



"A Painful Remembrance"

1924-2004: The Eightieth Anniversary of the Calendar Reform

Are the Terms "Christian" and "Orthodox" Accurate For Our Times?*

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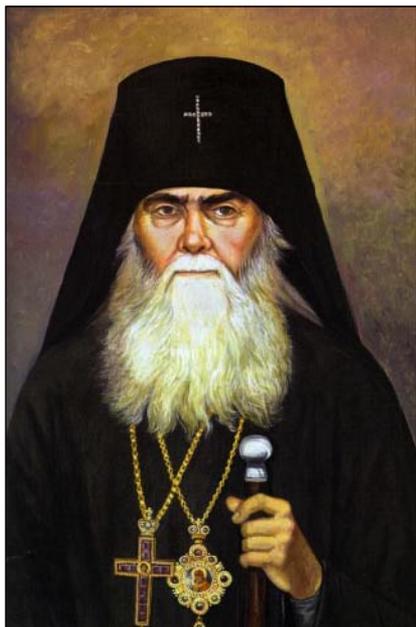
Archbishop Averky, Alexander Pavlovich Taushev in the world, was born on 19 October 1906 in the city of Kazan, Russia, of a pious and noble family. His father was a distinguished civil servant.

They left Russia as a family in 1920 and settled in the city of Varna, in Bulgaria, where Alexander finished high school. In 1925, he met the outstanding and ascetical Archbishop Theophan of Poltava (†1940, also a Russian refugee, who had only recently come from Yugoslavia). This meeting, and the spiritual bond that he formed with the Archbishop, resulted in his decision to pursue the monastic life.

At the urging of his Elder, Archbishop Theophan, who, it should be noted, had been an eminent professor of theology at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, he enrolled in the Theological Faculty of the University of Sofia, from which he graduated magna cum laude in 1930.

After learning of the difficulties that the Orthodox in Carpatho-Russia [situated in what is now Slovakia—Trans.] were facing, he decided to work there, helping them to remain faithful to Orthodoxy and confronting Papist propaganda.

In Carpatho-Russia he was tonsured a monk, on 17 May 1931, at the Holy Monastery of St. Nicholas in the village of Iza and received the name "Averky." On the following day, he was Ordained a Deacon. On the Feast of



+ Архиепископъ Аверкiй

the Annunciation the following year, he was Ordained a Hieromonk at the Holy Monastery of Devichy, Cherlenev.

He was transferred to the St. Nicholas Monastery so that he could serve the parishes in Nankov and Bornava, and in September of the same year he was assigned to the parish in Uzhorod. In 1938, he was transferred to the parish in Mukacevo.

After the occupation of Carpatho-Russia by the Magyars, he went to Belgrade in 1940, where he worked very intensively, chiefly in the field of education, under Metropolitan Anastassy (†1965), President of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which still had its headquarters there.

In 1945, he settled in Munich, the new temporary headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, where he remained until 1951, organizing charitable activities.

Then, following an invitation from Archbishop Vitaly of Jordanville, he went to America to teach Liturgics, Homiletics, and New Testament at the newly-established Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary located at the monastery of the same name. On 17 February 1952, he became Rector of the seminary.

On the Feast of the Holy Spirit in 1953, he was Consecrated Bishop of Syracuse, U.S.A. After the repose of Archbishop Vitaly, in May of 1960 he was elected Abbot of the monastery in Jordanville, a position which he retained until his repose. In 1961, he was elevated to the rank of Archbishop. He fell asleep in the Lord on 31 March 1976.

He was ascetical, dignified, an excellent preacher of the Divine word, an indefatigable writer (as his voluminous works on the background and interpretation of the New Testament and on homiletics, the multi-volume collections of his articles, sermons, and addresses, and his individual studies, etc., demonstrate), an indomitable Shepherd, an Elder to monks, the teacher and educator of a generation of clergy, and a vessel of the gifts of the Divine Comforter.

He was especially concerned, in both deed and word, about the purity and integrity of the True Faith, Holy Orthodoxy, observing with sorrow, and boldly denouncing, the spiralling apostasy of those so-called Orthodox who, entangled in the tentacles of ecumenism and going along with the spirit of apostasy that marks the contemporary world, have steadily turned away from Orthodoxy.

As the reader will ascertain, the present text is a confession of the Faith, and one distinguished by the candor of its language—the language of truth. Its timeliness is manifest, although it was written fifteen years ago, and it demonstrates the prophetic intuition of this saintly man and his holy zeal, traits which are evident in other of his Divinely illumined writings. By God’s Grace, we will publish some of these works in due course.

* * *

UNTIL RECENTLY [1975], the concepts and terms “Christian” and “Orthodox” were unambiguous and meaningful.

Now, however, we are living through times so terrible, so filled with falsehood and deception, that such concepts and terms no longer convey what is significant when used without further clarification. They do not reflect the essence of things, but have become little more than deceptive labels.

Many societies and organizations now call themselves “Christian” although there is nothing Christian in them, insofar as they reject the principal dogma of Christianity—the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, as do several of the newest sects, to which the very spirit of true Christianity, which follows so naturally and logically from the teaching of the Gospels, is generally quite foreign.

Of late, the term “Orthodox” also has ceased in large measure to express what it should, for even those who in fact have apostatized from true Orthodoxy and become traitors to the Orthodox Faith and Church continue to call themselves “Orthodox.”

Such are all the innovators, who reject the true spirit of Orthodoxy, all those who have started down the path of mutual relations with the enemies of Orthodoxy, who propagandize for common prayer and even liturgical communion with those who do not belong to the Holy Orthodox Church.

Such are the “renovationists”¹ and contemporary “neo-renovationists,” the “neo-Orthodox” (as some of them openly style themselves!), who are

clamoring about how essential it is to “renew the Orthodox Church,” about some sort of “reforms in Orthodoxy,” which allegedly has become “set in its ways” and “moribund.”

They harp on such things instead of focusing their prayerful attention on the truly essential renewal of their own souls and the fundamental reform of their own sinful nature with its passions and desires.

They insistently proclaim union with heretics, with non-Orthodox, and even with non-Christians. They proclaim “the union of all,” but without the unity of spirit and truth which alone makes such union possible.

Such, for example, in our days are the Ecumenical Patriarchs of Constantinople, who in the past recognized the “Living Church” in Soviet Russia as legal and now recognize the Pope of Rome as the “head of the whole Christian Church,” and even admit the Papist Latins to Holy Communion without their first being united to the Holy Orthodox Church.

Such are all those who actively participate in the so-called ecumenical movement, which is striving so blatantly to create some sort of new pseudo-church out of all the denominations now existing.

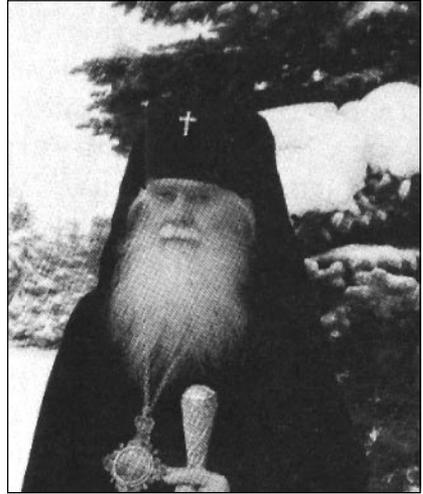
Such, too, are those many others who are not completely faithful to our Lord and Savior and His Holy Church, but serve His vicious enemies or please them in one way or another by helping them to realize their anti-Christian goals in a world which has turned away from God.

Who will dare to deny us our lawful right not to recognize such people as Orthodox, even though they may persist in using that name and in bearing various high ranks and titles?

From Church history we know that there have been not a few heretics and even heresiarchs of high rank who were solemnly condemned by the Universal Church and removed from their offices.

But what do we see today?

This, sadly, is an age of unlimited concessions and sly collaboration, when even the most scandalous heretical actions or statements disturb hardly anyone.



Very few react to this manifest apostasy from Orthodoxy as they should, and as for condemning these new heretics and apostates—there is no point in even thinking about it.

Today everything is permitted for everyone and nothing is prohibited for anyone, except in cases where someone is personally hurt, offended, and insulted when their own folly [that of the ecumenists—*Trans.*] is pointed out.

Oh, in such cases, this is unforgivable! Then threats make their appearance, based on those forgotten Canons, which otherwise are “obsolete, outdated and unacceptable” in our advanced, progressive age!

This is the kind of moral disintegration, of real spiritual monstrosity, that faces us.

The truth is readily ignored and brazenly flouted, while evil, just as readily, celebrates its triumphant victory and gloatingly mocks the truth which it has overthrown and trampled upon.

Is it possible to reconcile one’s conscience to this contemporary situation? Can one close one’s eyes to all these lies and falsehoods and calmly act as if one saw nothing wrong?

Only individuals whose consciences are burned out or completely lost can do so!

That is why it is more than strange to hear some, imagining themselves to be Orthodox, call the Russian Church Outside of Russia “Old Believer,” “schismatic,” “retrograde,” “obscurantist,” and so on, simply because we will not walk in step with these times and dare not to apostatize in anything from Christ’s Gospel and the original teaching of the Holy Church, and therefore consider it an obligation of conscience to condemn this clear and obvious evil of contemporary life, which has already penetrated into the Church.

In fact, it is not we who are schismatic, but all those who follow the spirit of these times and by that act cut themselves off from the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, apostatizing from the Apostolic Faith, from the Faith of the Fathers, from the Orthodox Faith, which established the whole world.

These people are obviously hurtling over the precipice of apostasy—into the abyss of perdition, together with the whole contemporary world, burying themselves in their apostasy from the life-creating God.

Do you hear the Apostle’s Divinely inspired words, you modernists, who attempt to distort Christ’s Gospel and are becoming so readily and zealously “conformed to this world,” evil and alluring as it is?

We readily accept your indictment that we are “old believers,” considering it an honor to our traditionalism; but how does your Christian conscience get on with your innovating, which overthrows essentially the ancient, true Faith and Christ’s unchanging Church?

Was it not the Apostle who warned all Christians: “Be ye not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God”?²

We are “old believers,” but not schismatics, for we have never cut ourselves off from the true Church of Christ.

We are in union with our Head, Christ the Savior, with His Holy Disciples and Apostles, with the Apostolic Fathers, with the great Fathers and Teachers of the Church, and with the great luminaries and pillars of the faith and piety of our Fatherland, Holy Russia.

But you are in union with some sort of innovating, self-appointed teachers, whom you advertise everywhere so unlawfully and obstinately, disparaging and at times even daring to criticize the genuine luminaries of our Holy Church, who have pleased God and been glorified in many ascetic struggles of piety and miracles throughout the course of her two thousand year history.

This being the case, which of us is really the schismatic?

Of course it is not those in the spirit of traditional Orthodoxy, but those who have apostatized from the true Faith of Christ and rejected the genuine spirit of Christian piety, even though all the contemporary patriarchs, who have altered our age-old, Patristic Orthodoxy, may be on the latter’s side, as well as the majority of contemporary, so-called Christians.

Indeed, Christ the Savior did not promise eternal salvation to the majority, but, quite to the contrary, He promised it to His “little flock,” which will remain faithful to Him to the end, in the day of His Glorious and Terrible Second Coming, when He will come “to judge the living and the dead.”

“Fear not, little flock,” He said, painting the frightening picture of the last times of apostasy from God and persecution of the Faith before our mind’s eye, “For it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”³

This is why all we have said above prompts us to re-examine the terminology that has been accepted up to the present.

It is insufficient in our time to say only “Christian”—now it is necessary to qualify this by saying “true Christian.” Similarly it is insufficient

to say “Orthodox”—it is essential to emphasize that one is not referring to an innovating modernist “Orthodox,” but to a true Orthodox.

All genuine zealots of the true Faith, serving Christ the Savior alone, have already begun to do this, both those in our Fatherland, enslaved by ferocious enemies of God, where zealots depart into the catacombs like the ancient Christians, as well as in Greece, our brother nation, where the “Old Calendarists” not only refuse to accept the New Calendar, but also reject all innovations of any kind. They have a special veneration for that champion of Holy Orthodoxy, St. Mark, Metropolitan of Ephesus, thanks to whose steadfastness the impious Union of Florence with Papal Rome in 1439 failed.

It is noteworthy that both the Catacomb Church in the former U.S.S.R., the so-called “Tikhonites,” and the Greek Old Calendarists, between whom there can hardly be any communication, have begun to call themselves “True Orthodox Christians.”

In our firm stand for the true Faith and Church it is essential only to avoid everything personal—pride and self-exaltation—, which inevitably lead to new errors, and eventually even to a fall; we have already witnessed this in several cases.

It is not ourselves that we should praise, but the pure and immaculate Faith of Christ. No fanaticism is admissible here, because it is capable of blinding the spiritual eyes of such who are “zealous not according to knowledge.” Rather than confirming one in the Faith, this blind fanaticism can sometimes lead one away from it.

It is important to know and to remember that a true Orthodox Christian is not someone who just accepts the dogmas of Orthodoxy formally, but a person who, as the great Russian hierarch St. Tikhon of Zadonsk taught so beautifully, thinks in an Orthodox way, feels in an Orthodox way, and lives in an Orthodox way, incarnating the spirit of Orthodoxy in his life.

This spirit—ascetic and world-renouncing, as is clearly set forth in the Word of God and the teachings of the Holy Fathers—is most sharply and boldly denied by the modernists, the “neo-Orthodox,” who want in everything to keep in step with the spirit of this world lying in evil, whose prince, in the words of the Lord Himself, is none other than the Devil.⁴

Thus, it is not God Whom they desire to please, but the “prince of this world,” the Devil; and thereby they cease to be true Orthodox Christians, even if they call themselves such.

If we consider all this more seriously and deeply, then we will see that this is precisely the case and that modernism, with its innovations, is leading us away from Christ and His True Church.

Let us be horrified at how rapidly apostasy has proceeded, although the modernists do not see it or feel it, inasmuch as they themselves are taking an active part in it.

And so let us not fear to remain in the minority, far from all their high-sounding titles and ranks. Let us always remember that even Caiaphas was a high priest of the true God, and to what depths he sank—to the horrible sin of deicide!

While living in this world which has apostatized from God, let us strive not for specious human glory and cheap popularity, which will not save us, but only to be within Christ's "little flock."

Let us be True Orthodox Christians, not modernists! □

* **Source:** Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐνοστασις καὶ Μαρτυρία, Nos. 18-21 (January-December 1990), pp. 204-209. The English translation of the Russian original was published in *Orthodox Life*, Vol. XXV, No. 3 (May-June 1975), pp. 4-8.

Notes

1. The name for members of the "Living Church" movement, sponsored by the Bolsheviks in the 1920s—*Trans.*
2. Romans 12:2.
3. St. Luke 12:32.
4. St. John 12:31.