

Elder Philotheos (Zervakos) Defends His Spiritual Father, St. Nectarios of Aegina*

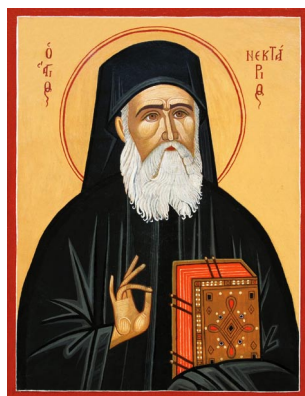
A Momentous Letter of Historic Importance

In the year of our Lord 1976, when seven years had already passed since we aligned ourselves with the Old Calendar movement on account of ecumenism (1969), we dedicated an entire issue of our periodical *Άγιος Κυπριανός* (No. 87 [March 1976], pp. 97-102) to refuting the slanders against St. Nectarios of Aegina (1846-1920) contained in a blasphemous book.

This most blasphemous book—which was, unfortunately, the first in a series of similar ones—was, in essence, nothing more than a farrago of invectives, slander, and suspect historical evidence. It was written in a supercilious style and contained scurrilous expressions and was full of provocativeness, animosity, prejudice, curses, anathemas, and distortions.

That same March, in 1976, we had the especial blessing of receiving a very valuable letter, full of godly and prophetic zeal, from the ever-memorable Elder Philotheos (Zervakos), who—as the Confessor of our spiritual Father, His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian—had given his blessing for us to join the Old Calendar movement and had encouraged us, in our further journey, with many and various letters, which we are intending to make public in due time.

For the time being, on the occasion of the commemoration of St. Nectarios the Wonderworker (9 November), we are publishing that momentous letter of multifaceted importance of the most saintly Elder of Paros, which he wrote, exactly four years before his holy repose (25 April 1980 [Old Style]), in defense of St. Nectarios and to express to us his heartfelt joy over our aforementioned publication.



St. Nectarios. Painted by the ever-memorable Mother Kypriane (†2000), Abbess of the Holy Convent of the Holy Angels, Aphidnai, 1968

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Holy Monastery of Longovarda, 27 March 1976

To my spiritual son in the Lord, Archimandrite Cyprian, joy and happiness.

Last November, on the Feast Day of St. Nectarios, I went to the Holy Monastery of the *Panagia Myrtydiotissa*, to the venerable Church of our Father among the Saints, Nectarios, spiritual Father to me in my youth, instructor in my spiritual life, and guide in my monastic life, and I celebrated his Feast Day, 9 November.

About forty days earlier, I had been given the blasphemous book by the proud, deranged, and demonized Abbess Magdalene. I was distressed and at a loss as to how a woman—and a nun, at that—could reach the point that she would crudely revile the most saintly of men, among the adulterous and perverse generation of our day, with invectives that even the worst and most malicious woman would spout only against the worst and vilest criminal.

I found the answer to my question when I remembered that our Lady and *Theotokos* Mary, on account of her utmost and immeasurable humility, became the dwelling-place of God. Abbess Magdalene, on account of her immeasurable pride, has become the dwelling-place of the prince of darkness, Beelzebub.

St. Nectarios, through his great humility, fervent faith, and wholehearted love, and through prayer, fasting, and vigils, was vouchsafed Heavenly gifts. Abbess Magdalene, through her great pride, received from the prince of darkness demonic gifts: envy, lies, slander, etc.

Seeing and hearing the miracles that St. Nectarios performed, and performs for all who call on him with faith and piety, even for the New Calendarists (though she is with the Old Calendar, which she has so struggled to honor, and this as if she were above all the Hierarchs and Patriarchs and Synods), she has professed that the Holy Spirit, Whom the New Calendarists call upon in all of their Mysteries, does not descend because of the absence of the Old Calendar, and, subsequently, their Mysteries are invalid; and the New Calendarists, when partaking of the Mystery of Holy Communion, do not eat the Body

of Christ and do not drink the Blood of Christ, but common bread and wine. They eat straw-and grass.

Oh, what impiety and insanity! Alas, to what heights of impiety and insanity pride impels wretched man. It renders him like unto its father, the Devil. And it renders Magdalene higher than the Devil. For the Devil said, I will be equal to the Most High. But Magdalene is higher than God.

And, as one mad, on the last page of her blasphemous and most impious book, the most audacious, most wretched, most irreverent, and most wicked one, as one enraged and demonized, having vomited forth abuse on St. Nectarios, also turns to Almighty God, the Creator and Maker of all things visible and invisible, and says to him: "Hearken, O Heaven, and give ear, O earth! May all who recognize Nectarios Kephalas as a Saint have the curse and anathema of the aforementioned Fathers and the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod. Amen!"

The First to recognize Nectarios as a Saint is God. God showed him to be a Saint. It is the will of God for all of us to become Saints: "Be ye holy, for I am holy." And elsewhere He says: "I said ye are gods and all are sons of the Most High." Elsewhere again, in the Gospel, He says: "Without me ye can do nothing." He says these things so that we might always be humble and always have a humble attitude. For the Lord resists the proud, but to the humble He gives Grace.

God rendered St. Nectarios wondrous, as David chants: "In the Saints that are in His earth hath the Lord been wondrous." Not so Magdalene, whom Satan corrupted! "Whosoever acknowledges St. Nectarios as a Saint, let him be accursed!" Truly, she knows not what she says. May God restore her to her right mind.



Elder Philotheos (Zervakos)

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I was sick at heart in those days, fearing lest the *fanatic* Old Calendarists had deceived you into accepting their blasphemous and

impious belief that the Mysteries of the New Calendarists are invalid because they do not follow the Old Calendar.

The Old Calendar is not God, nor the Holy Spirit. It is Tradition, which they ought not to have despised; they ought to have respected it. They did not entirely reject it, however, as the Iconoclasts rejected the Icons and burned them. They did not cast the Saints out of the Church, they did not burn the calendar, they did not deny God, the Mysteries, or the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Fathers, who prescribed that the Feast of Pascha be celebrated according to the Julian Calendar, did not tell us: “With that [the Julian Calendar] you will celebrate the Mysteries; with that you will be saved; if you have that you are able to commit all manner of sins, to cast aside love, to have enemies amongst yourselves, to insult one another, to accuse one another, to anathematize one another, to beat one another, even inside Churches—you are free. You can do all of this, just as long as you keep the Old Calendar.”

The Holy Fathers who prescribed the Old Calendar did not become Saints because they kept the Old Calendar. They became Saints because they kept the Orthodox Faith, love, humility, and the other virtues.

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While I was in a sorrowful state and was considering writing to you to be careful to guard yourselves from the errors of various heretics, including the over-zealous and fanatic Old Calendarists, I was forestalled by the arrival of your religious periodical *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, which you dedicated to proclaiming boldly the truth about St. Nectarios, severely criticized the blasphemous book of the most irreverent, demonized reviler of St. Nectarios, whom God glorified while he was alive and after death, on earth and in Heaven, to the disgrace of the visible and invisible enemies who hate him and to the rejoicing of the Faithful who honor, glorify, and celebrate him.

The joy, my spiritual child, which you gave me by your defense of the truth and of my holy spiritual Father, may the Lord also grant to you a thousandfold in the time of the just recompense, vouchsafing you and your little flock, through the intercessions of His All-

Immaculate Mother, of Sts. Cyprian, Justina, Nectarios, and of all the Saints, the Heavenly Kingdom and the eternal good things, whereof may we all be counted worthy. Amen.

With paternal love
and heartfelt wishes,

Αρχιμανδρίτης Φιλόθεος Ζερβάκος

Archimandrite Philotheos Zervakos

*Source: Άγιος Κυπριανός, No. 323 (November-December 2004), pp. 114-116.