos Petra, *The Synaxarion: The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church*, Vol. 5, trans. Mother Maria (Rule) and Mother Joanna (Burton) (Ormylia: Holy Convent of the Annunciation of Our Lady, 2005), p. 534.

cal methods of recognizing sacred and catholic tradition can be many; that of assembling Ecumenical Councils is but one of them, and not the only one. This does not mean that it is unnecessary to convoke councils and conferences. But it may so happen that during the council the truth will be expressed by the minority. And what is still more important, the truth may be revealed even without a council. The opinions of the Fathers and of the ecumenical Doctors of the Church frequently have greater spiritual value and finality than the definitions of certain councils. And these opinions do not need to be verified and accepted by ‘universal consent.’ On the contrary, it is they themselves who are the criterion and they who can prove. It is of this that the Church testifies in silent *receptio*. Decisive value resides in inner catholicity, not in empirical universality. The opinions of the Fathers are accepted, not as a formal subjection to outward authority, but because of the inner evidence of their catholic truth.<sup>27</sup>

The obvious corollary to the foregoing, which we should explicitly state here, is that just as Synods do not so much define as *defend the Faith that already exists*, so also the Canons express and codify correct practice *already in existence*. (The promulgation of Canon XV of the First-Second Synod is a case in point.)

You would do well, in “awaiting a future Synodal decision,” to reflect carefully on Father Florovsky’s point about *latrocinia*. Let us not forget that the Synod of Hieria, in 815, “reaffirmed the iconoclast council of Hieria–Blachernae (754) [even declaring it to be an Ecumenical Synod!] and annulled the act of Nicaea II (787) specifically censuring... the Empress Irene and the Patriarch Tarasius.”<sup>28</sup> Now, what if the much-touted “Great and Holy Council,” which has now been in preparation for over forty years, were finally to be convoked and were to proclaim, in the fashion of the false Synod of 815, that the “Pan-Orthodox Congress” of 1923 was an Ecumenical Synod and were to promulgate Canons, in the spirit of the 1998 “Inter-Orthodox Summit” of Thessaloniki, to the effect that we resisters are “schismatics” and “extremists” (a judgment

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<sup>27</sup> “The Catholicity of the Church,” in *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Vaduz: Buechervertriebsanstalt, 1987), pp. 52–53.

<sup>28</sup> J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 57.

echoed at the Assembly of Orthodox Primates that met in Nicaea in December of 2000)? This is not an unlikely scenario, incidentally; after all, it is highly unrealistic to believe that a group of Hierarchs from the self-proclaimed “official” Churches, which are heavily invested in the ecumenical movement, would gather in Synod, do a complete one hundred eighty degree turn, and, repudiating their whole ecclesiastical careers and jeopardizing their own personal reputations, condemn ecumenism for the heresy that it is. Would such a Synodal decision, simply because it was a Synodal decision, clinch matters for you? If so, woe to you and your soul, for you will become what the iconoclasts became: followers of illicit laws.

## Section H

*P.B. Perhaps once again we will realize that there were Saints on both sides.*

F.P. The argument here, which you also put forth earlier, is that because “there were Saints on both sides” of a given ecclesiastical controversy, the Church tacitly endorses both views (or perhaps neither view) on the matter in dispute, thereby neutralizing the whole episode. Aside from the important points that we made above, we have to bear in mind that sanctity does not, in and of itself, entail infallibility; frankly put (and one says things like this with pious fear, of course), Saints can (and do) make mistakes and errors in judgment, just as they are not all, in keeping with the standards of Hollywood, “nice guys.” In any event, there are numerous instances in Church history where there were Saints on both sides of a disputed issue; yet, the Church decidedly considered only one side correct. Among many others, we can cite the Quartodeciman Controversy; the improperly-named “Meletian Schism” (more correctly termed the “Antiochian Schism” [330–485]); the infamous “Synod of the Oak,” which (*canonically* but *unjustly*) deposed St. John Chrysostomos; the conflict in the West between Roman liturgical practice and Celtic usage; the improperly-named “Phoitian Schism”; the conflict in Russia between the Possessors and the

Non-Possessors; and on and on. In all of these cases, to retreat into the idea that “*no conclusions can be drawn*” because “there were Saints on both sides” of the issues under debate is to deny that Orthodoxy is ultimately grounded in the *consensus Patrum*, not on the teachings or opinions of individual Fathers, who are not by themselves infallible. The sanctity of the Saints involved in a given confrontation rises not from some relativistic view of complex matters, but from the attempts of these holy men to avoid relativism and, at the same time, preserve the unity and integrity of the Church. Therein lie the criteria by which their sanctity was established.

St. Photios the Great provides us with a perfect model to follow in such situations. In the debate over the use of the *Filioque*, the Franks contumaciously argued that Sts. Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome supported their doctrinal opinion, relying exclusively upon these Fathers. St. Photios, with *exemplary piety towards Sts. Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome*, admirably upholds their sanctity, while chiding the Frankish theologians for insolently “quot[ing] the statements of the human fathers...as readily supporting their own contentious purpose against God.”<sup>29</sup> Regarding these Western Fathers, St. Photios writes:

Though they were otherwise arrayed with the noblest reflections, they were human. If they slipped and fell into error, therefore, by some negligence or oversight, then we should not gain-say or admonish them. But what is this to you? For they were not, even in the slightest degree, participants in those things in which you abound. They are rather adorned with many examples of virtue and piety and thus professed your teaching either through ignorance or oversight. ...[T]aking refuge in the fathers, you cast down their great honor with blasphemy. ...You make these your fathers without living the life in yourselves.... ...[I]f any among them has fallen into something unseemly—for they were all men and human, and no one composed of dust and ephemeral nature can avoid some step of defilement—then I would imitate the sons of Noah. I would cover up the shame

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<sup>29</sup> St. Photios, *The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, trans. Joseph P. Farrell, with an introduction by Bishop [Archbishop] Chrysostomos (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1987), p. 90.

of my father with silence and gratitude, instead of garments. I would not have followed Ham as you do.<sup>30</sup>

Then, to refute definitively the error of the *Filioque*, it is precisely to the “chorus of the Fathers”<sup>31</sup> (the *consensio Patrum*)—and mainly Western Fathers, to boot—, “these voices [that] all burst forth with the same divine words,”<sup>32</sup> that St. Photios appeals.

Finally, in our own days it can hardly be said that, even if there are holy men (as there well may be) who do not advocate the kind of active resistance to the heresy of ecumenism in which we engage (or who even, in error, resist it), they are justified, not for avoiding resistance, but by such extenuating circumstances as being under the same kind of compulsion or pressure that Sts. Tarasios and Nikephoros were. In some cases, admittedly, they do face the prospect of losing their jobs and the concomitant prestige; but, in the end, they are free to choose whatever course of action to take in response to ecumenism and the calendar innovation that it spawned. To follow them because of their holiness, attempting to justify one’s avoidance of the sacrifices of resistance, is not a prudent thing. The holiness which covers them will not cover you. To think so is to succumb to guruism, “officialdom,” “neo-Papist Patriarchalism,” and Latin legalism.

## Section I

*P.B. Until then Canon XV requires further scholarly study to determine whether the zealots are truly justified in applying to themselves the following excerpt therefrom: “The holy synod did, however, distinguish between unreasonable rebellion and laudable resistance, for the defense of the Faith, which it encouraged. In regard to this matter, it decreed that should a bishop publicly confess or adhere to some heresy, already condemned by the holy fathers and previous synods, one who ceases to commemorate such a bishop even before conciliar condemnation, not only is not to be censured, but also*

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91–93.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

*should be praised as condemning a false bishop. In doing so, moreover, one is not dividing the Church, but struggling for the unity of the Faith.”*

F.P. Further study is not the issue. You are simply not sufficiently read in the materials that are available and in the whole range of Patristic literature (nor, of course, is Monk Basil, though he also deliberately ignores what does not serve his arguments and ignores essential theological and historical dimensions of the issues at hand, in asserting his position). To reiterate, Canons express and codify correct practice. When a situation demands decisive action, we need not be incapacitated by the absence of Canons with explicit instructions or by some putative “need for further study”; rather, we must determine what is right and proper by drawing upon the numerous precedents available to us in Holy Tradition. In the case of our resistance, however, we *do have* Canons with explicit instructions, and, as you have observed, Canon XV of the First-Second Synod is one of them. In calling for “further scholarly study” of Canon XV, you have, perhaps unwittingly, fallen to the habitual proclivity of ecumenists to forestall any real progress in resolving the issues beleaguering the Church today by invoking interminable and inconclusive studies, consultations, summits, and so forth *ad nauseam*. While we certainly applaud further investigation of Canon XV, your statement implies that our application of this Canon lacks requisite study, thereby casting doubt on the validity of our resistance. To dispel this aspersion, we refer you to the commentaries on this Canon by Bishop Nikodim (Milaš), a revered authority on the canonical traditions of Orthodoxy, and by his namesake, St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, also an undisputed expert on the Holy Canons. We believe that a study of the adequate, articulate, and perspicacious considerations of Canon XV in these commentaries will prove especially useful to our New Calendarist brethren, who publicly and formally declared themselves ready to break communion with ecumenist Hierarchs in the “Conclusions” of the “Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference” held in Thessaloniki in 2004.

At this gathering, the clergy, theologians, and faithful present proposed this:

That it be made manifest to church leaders everywhere that, in the event that they continue to participate in, and lend sup-

port to, the pan-heresy of Ecumenism—both inter-christian and inter-religious—the obligatory salvific, canonical and patristic course for the faithful, clergy and laity, is excommunication: in other words, ceasing to commemorate bishops who are co-responsible for, and co-communicants with, heresy and delusion. This is not a recourse to schism but rather to a God-pleasing confession, just as the ancient Fathers, and bishop-confessors in our own day have done, such as the esteemed and respected former metropolitan of Florina, Augustinos, and the Fathers of the Holy Mountain (Athos).<sup>33</sup>

If the New Calendarist Churchmen who endorsed this proposition can ever overcome their penchant for empty talk, rather than meaningful action, and finally decide to join us in our active resistance to ecumenism, they will then engage in “laudable resistance,” and not “unreasonable rebellion,” by following the guidelines laid down in Canon XV: “If...a Bishop, Metropolitan, or Patriarch begins to preach publicly in Church any heretical doctrine that is antithetical to Orthodoxy, then the...clergy *have a right and at the same time an obligation to separate themselves forthwith* from that Bishop, Metropolitan, or Patriarch.”<sup>34</sup>

## Section J

*P.B. The use of this Canon by zealot groups raises many questions; and these questions are a main reason why Orthodox Christians are so divided over the proper response to the admittedly serious problem of Ecumenism in the Church today.*

F.P. This attempt to place the responsibility for disunity in the laps of the resisters is unworthy of you. It is those who have deviated from Holy Tradition by engaging in the innovations of ecumenism and the

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<sup>33</sup> [http://uncutmountain.com/uncut/docs/Conclusions\\_of\\_the\\_Conference\\_on\\_Ecumenism.pdf](http://uncutmountain.com/uncut/docs/Conclusions_of_the_Conference_on_Ecumenism.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> See Bishop Nikodim Milaš, *The Canons of the Orthodox Church, With a Commentary* (in Serbian) (Novi Sad: 1896), Vol. II, pp. 290–291; translation from the Serbian by Hieromonk [now Bishop] Irinej (Bulović) (*emphasis mine*).

calendar reform, not those of us who have maintained sedulous fidelity to Holy Tradition, who are guilty of fragmenting the Church into Old Calendarist and New Calendarist factions, traditionalists and modernists, anti-unionists and unionists. I quote your own words:

*Orthodox involvement in...[the ecumenical] movement has yielded precious little good fruit. In fact, a compelling case can be made that our involvement has resulted in the infection of many Orthodox participants with the bacterium of heretical belief. ...[M]any Orthodox participants—even entire local Orthodox Churches—have to varying degrees over the years, lost touch with a proper understanding of Orthodox ecclesiology, often becoming increasingly estranged from the life-giving spiritual heritage of Holy Tradition. Serious compromises in the Faith have resulted, creating confusion and internal division among the Faithful.*<sup>35</sup>

The invocation of Canon XV by us moderate resisters is, in fact, a clarion call to the unitive power of obedience to Holy Tradition, a call that we make, firstly, to ourselves; secondly, to our erring Orthodox brethren, modernists and extremist traditionalists alike; thirdly, to non-Orthodox Christians; and, fourthly, to non-Christians. In so doing, we “have not sundered the unity of the Church through any schism, but have been sedulous to deliver the Church from schisms and divisions.”<sup>36</sup> Here, then, is “ecumenism in its true and proper form—i.e., activities proper to the Apostolic mark of the Church (to be ‘sent out’), conducted in ways that do not violate Orthodox canonical guidelines.”<sup>37</sup>

Ironically, one thing over which the most theologically astute minds on both sides of the calendar issue are not divided is that ecumenism is much, much graver than an “admittedly serious problem.” It has been characterized as “something much worse than a panheresy” and as a “sickness unto death,”<sup>38</sup> as “the most hideous syncretism” and “worse than every [other] heresy,”<sup>39</sup> and as “an unprecedented be-

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<sup>35</sup> *The Non-Orthodox*, pp. 3–4 (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>36</sup> Canon XV of the First-Second Synod.

<sup>37</sup> *The Non-Orthodox*, p. 121.

<sup>38</sup> Andreas Theodorou, professor of theology at the University of Athens.

<sup>39</sup> Archimandrite Epiphanius (Theodoropoulos).

trayal.”<sup>40</sup> Your cavalier attitude towards heresy is not supported by the ethos of the Church.

## Section K

*P.B. Has Ecumenism as an ecclesiological heresy already been “condemned by the holy fathers and previous synods”?*

F.P. I am incredulous that you, who are already of the opinion that ecumenism is “an ecclesiological heresy,”<sup>41</sup> would consider this a serious question. Firstly, the component errors of ecumenism (its presuppositional acceptance of the “invisible church” doctrine of Protestantism over and against Orthodox ecclesial uniqueness and primacy, and its rampant religious syncretism) are by their very nature already under the anathemas of the Church. Secondly, ecumenism has, indeed, been condemned by numerous holy Fathers and Synods of our time. Here are just two striking examples from the past century:

(1) *Blessed Archimandrite Justin (Popović):*

This decision [of the Orthodox members of the Fifth Pan-Orthodox Consultation in Geneva (8–16 July 1968), with regard to the participation of Orthodox in the work of the World Council of Churches ‘to express the common recognition of the Orthodox Church that she is an organic member of the World Council of Churches’] is apocalyptically horrendous in its unorthodoxy and anti-Orthodoxy. Was it really necessary for the Orthodox Church, the all-immaculate Theanthropic Body and organism of the God-Man Christ, to be so monstrously humiliated that Her theological representatives, including even Hierarchs (among whom were also Serbs), should seek after ‘organic’ participation and inclusion in the World Council of Churches, which thus becomes a new ecclesiastical ‘organism,’ a ‘new Church’ above the churches, of which the Orthodox Church and non-Orthodox churches are merely ‘members,’ ‘organically’ joined to each other? Alas, an unprecedented betrayal! We re-

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<sup>40</sup> Archimandrite Justin (Popović).

<sup>41</sup> *The Non-Orthodox*, pp. 4–5, 121.

ject the Orthodox Theanthropic Faith, this organic bond with the Lord Jesus, the God-Man, and His all-immaculate Body—the Orthodox Church of the Holy Apostles, Fathers, and Ecumenical Synods—and wish to become ‘organic members’ of the heretical, humanistic, man-made and man-worshipping assembly, which is composed of 263 heresies, each one of them spiritual death!<sup>42</sup>

(2) *The 1983 condemnation of ecumenism by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad:*

To those who attack the Church of Christ by teaching that Christ’s Church is divided into so-called ‘branches’ which differ in doctrine and way of life, or that the Church does not exist visibly, but will be formed in the future when all ‘branches’ or sects or denominations, and even religions will be united into one body; and who do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation; therefore, to those who knowingly have communion with these aforementioned heretics or who advocate, disseminate, or defend their new heresy of Ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, Anathema!<sup>43</sup>

The following quotations from the proceedings of the aforementioned “Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference,” though not, of course, from a holy Father or a Church Synod, are also very telling and significant: “The very act of participation in the ‘World Council of Churches’ and in theological dialogues with heretical Papists, Protestants, and Monophysites constitutes a denial of the uniqueness of the Church and an adequation of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church with heresies and schisms. It is, as has been said, the greatest ecclesiological heresy in the history of the Church.”<sup>44</sup> And again, “[Let

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<sup>42</sup> “An Orthodox Appraisal and Testimony,” [in Greek] *Orthodoxos Enstasis kai Martyria*, Nos. 18–21 (January–December 1990), pp. 171–172.

<sup>43</sup> Archbishop [Metropolitan] Vitaly, “The Council of Bishops of 1983,” *Orthodox Life*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 4 (1984), p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference, “I. Findings—II. Proposals,” [in Greek] *Orthodoxos Typos*, No. 1577 (17 December 2004), p. 5b, §A2; *Parakatatheke*, No. 38 (September–October 2004), p. 4b.

it be made clear to Church leaders that in the event that they continue to participate in, and lend support to, the panheresy of ecumenism—both inter-Christian and interfaith—, the obligatory salvific, canonical, and Patristic course for the Faithful, clergy, and laity, is abstinence from communion, that is, ceasing to commemorate Bishops who share responsibility for, and commune with, heresy and error.”<sup>45</sup>

At this point, it is perhaps worth bearing in mind that Joseph Smith and Mormonism have also never been synodally condemned by the Orthodox Church. Does this mean that we the Faithful are allowed to suspend judgment on whether or not Joseph Smith is an heresiarch or Mormonism a heresy? Again, your thinking is faulty.

## Section L

*P.B. Is Ecumenism taught with bared-head, i.e., openly, officially, “from the ambon”, and promulgated as the teaching of the Church?*

**E.P.** It is difficult to take such a question seriously from you, who have previously articulated your definition of an ecumenist as

a person ‘infected’ with what the Holy Fathers call the bacterium of an ecclesiological heresy. The chief symptoms of this disease are statements and activities that contradict or compromise the unity and uniqueness of the Church, and which expand Her boundaries in ways that are foreign to Her self-understanding. *At an advanced stage, these symptoms often include an open espousal of various forms of the heretical Branch Theory of the Church, accompanied by an open disdain for those Faithful who stand opposed to the erosion of Holy Tradition and the Patristic mindset [sic] which so often characterizes Orthodox involvement in the ecumenical movement.*<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Inter-Orthodox Theological Conference, “II. Proposals, §8,” [in Greek] *Orthodoxos Typos*, No. 1577 (17 December 2004), p. 5e; *Parakatatheke*, No. 38 (September–October 2004), p. 12a.

<sup>46</sup> *The Non-Orthodox*, p. 121 (*emphasis mine*).

The answer to your question, then, is emphatically affirmative: ecumenism most certainly is taught by Orthodox Hierarchs involved in the ecumenical movement “with bared head” (“barefacedly” is perhaps idiomatically preferable; or, to use your own phrase, with “an open espousal”). Here are but three of innumerable examples, each speaking so forcefully that your question seems almost rhetorical in nature:

(1) *Metropolitan John (Zezioulas) of Pergamon*. In his address to Pope John Paul II at the Patronal Feast of the Church of Rome in 1998, His Eminence emphasized the necessity “of restoring our full communion [of Orthodox and Papists] so that the approaching third millennium of the Christian era may find the Church of God visibly united as she was before the Great Schism. As Your Holiness aptly put it some years ago, East and West are the two lungs by which the Church breathes; their unity is essential to the healthy life of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.”<sup>47</sup> Can any one deny that it is a heresy to teach that, after the Great Schism, Orthodoxy and the Papacy are the same Church, but simply administratively divided? Is, or is not, the Orthodox Church the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church?

(2) *Archbishop Athenagoras (Kokkinakes) of Thyateira and Great Britain*. “Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Copto-Armenians and Ethiopians, Lutherans and Methodists, and other Protestants are Christians Baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”; “All of us Christians have, by the same Baptism, become members of the Body of Christ, which is the Church”; “the Church has doors but does not have walls. The Holy Spirit inspires Christians to seek and find the exit and to go out to meet other Christians so as to become friends, and to pray together and work together for the great cause of Christian unity”; “*Christians believe that true Ordination and Priesthood are possessed and imparted by Orthodox Bishops, Roman Catholic Bishops, Copto-Armenian and Ethiopian Bishops, and Anglican Bishops.*”<sup>48</sup> Has anyone every preached such a thing with bare head and not been accused of ecumenism and heresy?

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<sup>47</sup> “Chronicle of the Eastern Churches,” *Eastern Churches Journal*, Vol. V, No. 2 (Summer 1998), p. 270.

<sup>48</sup> *The Thyateira Confession: The Faith and Prayer of the People of God* (in English and Greek). Published with the blessing and authorization of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (London: The Faith Press, 1975), pp. 158–159, 203,

(3) *Patriarch Ignatios IV of Antioch*. “We are all [*viz.*, Orthodox and heterodox] members of Christ, a single and unique body, a single and unique ‘new creation,’ since our common baptism has freed us from death.”<sup>49</sup> Need one even comment on the patent heretical content of this statement from an ecclesiological standpoint?

## Section M

*P.B.* Does Canon XV justify the establishment of a parallel, even rival, synod? Where are examples of this from Church history?

*F.P.* Aside from an inadequate knowledge of Church history, you fall, here, to the very weakness for which you earlier appropriately criticized Father Basil: “...placing all zealots in the same basket.” You will notice that, in contradistinction to the First Hierarchs of the other Greek Old Calendarist Synods, our own First Hierarch, Metropolitan Cyprian, has never styled himself “Archbishop of Athens and All Greece” (and neither did Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina), and this precisely because, unlike the extremist Old Calendarists, whose First Hierarchs pretentiously assume this title for themselves, ours is not “a parallel, even rival, synod” to the State Church of Greece and has never conceived of itself as such. As Metropolitan Cyprian so lucidly states:

The anti-innovationist plenitude of the Orthodox Church in resistance, as a specific ecclesiastical community that has walled itself off,

—*does not constitute* the Church;

—*is not* an administrative substitute for the innovating Church;

—*does not function* as a jurisdiction parallel to that of the New Calendar Church;

—*and does not present itself* as a second Orthodox Church in Greece.

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204 (*emphasis mine*).

<sup>49</sup> “The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Geneva: Address of His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatios of Antioch” [in Greek], *Episkepsis*, No. 370 (January 15, 1987), p. 10.

It is, however, profoundly aware that  
—it *is* within the boundaries of the Church;  
—it *constitutes* the ‘healthy part’ of the Church;  
—and that it *continues* the history of the anti-innovationist Church of Patristic Tradition, which is Orthodoxy in its genuine sense, always having in mind the prospect of a general unifying Synod.<sup>50</sup>

Archimandrite Cyprian of Fili, a spiritual son of Metropolitan Cyprian and Secretary of the Holy Synod in Resistance, in his brilliant critique of the book *Ekklesiologikes Theseis tou Hagiou Theodorou tou Stouditou*, by Basil Tsingos, which is a sadly deficient and illogical piece of scholarship,<sup>51</sup> has this to say on the subject at hand:

Finally, given these three very fundamental grounds, on the basis of which Mr. Tsingos methodologically and theologically refutes his own position, it is only natural that he misinterprets the consequences of an Orthodox notion of a walling-off; as a result, he imagines that anti-ecumenists have somehow ‘been misled into “departing” from the fold of the Church and into creating independent ecclesiastical factions and groups’—that ‘they usurp the Church’s leadership and form competing and parallel movements, even founding another “church”’ (p. 91).

It is truly sad that Mr. Tsingos ignores the fact that the Orthodox who have walled themselves off from the ecumenists have never declared that they have established another church(!), but are profoundly aware that they comprise, as St. Theodore puts it, the ‘confessing flock of Christ’ (p. 104) in resistance, and that they function as administrative structures by *oikonomia*, provisionally, and ‘owing to pressing needs’ and certainly *ad referendum* to a unifying Orthodox council or synod. St. Theodore is very clear and instructive in this matter: ‘In times of heresy, owing to pressing needs, things do not always proceed flawlessly, in accordance with what has been prescribed in times of peace; this seems to have been the case with the most blessed Athanasios [of Alexandria] and the most holy Eusebios [of Samosata], who both performed Ordinations outside their respective dioceses;

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<sup>50</sup> *The Heresy of Ecumenism and the Patristic Stand of the Orthodox* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1998), pp. 50–51 (*emphasis in the original*).

<sup>51</sup> Thessaloniki: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxos Kypsele,” 1999.

and now, the same thing is evidently being done while the present heresy persists.<sup>52</sup>

As for examples from history, the passage that we cited earlier from St. Basil regarding his severance of communion with Bishop Evstathios of Sebasteia confirms the Patristic axiom that “one man with the truth is the majority.” Another excellent illustration of this axiom is the example of St. Gregory the Theologian, whom we have also previously mentioned, who formed a Church in resistance during the Arian occupation of Constantinople in 379. The Orthodox party in the Imperial City had been deprived by the Arian heretics of all its Churches and was in a very precarious situation, until St. Gregory agreed to be their spiritual leader. When he arrived in Constantinople, “he found everything in Arian hands and was forced to use a private dwelling presented by a relative as [a] church and meeting place,” which he called “Anastasia,” no doubt “to symbolize what he hoped to achieve [*viz.*, the resurrection of Orthodoxy].”<sup>53</sup> When the Orthodox Emperor Theodosios the Younger finally gained control of the city, St. Gregory was led in triumph from the Church of the Resurrection to the Church of the Apostles, where he was installed as Archbishop. Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina, the first Shepherd of the Greek Old Calendarists and a courageous Confessor in his own right, interprets St. Gregory’s stance of resistance thusly:

The Orthodox character of the official Church was constituted by a small group in Constantinople, not defiled by the pollution of Arianism, which, having broken off ecclesiastical Communion, in no way harmed the unity of the Church, but served as a pledge for the subsequent return of the whole Church to Orthodoxy through the rejection of the Arian heresy.<sup>54</sup>

Let us next consider the case of St. Maximos the Confessor. All of the Patriarchates except that of Rome had succumbed to the Monothelite heresy. When asked to which Church he belonged—Byzantium,

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<sup>52</sup> “The Ecclesiological Precepts of Saint Theodore the Studite,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XVII, Nos. 2–3 (2000), pp. 19–20.

<sup>53</sup> Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: *Three Poems*, tr. Denis M. Meehan, O.S.B. (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987), p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> Cited in Stavros Karamitsos, *A Contemporary Confessor of Orthodoxy* [in Greek] (Athens: Ekdoseis “Panagia He Theotokos,” 1990), p. 161.

Antioch, Alexandria, or Jerusalem—, he replied that Christ had “called that Church the Catholic Church which maintained a true and saving confession of the Faith,” and that He called St. Peter blessed because he had confessed the Faith correctly. As long as the confession on the basis of which all Churches were in Communion was not opposed to the truth, he was willing to accept it.<sup>55</sup> But when his accusers presented him with a heretical confession, he steadfastly continued his resistance against the Monothelite heresy. Later on, St. Maximos was informed that two delegates from Rome had arrived who would commune with the heretical Patriarch of Constantinople. Hitherto, St. Martin of Rome had joined with St. Maximos in resisting the Monothelite heresy, but the Pope had died in exile several years before. “The Saint replied, ‘Even if the whole universe holds communion with the Patriarch, I will not communicate with him. For I know from the writings of the holy Apostle Paul: the Holy Spirit declares that even the angels would be anathema if they should begin to preach another Gospel, introducing some new teaching.’”<sup>56</sup> In time, St. Maximos was vindicated by the Sixth Ecumenical Synod, which formally condemned the Monothelite heresy.

Then, there is the case of St. Mark of Ephesus, whose adamant and single-handed resistance to the decisions of the pseudo-Synod of Ferrara-Florence is so well known that further commentary is almost superfluous. His last words speak volumes:

—I neither desire nor accept communion with him [the unionist Patriarch Gregory III] or his lackeys, in any way whatsoever, neither during my lifetime nor after my death;

—Just as throughout my life I was separated from them [*viz.*, the Latinizers], so also at the time of my departure, and even after my death, I reject communion and union with them;

—And I adjure, I command, that none of them approach either at my funeral or at memorial services for me [or attempt] to concelebrate with our clergy;

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<sup>55</sup> *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Fr. Christopher Birchall (Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1982), p. 14.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38–39.

—For it is necessary that they [*viz.*, the Latinizers] be completely separated from us.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, we should not neglect to mention the Arsenite Bishops, who from 1250 through 1310 maintained a strong, though at times intransigent, stand of resistance against compromises in the Faith, chiefly the false union of Lyons (1274). These Hierarchs supported Patriarch Arsenios, who had excommunicated Michael Palaeologos for usurping the throne of the rightful heir, John IV Lascaris, in 1259. Arsenios, in turn, was deposed for a year and later restored to the Patriarchal throne. He excommunicated Michael for a second time in 1262, on learning that he had blinded and imprisoned the young prince in 1261. Two years later, after relations between Church and state had become markedly strained, Michael deposed Arsenios and exiled him. The Patriarchal successor, Germanos III, beholden as he was to the Emperor, excommunicated Arsenios for allegedly taking part in a plot against the Empire and for refusing to appear before the Emperor to answer this and other slanderous accusations. The actual reason for banishing Arsenios was that he had publicly condemned Michael's ruthless seizure of power.

After Arsenios's repose in 1273, his supporters maintained that the late Patriarch's position with regard to the Emperor Michael was correct and that his deposition was totally invalid. Thus, they refused to recognize Joseph, who became Patriarch after Germanos resigned, or any of his successors. It was not until 1310 that this faction was finally reunited with the rest of the Church in what J.M. Hussey describes as "a fantastic ceremony in Hagia Sophia on 14 September 1310," in which "the corpse of the dead Patriarch Arsenius was set up dressed in his patriarchal robes. The reigning Patriarch Niphon solemnly took from Arsenius's skeleton hand a document absolving all whom Arsenius had previously anathematized. ...The Emperor Andronicus pronounced the terms of the agreement in a 'tome of union' and the liturgy for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was then celebrated by former Arsenite and Orthodox bishops together."<sup>58</sup> From this admittedly peculiar cer-

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<sup>57</sup> "Apologia Uttered Impromptu at the Time of His Death," *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CLX, cols. 536-537.

<sup>58</sup> *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*, p. 253.

emony, we can see how, at that time, the kind of depersonalization that characterizes contemporary attitudes towards those in resistance was eschewed in favor of a more conciliatory policy. We also see how great respect was accorded to the Relics of one who had come to be venerated as a Saint by his followers, shortly after his repose, and for some time after the union ceremony described here. His veneration seems to have faded from memory during the Turkish Yoke.

## Section N

*P.B. It's one thing to cease "[commemoration of] such a bishop even before conciliar condemnation", but does this Canon permit ceasing communion with all other Bishops who might be in communion with that Bishop?*

F.P. Again, we are not playing a game here to see if we can somehow justify the avoidance of resistance. If you sever communion with one Bishop who preaches false doctrines, and his fellow-Bishops remain in communion with him and do not strive to ensure that he corrects his errors, then you must *eo ipso* sever communion with those Bishops, too. For, by failing to correct their erring brother, "they bring upon themselves the fearful charge of remaining silent."<sup>59</sup> In a similar vein, let us repeat the words of St. Mark of Ephesus:

I am absolutely convinced that the more I distance myself from him [the Patriarch and the other pro-Papal unionists of his day] and those like him, the closer I draw to God and all the faithful and Holy Fathers; and just as I separate myself from these people, even so am I united with the truth and the Holy Fathers and theologians of the Church.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> St. Theodore, "Epistle I.48," *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1076C.

<sup>60</sup> "Apologia Uttered Impromptu at the Time of His Death," *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CLX, col. 536D.

## Section O

*P.B.* How can the moderate resisters say that the Bishops with whom they have broken communion are still Bishops when Canon XV states, “For they have defied, not Bishops, but pseudo-bishops and pseudoteachers”?

E.P. This has all the hallmarks of a trick question, but it is very ably answered by anyone with a basic knowledge of the history of the early Church, in which the question of addressing heretics before their depositions is clearly resolved. Indeed, this is so clear as to make your question astonishing. Let us cite the following document, issued by the Holy Synod in Resistance, which summarizes Patristic practice:

The characterization of a Shepherd as a ‘pseudo-bishop...prior to a synodal decision’ is heuristic or diagnostic in nature (the doctor ascertains the disease) and not final and juridical or condemnatory (the doctor diagnoses the incurability of the ailing member and reaches a firm decision to amputate it).

1. We will recall that before the Third Holy Ecumenical Synod, St. Cyril called the heresiarch Nestorios ‘the Most Reverend Bishop Nestorios,’ and *at the same time* characterized him diagnostically as a ‘wolf.’

2. For precisely this reason, the Third Holy Ecumenical Synod can call Nestorios ‘Most Reverend’ and ‘Lord’ before his synodal condemnation, but after his sentencing can characterize him as ‘most impious.’<sup>61</sup>

## Section P

*P.B.* These are serious questions that can only be answered by a scholarly study of Church history during times of controversy, as well as of Canon XV. I look forward to the day when such a study exists in English.

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<sup>61</sup> “On the Status of Uncondemned Heretics,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (2001), p. 12.

F.P. Many of your questions, as I have pointed out, are not, in fact, valid. They are poorly formulated and ill-conceived. Nor are they questions that have not been posed over and over for many, many years and studied for long periods of time by very able scholars. The resistance movement is not something new and not something that we, today, embrace without careful study. But at some level you are correct about looking at matters circumspectly. As you have pointedly observed: “In our day, ecumenism—an ecclesiological heresy—has ravaged the Church and at times appears to have the characteristics of a ‘protracted naval battle,’ to use a metaphor from St. Basil the Great (On the Holy Spirit, Chapter 30).”<sup>62</sup> In such a combat situation, we are not always in a position to stand back and dispassionately evaluate our conduct. We are compelled by the exigencies of the conflict to act in accordance with the *sensus fidelium*, the conscience of the Church. For now, our primary concern should be to see the struggle through to an auspicious conclusion, always keeping in mind that “we are not striving to conquer, but to bring our brothers—by whose separation from us we are torn apart—to our side.”<sup>63</sup> When one looks at the opprobrious condemnations of sincere people who, despite their imperfections, are reduced to “the enemy” by various voices in the Church (and those condemnations against *our own leaders and spiritual Fathers* are too many to mention), he can but wonder: “Are these people truly Christians?” It speaks for itself that we must ask such questions, and especially when our critics are often arrogantly self-righteous.

I wish to add a few more comments to the foregoing, even at the risk of causing offense (albeit unintentionally) to those would-be traditionalists who deem it preferable to remain within the *soi-disant* “official” or “mainstream” Churches. Many of these individuals, dismissing the difficulties which we resistors face (struggling, as we do, against detractors on all sides, wrestling with the fanaticism which, as in St. Theodore the Studite’s times, resistance invites, and working with limited resources and criticized falsely for every possible reason), are, quite frankly, motivated by a desire to retain their salaries and reputations—and even to gain a notoriety which resistance would never bring them.

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<sup>62</sup> *The Non-Orthodox*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>63</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, “Oration XLI, ‘On Pentecost,’” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXXVI, col. 440B.

This applies in particular to clergy and academics in Greece and other traditionally Orthodox countries who would immediately forfeit both their salaries and their reputations, were they to put their often inflated and high-sounding rhetoric about ecumenism into practice and align themselves with the Synod in Resistance.

I am not criticizing, in this statement, those who have not come to a crisis of conscience about resistance. I am chastising those who, knowing the correct path, have chosen an easier route. In so doing, I am also not saying that they are not Orthodox or are outside the Church, as they too often say of us; nor am I denying that truly holy people, simply misled, can misunderstand the heresy of ecumenism (just as St. Gregory the Theologian's father did not fully grasp some of the errors of the Semi-Arians). I am saying, however, that those who know the dangers of ecumenism are accountable for that knowledge, just as they should be chided for their attacks against us resisters by focusing on the zealots and weaker Old Calendarist zealots. St. Gregory the Theologian himself rightly condemns such attacks. Referring to the Eunomians, he states: "For, since there is no strength in their own dogmas, they hunt for it in our weak points, and for this reason they apply themselves to our—let me say 'mistakes' or 'sins'?—like flies to wounds."<sup>64</sup>

These observations apply, to be sure, to Father Basil and to those like him who, rather than forming themselves in the Fathers and acting accordingly (as Metropolitan Cyprian did in leaving the New Calendar Church, suffering unjust and despicable condemnations and persecution for his act of conscience), use the Fathers as proof texts to argue for compromises foreign to the Fathers and to justify positions that, even if only subconsciously, are formed by a weakness for comfort (hence, the desire to keep one's salary and position) and a certain cowardice about resistance. An awareness of one's weaknesses in the face of resistance is not necessarily betrayal, of course; but attacking those who are brave enough to resist, and often with inappropriate personal invective and even slander, is sinful. It is also sinful to misuse the Fathers, in this way, to attack those who should be praised. Hence, all of the false depositions and punishments and the sad relinquishing of the "good fight," not with shame for one's weaknesses, but with the aim of avoiding self-

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<sup>64</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, "Oration 27 (First Theological Oration)," §5, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXVI, col. 17B.

reproach by reproaching the resisters for their faults, whether real or contrived, and defending oneself instead of rising above personalities and defending the true champions of the Faith.

I have seen this personally, since I abandoned the New Calendarists for the resistance movement, perceiving the secondary organizational faults and foibles of the latter, yet rejecting the errors in Faith, my primary concern, among the former. In the resistance movement, I have had good examples of formation in difficult circumstances. My fellow monks and I have had task-masters of a strict kind, have been trained to set aside the personal, and have learned to accept, rather than justify, weaknesses in ourselves. In this, we are like Elder Ephraim of Philotheou, who points out that in his training under the renowned Elder Joseph, he was never called by his name but by various “epithets.”<sup>65</sup> This is a lesson lost on the New Calendarist ecumenists who attack us resisters, wholly unable, as they are, to acknowledge their own faults, and thus finding themselves motivated to lash out at those who prick their consciences and address to them charges that they deserve but cannot endure. They also miss the fact that many resisters chastise them out of love, seeing their weaknesses. They, unable to accept harsh love on account of their pride, simply become outraged and focus on the faults of their teachers and accusers (again, whether real or not), instead of looking at their own shortcomings. This is the spirit in which Monk Basil seems to be writing, and I think that you would do well to avoid such material in the future. It does not enhance your otherwise fair and reasonably balanced website.

In conclusion, as a former instructor in Latin, I cannot avoid quoting Archbishop Chrysostomos’ favorite Latin adage, which he repeats to me often, and not always with mild emphasis. I would address this to Monk Basil and those who, like him, think that they have put us resisters to rest: “*Tecum habita [et] noris quam sit tibi curta supellex*” (literally, “Live with yourself and know how deficient your equipment is”); in essence, know yourself and how much you still have to acquire (learn). As His Eminence tells us, a man is *brilliant* when he knows *how little he knows*; he is a *fool* when he thinks *he knows enough*.



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<sup>65</sup> *Monastic Wisdom: The Letters of Elder Joseph the Hesychast* (Florence, AZ: St. Anthony’s Greek Orthodox Monastery, 1998), p. 24.