



The True Meaning of Canonicity

*Why the Synod in Resistance of the Orthodox Church of Greece
Stands on the Firmest of Canonical Grounds in Its Sacred
Opposition to the Religious Syncretism of Ecumenism*

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“NO TERM IS USED—AND MISUSED—among the Orthodox people in America more often than the term *canonical*. One hears endless discussions about the ‘canonicity’ or the ‘uncanonicity’ of this or that bishop, jurisdiction, priest, parish.”¹ So states Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann (1921–1983) at the very outset of his penetrating article, “The Canonical Problem,” and nearly half a century later “canonical” and “uncanonical” continue to be bandied about by individuals ignorant of the Orthodox import and genuine meaning of these terms. Thus, we canonical resisters to the ills of innovation (the New Calendar), deviation from Holy Tradition, and the religious syncretism of ecumenism are often the objects of epithets like “uncanonical” and “irregular status” (the latter a term directly borrowed from Roman Catholic nomenclature). Canonicity is, of course, a requisite constituent of Orthodox Christianity; indeed, in some ways “canonical” is a ready synonym for the adjective “orthodox.” For this reason, we find it necessary to define the term “canonical” and to offer a succinct refutation of the ill-informed and frequently ill-intentioned accusation of noncanonicity levelled against our God-pleasing canonical resistance as an assault on our very orthodoxy. We would like to do so, here, by drawing on the insights of Father Schmemmann, as well as of other writers. We will do this

¹ Alexander Schmemmann, “Problems of Orthodox in America: The Canonical Problem,” *St. Vladimir’s Seminary Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, No. 2 (1964), p. 67.

- 1) by examining the popular misunderstanding of canonicity and demonstrating the erroneousness of prevailing ideas about it;
- 2) by defining canonicity properly, in terms of Orthodox ecclesiology, and particularly *vis-à-vis* Apostolicity; and
- 3) by establishing that our particular jurisdiction, the Holy Synod in Resistance of the Orthodox Church of Greece, most firmly and scrupulously exemplifies the Orthodox requirements of canonicity.

“Canonicity” means “the state or quality of being canonical,” which in turn, in the Orthodox universe of discourse, means “that which is in conformity with the Holy Canons of the Church.” This definition is so obvious as to be tautologous; yet, a disturbing number of Orthodox Christians, whose thinking is so frequently poorly formed in the Fathers and spiritual experience, never make the connection between canonicity and the Holy Canons. Instead, what has come to prevail in the popular consciousness is an equation of “canonical” with “official,” the latter meaning “derived from an office or an officer, or by virtue of the authority invested therein.” This conflation of canonicity and officiality Father Schmemmann labels “canonical subordinationism,” which he defines as

one simple rule, which to...[those who invoke it]...seems a self-evident one: to be ‘canonical’ one has to be *under* some Patriarch, or, in general, under some established autocephalous church in the old world. Canonicity is thus reduced to *subordination* which is declared to constitute the fundamental principle of church organization. Implied here is the idea that a ‘high ecclesiastical power’ (Patriarch, Synod, etc.) is in itself and by itself the *source* of canonicity: whatever it decides is *ipso facto* canonical and the criterion of canonicity.²

“‘Canonical subordinationism’ is the best indication of how deeply ‘westernized’ we have become in our canonical thinking,”³ Father Schmemmann further observes, and he goes on to note that, “in the theory of ‘canonical subordinationism’ the reality of the church is reduced to the formal principle of ‘jurisdiction,’ i.e. subordination to a central ecclesiastical power.”⁴

² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Although he never explicitly mentions the Roman Catholic Church, Father Schmemmann has, in fact, provided us, here, with an ecclesiological definition of the heresy of Papism *in nuce*. This classic heresy has resurfaced in a mutated, if not mutilated, form in the contemporary Orthodox Church as “Neo-Papism,” “Papalism,” or “Patriarchalism,” of which malignant trend the modern Patriarchate of Constantinople is especially guilty,

with its new, anti-Orthodox, and blasphemous concept of a ‘Mother Church’ modeled on the Latin understanding of that term and of what is essentially an ‘Eastern Pope’ with administrative and spiritual authority throughout Orthodoxy—even to the point, apparently, of claiming jurisdiction over the autocephalous Orthodox Churches and their Patriarchates!⁵

Another example of this Patriarchalist mentality is the much-touted catch phrase of the Antiochian Patriarchate, “The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:26),” or the self-descriptive moniker assumed by the Patriarchate of Moscow: “The Third Rome.” What Neo-Papism has in common, then, with Roman Catholicism is the idea that Divine authority automatically inheres in a given See, Hierarchy, or Synod—that is, in an *office* or *officeholder*—and that it is communion with, and submission to, this officiality that concurrently guarantees Orthodoxy and constitutes canonicity.

Thus, “canonical subordinationism,” as Father Schmemmann argues, leads to (and also in part proceeds from) the harmful and un-Orthodox reduction of canonicity to an almost abstract principle of *validity*..., [as] a ‘principle in itself,’ i.e. disconnected from truth, authenticity and, in general, the whole faith and order of the Church.⁶

He decries as a “really *immoral* idea [the notion] that a man, an act, a situation are ‘valid’ only in function of a purely formal ‘validity in itself’”:⁷

We are constantly told that something is ‘canonical,’ because it is ‘recognized’ as canonical by such or such Patriarch or Synod. But... in the Orthodox teaching canonical is that which complies with the canons[,] and the canons express the *truth* of the church. We

⁵ “Neo-Papism,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (1997), p. 24.

⁶ Schmemmann, “The Canonical Problem,” pp. 73–74.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

must openly reject the ‘romanizing’ theory that something is true because some infallible authority has decreed that it is true. In the Orthodox Church truth itself is the supreme authority and criterion. At one time the Patriarch of Constantinople ‘recognized’ as Orthodox and canonical the so-called ‘Living Church’ [the Живая Церковь, or Renovated Church (Обновленческая Церковь)], was established by the Communists, in 1922, to replace the administration of the Orthodox Church of Russia, introducing unheard-of reforms and perversions into that body for almost two decades—*note by the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery*]. This did not make it either Orthodox or canonical.⁸

From this “immoral idea” that officiality is self-validating stems a legalistic interpretation of canonicity utterly foreign to the Orthodox ethos:

Canonical *tradition*, understood at first as an organic part of the dogmatical tradition, as the latter’s application to the empirical life of the Church, became Canon *Law*: a system of rules and regulations, juridical, and not primarily doctrinal and spiritual, in their nature and interpreted as such within categories alien to the spiritual essence of the Church. Just as a lawyer is the one who can find all possible precedents and arguments that favor his ‘case,’ a canonist, in this system of thought, is the one who, in the huge mass of canonical texts, can find that one which justifies his ‘case,’ even if the latter seems to contradict the spirit of the Church. And once such [a] ‘text’ is found, ‘canonicity’ is established.⁹

Officialdom, self-validation, legalism—such are the artificial, external, and formalistic superficialities upon which “canonical subordinationism” fixates at the expense, and to the exclusion, of the genuine inner content of canonicity.

What, then, is the correct Orthodox understanding of canonicity? It begins with a recognition that canons are the flip side of dogmas on the coin of Christian Truth, the latter being the “head” of θεωρία (theory) and the former the “tail” of πράξις (practice). This idea is made evident by Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky (1888–1988) in his juxtaposition of the two:

In ecclesiastical terminology *dogmas* are the truths of Christian teaching, the truths of faith, and *canons* are the prescriptions re-

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

lating to Church order, Church government, the obligations of the Church hierarchy and clergy and of every Christian, which flow from the moral foundations of the evangelical and Apostolic teaching. *Canon* is a Greek word which literally means ‘a straight rod, a measure of precise direction.’¹⁰

In regard to this definition of “canon,” it is noteworthy that “the favorite phrase”¹¹ used by Saint Irenæus of Lyons (*ca.* 125–202) to designate the *corpus* of dogmas is “ὁ κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας,” or “the canon of truth.” For example, Saint Irenæus speaks of “put[ting] an end to all...[false] doctrines, and...establish[ing] the rule [canon] of truth in the Church”;¹² elsewhere, he speaks of “holding the unadulterated rule [canon] of truth.”¹³ It is precisely this “canon of truth” which “serves generally to emphasise what is for Christianity an inner law and binding norm”¹⁴ that the Holy Canons, as a body of rules, reify and regulate.

Father Schmemmann likewise stresses the intimate and vital connection between the dogmatic and the canonical, characterizing the Holy Canons as manifestations of Truth:

...[I]n the genuine Orthodox tradition...ecclesiastical power is itself *under* the canons and its decisions are valid and compulsory only inasmuch as they comply with the canons. In other terms, it is not the decision of a Patriarch or His [*sic*] Synod that creates and guarantees ‘canonicity,’ but, on the contrary, it is the canonicity of the decision that gives it its true authority and power. Truth, and not power, is the criterion, and the canons, not different in this from the dogmas, express the *truth* of the Church. And just as no power, no authority can transform heresy into orthodoxy and to make white what is black, no power can make canonical a situation which is not canonical. ...[T]he whole point is that canons are

¹⁰ Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology: A Concise Exposition*, 3rd ed., trans. and ed. Hieromonk Seraphim Rose and the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood (Platina, CA; St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2005), p. 42.

¹¹ Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, Vol. I of *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* (Belmont, MA; Nordland Publishing Co., 1972), p. 78.

¹² “Irenæus Against Heresies,” Vol. I of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, rev. A. Cleveland Coxe (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1975), p. 426.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

¹⁴ “Κανὼν,” Hermann Wolfgang Beyer, Vol. III of *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1965), p. 600.

not mere laws, but laws whose authority is rooted precisely in the spiritual essence of the Church. Canons do not constitute or create the Church[;] their function is to defend, clarify and regulate the life of the Church, to make it comply with the essence of the Church. This means that in order to be properly understood, interpreted and applied, canonical texts must be always referred to that *truth* of, and about, the Church, which they express sometimes for a very particular situation and which is not necessarily explicit in the canonical text itself.¹⁵

This formulation of canonicity, unlike the doctrine of “canonical subordinationism,” is wholly consentaneous to the “φρόνημα τῶν πατέρων,” “the mind of the Fathers” (which is, of course, “the mind of Christ”¹⁶)—not an insignificant fact, given that the Holy Canons are products of this selfsame Patristic mind. They are, in fact, a codification of general and specific guidelines drawn from the extensive (and often nettlesome) Archpastoral experience of the Church Fathers.

Canonicity, then, is a pastoral expression of Patristicity. As a corollary to this truth, that which is canonical is also of necessity Apostolic, since Patristicity is of a piece with Apostolicity, the former being nothing other than the organic extension and perpetuation of the latter in the post-Apostolic—that is, Patristic—age. In other words, the Holy Apostles were simply the first generation of Holy Fathers, and hence Apostolicity is the fountainhead from which Patristicity emanates. As Protoperbyter Georges Florovsky (1893–1979) avers: “Only by being ‘Patristic’ is the Church truly ‘Apostolic.’”¹⁷ No better elucidation of this truth can be found than that offered by Saint Justin of Ćelije (1894–1979), who puts forth the case with characteristic clarity:

The holy apostles were the first god-men by grace. ...For them, the historical God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the supreme value and the supreme criterion. ...This theanthropic apostolicity is integrally continued in the earthly successors of the Christ-bearing apostles: in the holy fathers. Among them, in essence, there is no difference: the same God-man Christ lives, acts, enlivens and makes them all eternal in equal measure, He Who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). Through the holy fathers,

¹⁵ Schmemmann, “The Canonical Problem,” pp. 69, 75.

¹⁶ I Corinthians 2:16.

¹⁷ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, p. 107.

the holy apostles live on with all their theanthropic riches, theanthropic worlds, theanthropic holy things, theanthropic mysteries, and theanthropic virtues. The holy fathers in fact are continuously apostolizing, whether as distinct godlike personalities, or as bishops of the local churches, or as members of the holy ecumenical and holy local councils. For all of them there is but one Truth, one Transcendent Truth: the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Behold, the holy ecumenical councils, from the first to the last, confess, defend, believe, announce, and vigilantly preserve but a single, supreme value: the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁸

“In Christianity truth...is the theanthropic hypostasis—the historical Jesus Christ,”¹⁹ Who is “the incarnate Truth.”²⁰ Correspondingly, the Orthodox Church, as “the Body of Christ,”²¹ “is a divine-human organism, is the God-man extended into the ages,”²² “is the incarnation of the *Theanthropos* Christ, continuing through the ages and through all eternity.”²³ Apostolicity is, of course, one of the four classic *notæ* of the True Orthodox Church professed in the Symbol of Faith (“I believe...in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church”), and “through her apostolicity she preserves the unchangeable and continuous historical reality and life of the divine-human body and work of Christ.”²⁴

But what, exactly, constitutes Apostolicity? The Apostles being agents sent forth by the Holy Trinity, it is appropriate that we identify three constituents of Apostolicity: *continuity*, *authenticity*, and *œcumenicity*. The first of these, *continuity*, is realized through Apostolic Succession, whereby the Hierarchy of the Church uninterruptedly perpetuates itself from the Apostolic age through the Mystery of the Laying on of Hands, as Saint Gregory Palamas (1296–1359) explains:

¹⁸ Archimandrite Justin (Popovich), “The Attributes of the Church,” trans. Stephen Karganovic, *Orthodox Life*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (January–February 1981), p. 31. (The English in this translation is, unfortunately, at times rather awkwardly rendered. We have nonetheless quoted it verbatim.)

¹⁹ *Idem*, *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, trans. Asterios Gerostergios *et al.* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1994), p. 78.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

²¹ Romans 7:4; I Corinthians 10:16, 12:27; Ephesians 4:12.

²² Father Justin, *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, p. 82.

²³ *Idem*, “The Attributes of the Church,” p. 32.

²⁴ *Idem*, *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, p. 84.

...[T]hrough the Apostles ordaining their successors, and these successors ordaining others, and so on, the grace of the Holy Spirit is handed down through all generations and enlightens all who obey their spiritual shepherds and teachers.²⁵

Father Schmemmann warns us, however, that, in the doctrine of “canonical subordinationism,”

[a] Church’s subordination to a ‘jurisdiction’...[is a] serious distortion and, indeed, destruction of the Orthodox conception of continuity and apostolic succession. For the Church cannot be reduced to ‘jurisdiction.’ She is a living organism and her continuity is precisely that of life. The function of the Episcopate and of ‘power’ in general is to preserve, defend and express this continuity and fulness of life, but it is a function *within* and not *above* the Church. The ministry of power does not *create* the church but is created by God within the Church, which is ontologically prior to all functions, charisms and ministries. And ‘jurisdiction’ when it is divorced from the real continuity of the Church can become, and in fact often becomes, a principle of discontinuity and schism....²⁶

“The real continuity of the Church” is ensured by the second component of Apostolicity, *authenticity*, which refers to wholehearted fidelity to the Apostolic spirit and teaching, embodied in the *Gestalt* of Holy Tradition. Thus, Apostolicity is not self-sufficiently established by a mere Hierarchical pedigree (such as that which Nestorians, Monophysites, Papists, and Anglicans claim to possess no less than Orthodox); it also requires full adherence to Orthodox doctrine and practice. Father Florovsky touches upon the nexus between continuity and authenticity when he explains that the Irenæan “canon of truth” is,

in fact, nothing else than the witness and preaching of the Apostles, their κήρυγμα and *praedicatio* (or *praeconium*), which was ‘deposited’ in the Church and entrusted to her by the Apostles, and then was faithfully kept and handed down, with complete unanimity in all places, by the succession of accredited pastors: *qui cum episcopatus successione charisma veritatis certum acceperunt* [Those who, together with the succession of the episcopacy, have received the

²⁵ *The Homilies of Saint Gregory Palamas*, ed. Christopher Veniamin, Vol. II (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2004), p. 29. This is one of the few translations from the difficult writings of St. Gregory Palamas that is faithful to the original Greek texts.

²⁶ Schmemmann, “The Canonical Problem,” p. 71.

firm charisma of truth...]. ...[I]n the mind of St. Irenaeus, this continuous preservation and transmission of the deposited faith was operated and guided by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. The whole conception of the Church in St. Irenaeus was at once ‘charismatic’ and ‘institutional.’ And ‘Tradition’ was, in his understanding, a *depositum juvenescens* [a living tradition] entrusted to the Church as a new breath of life.... Bishops or ‘presbyters’ were in the Church accredited guardians and ministers of this once deposited truth. ‘Where, therefore, the *charismata* of the Lord have been deposited..., there it is proper to learn the truth, namely from those who have that succession of the Church which is from the Apostles...and who display a sound and blameless conduct and an unadulterated and incorrupt speech....’²⁷

Note, here, the accouplement of continuity—“the succession of the episcopacy”—and authenticity—“the firm charisma of truth”—, the harmony of the “institutional” and the “charismatic,” or, as the eminent Church historian Jeffrey Burton Russell characterizes it, “[t]he spirit of order and the spirit of prophecy..., [which] together...[give] balance to the Christian religion.”²⁸ With regard to authenticity, Father Schmemmann alerts us to another danger posed by “canonical subordinationism”:

...[The] idea of validity *per se* appears more and more as the only criterion. There grows around us a peculiar indifference to *authenticity*, to elementary moral considerations. A Bishop, a priest, a layman can be accused of all sorts of moral and canonical sins: [but] the day when he ‘shifts’ to the ‘canonical’ jurisdictions all these accusations become irrelevant; he is ‘valid’ and one can entrust to him the salvation of human souls! ...It is this immoral doctrine that poisons the Church, makes parishes and individuals think of any jurisdictional shift as justified as long as they ‘go under a valid bishop’ and makes the Church cynical about[,] and indifferent to, considerations of truth and morals.²⁹ [One cannot help but note the astonishing irony of the curious abandonment of this Patristic concept of “authenticity” when Father Schmemmann’s jurisdiction, the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America, or

²⁷ Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition*, pp. 78–79.

²⁸ Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Medieval Christianity: Prophecy and Order* (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1968), p. 195.

²⁹ Schmemmann, “The Canonical Problem,” p. 74.

the so-called “Metropolia,” negotiated autocephaly from the Moscow Patriarchate in 1970 and, having renamed itself the “Orthodox Church in America,” suddenly identified itself as the historical Russian Church in America, despite having many of its roots in Greek Catholicism, and began styling itself *the* “canonical” American Orthodox jurisdiction—*note by SGPM.*]

Continuity and authenticity coalesce in the third aspect of Apostolicity, *œcumenicity*, that aspect which the average person perhaps finds most difficult to understand. To grasp the theological meaning of œcumenicity, it is helpful to keep in mind two complementary aspects of this term. Firstly, “œcumenicity” comes from the Greek “*οἰκουμένη*,” “the ecumene,” meaning “the inhabited world”; knowing this, the relationship of œcumenicity to *universality* becomes transparent in the Psalm verse applied to the Holy Apostles: “Their sound is gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world [*τῆς οἰκουμένης*].”³⁰ Secondly, “*οἰκουμένη*” is etymologically derived from “*οἶκος*,” Greek for “house,” a word invoked in the Pauline images of “*τοῦς οἰκείους τῆς πίστεως*,” or “the household of faith,”³¹ and “*οἰκεῖοι τοῦ Θεοῦ*,” or “the household of God.”³² The gist of œcumenicity is thus *not*, as is often believed, ubiquity or a monolithic worldwide presence (which best describes the Papaty’s understanding of universality), but *domesticity*: an intimate familial environment—a spiritual home. The term “œcumenicity” thus paradoxically combines within itself universality and locality (domesticity); yet there is no contradiction in this, for the Universal Church does not exist as an abstract entity, but rather is always actualized in its totality in concrete Local Churches. This is a logical consequence of the Theanthropic ontology of Orthodoxy, the Incarnational theology of the Church as the Body of Christ: just as Divine Nature and human nature (which natures are simultaneously present in the Orthodox Church) do not subsist *in abstracto*, as Platonic ideals, but are realized, in their fullness, through hypostatic individuation, so “Ecclesial Nature” of necessity subsists in “Ecclesial Hypostases.” In other words, a Local Church is not merely a *part of* the Universal Church; a Local Church *is* the Universal Church.

³⁰ Psalm 18:5.

³¹ Galatians 6:10.

³² Ephesians 2:19.

Now, the focal point, channel, and linchpin of the oecumenicity of a given Church is its Hierarchy, an idea that Father Schmemmann also examines:

In the original tradition [of Orthodox canonicity], a Bishop through his consecration by other bishops, becomes the ‘successor’ not to his consecrators but, first of all, to the unbroken continuity of his own Church. The ‘Church is in the Bishop’ because the ‘Bishop is in the Church’ [according to Saint Cyprian of Carthage (ca. 200–258)—*SGPM*], in...‘organic unity with a particular body of church people.’ In the system of canonical subordinationism, however, the Bishop becomes a simple representative of a higher jurisdiction, important not in himself, not as the charismatic bearer and guardian of his Church’s *continuity* and *catholicity*, but as means of this Church’s subordination to a ‘jurisdiction.’ ...There can be no doubt that the unity of the Church, as expressed in her canonical structure, is expressed, first of all, in and through the unity of the Episcopate. *Episcopatus unus est*, wrote St. Cyprian of Carthage in the third century. This means that each local or particular church is united to all other churches, reveals her ontological identity with them, in its bishop. Just as every bishop receives the fulness of his episcopate from the oneness of the Episcopate expressed in the plurality of the consecrators, this fulness includes, at its very essence, his unity with the whole Episcopate.³³

In a similar vein, analyzing the ecclesiological thought of Saint Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 30–ca. 107), Protosynergos John Romanides (1927–2001) makes what is, at first, a startling observation: “The idea that the bishop is now what the apostles once were is completely missing from the epistles of Ignatius. Peculiarly enough it is the presbyters who are always compared to the apostles.”³⁴ Presbyters, and not Hierarchs, represent the Apostles? Does this not unravel the entire argument that Hierarchs embody Apostolicity? Not at all. In the Ignatian metaphor, just as the Apostles were united around their spiritual Father, Christ, so the Presbyters are united around their spiritual Father, their Hierarchy, who thus serves, not as an Icon of the Apostles, but as a living Icon of Christ Himself. Yet, it is precisely because “[t]he holy apostles were the first

³³ Schmemmann, “The Canonical Problem,” pp. 70–71, 79–80.

³⁴ The Rev. John S. Romanides, “The Ecclesiology of St. Ignatius of Antioch,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, Vol. VII, Nos. 1 & 2 (Summer 1961—Winter 1961–1962), p. 70.

god-men by grace”³⁵ that their successors, the Hierarchs, are likewise enabled to function as flesh-and-blood images of the God-Man. As Father Romanides points out, this teaching has comprehensive ramifications for the equality of Hierarchs in their rôles as agents of œcumenicity:

The order of the episcopate was not something that existed in itself, of itself, and over or apart from the local Church. It was definitely within the Church; and since the visible Church could be defined only in terms of the body of Christ locally manifested in its mystagogical life, the episcopate was definitely of local character. The existence of bishops in the smallest and remotest villages of the empire cannot be explained otherwise than in terms of the necessity to have a bishop and council of presbyters within and responsible for the life of each eucharistic center. Therefore bishops were equal because communities were equal. One local manifestation of the body of Christ could not be more [the] body of Christ or less than another. Likewise the living image of Christ, the bishop, could not be more [the] image or less image than another image, because Christ, whose image the bishops are, is identically One and Equal with Himself.³⁶

The rarefaction of œcumenicity Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Holy Synod in Resistance of the Orthodox Church of Greece, renders accessible in a brilliant sixfold précis of Patristic ecclesiology:

What is the Church?

1. The Church is the Assembly of the People of God for the celebration of the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, wherein the local Church actually becomes and is revealed as the Body of Christ, as a Theandric organism, in which the Holy Trinity dwells.

2. The visible center and head of the Eucharistic Assembly is the Bishop: It is he who leads the Assembly and preaches the word of God; it is he who offers the Eucharist, as an ‘Icon of Christ,’ the Great High Priest, and as the one who presides ‘in the place of God,’ according to St. Ignatius of Antioch.

3. In the early Church, only the Bishop offered the Divine Eucharist in each local Church; that is, there was only one Eucharist, and this was centered on the Bishop.

³⁵ Archimandrite Justin, “The Attributes of the Church,” p. 31.

³⁶ Romanides, “The Ecclesiology of St. Ignatius of Antioch,” pp. 71–72.

4. The Bishop, when he offers the Divine Eucharist, offers Christ in His wholeness, imparting the Holy Mysteries to the Faithful with his own hands; in ancient times, the People of God partook of Christ only from the living Icon of Christ, the Bishop.

5. Therefore, the Bishop not only embodies the local Church, but also expresses in time and space the Catholic Church, that is, the whole Church; for that which embodies Christ in His wholeness, and wherein one receives Christ in His wholeness is that which embodies the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. ‘Wherever Jesus Christ is,’ says St. Ignatios, ‘there is the Catholic Church.’

6. For precisely this reason, when one is united with the Bishop in the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist, then he is also united with the Catholic Church.³⁷

Note, here, the explicit mention of the four hallmarks of the True Orthodox Church. Although we have explored but one, Apostolicity, it is important to realize that the ecclesial *notæ* are not discrete characteristics, but rather interpenetrate, corroborate, and reiterate one another. Thus, in *continuity* we have the Apostolic quality of the Church’s *Oneness*; in *authenticity* we have the Apostolic quality of the Church’s *Holiness*; and in *œcumenicity* we have the Apostolic quality of the Church’s *Catholicity*. Canonicity is not canonicity in the absence of any of these three qualities of Apostolicity.

We come, then, to our main point, *viz.*, the canonicity of resistance, and, in particular, of the Holy Synod in Resistance. What is its canonical *raison d’être*? First of all, ours is an Ecclesiastical Community “in resistance.” By this appellation, we wish to emphasize our fulfillment of a particular canonical imperative typified by the maxim of the Apostle James, “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you,”³⁸ and encapsulated by Saint Theodore the Studite (759–826) in the phrase, “God-pleasing resistance.”³⁹ To what, then, are we in resistance? Submitting ourselves to God, we are in resistance to *the panheresy of ecumenism*. The ailing President of our Synod, Met-

³⁷ Archimandrite Cyprian, “The Place of the Bishop in the Orthodox Church,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XVI, Nos. 3 & 4 (1999), p. 12.

³⁸ St. James 4:7.

³⁹ St. Theodore the Studite, “Epistle I.39, ‘To Theophilos the Abbot,’” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1049A.

ropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, some time ago summarized our position thusly:

What is Ecumenism? Ecumenism is heresy, the panheresy of Antichrist. This heresy is called ‘Ecumenism,’ since it derives from a world [*οικουμένη*] far from God; that is, from the world of sin. ...Behind the heretical leaders and their heresies...is found the Devil. ...Ecumenism is not simply a heresy, but a full collection of heresies. It has brought together from the modern world all of the heresies and strives to unite them into one great and powerful panheresy. The heresy of Ecumenism does not contain the incorrect teaching of just one heresy, but the incorrect teaching and falsehood of all of the heresies. Ecumenism wishes to place the local Orthodox Churches in the midst of its structure as another heresy. This dark plan is crafty. If we Orthodox Christians recognize Ecumenism, then we will embrace not only one heresy, but all of the heresies of the known world. We will forsake Orthodoxy and place ourselves in the world of heresy. Then the local Orthodox Churches will themselves become panheretical and the Orthodox Church will disappear from the face of the earth. There will be neither faith nor will Divine Grace be effective, and man will not be saved from eternal death. Hence, the Divine work of salvation in Christ will be rendered useless and the Antichrist will prevail, to the wild delight of the Devil. ...The panheresy of Ecumenism is to date the most powerful weapon of the Devil against the Church and against the salvation of mankind in Christ...⁴⁰

Therefore, to resist Ecumenism is to resist the Devil, in fulfillment of the aforementioned Scriptural injunction proffered by Saint James.

“Ecumenism is the common name for...pseudo-Christianity,” declares Saint Justin of Ćelije, “[and] within it is the heart of European humanism...”⁴¹ If Orthodox involvement in the Ecumenical Movement was meant to enrich Western Christianity with the Theanthropic wealth of Orthodoxy, just the opposite has occurred: Orthodoxy has been impoverished by the humanistic penury of Western Christianity:

In the European West, Christianity gradually became transformed into humanism. For several centuries the God-man became more

⁴⁰ Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, *The Panheresy of Ecumenism*, 3rd. ed., trans. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2004), pp. 7–8.

⁴¹ Father Justin, *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, p. 169.

and more limited and confined to His humanity, eventually becoming the infallible man of Rome and of Berlin. Thus, on the one hand there appeared a western Christian humanistic maximalism (the papacy) which took everything away from Christ, and on the other hand a western Christian humanistic minimalism (protestantism) which sought very little if anything from Christ. In both man takes the place of the God-man as that which is of most value and is the measure of all things. Thus, a most grievous correction of the God-man, His work, and His teaching was accomplished!⁴²

In fact, we see that those Orthodox Churches that have abandoned their oecumenicity for Ecumenism now have a mongrelized ecclesiology blending Protestant ideology—*Ecumenism*—and Papist methodology—*Neo-Papism*.

The Ecumenical Movement was, through and through, the brainchild of Protestantism, which has always had denominationalism—ecclesiastical competition—as its *modus vivendi*. It keenly dawned on Protestant theologians in their missionary endeavors in the nineteenth century just how utterly counter-productive denominationalism was, and it was in rethinking their missiology, as Metropolitan Cyprian has noted, that the idea was born to replace ecclesiastical competition with ecclesiastical coöperation—Ecumenism. Thus, in consort with His Eminence, Father Peter Heers shows that

...long before...the Orthodox entered into the [Ecumenical] discussion, the presuppositions and parameters of encounter were set[,] and they did not, even in the slightest, reflect or even acknowledge Orthodox ecclesiological principles. The ecclesiological framework in which the ecumenical movement was forged, formed, developed and exists to this day is, with slight adjustments, the product of 19th century Evangelicalism.⁴³

Fundamental to Protestant ecclesiology and its denominational experience, and hence to the Ecumenical Movement, is the theological distinction between “The Visible Church” and “The Invisible Church”:

Traditionally interpreted, the visible church points to the institutional church in the world, whereas the invisible church consists of the totality of all true believers irrespective of their affiliations or lack of them with any organizationally constituted church. ...[I]t is clear that the Reformers were aware of the apparent difference between the essence of the church and their experience of the church

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁴³ Fr. Peter Alban Heers, “The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism: Milestones leading up to 1920” (Athens: 2005), p. 2.

in their time. The accent upon the visible/invisible division was aimed primarily to point out this wide difference between what the church claimed to be and what it actually was in practice. The visible church designated what was incomplete, corrupt, unholy, and external, whereas the invisible church pointed to what was complete, incorruptible, holy, and internal. This notion pointed to the church within the church. In fact, it seemed to indicate or imply that there was a kind of Platonic essence or ideal of which the visible church was unfortunately only a partial and defective image. Thus the ‘true’ church was a purely transcendent and heavenly reality, while the existing and earthly church was imperfect and impure.⁴⁴

According to the Protestant ecclesiology undergirding the Ecumenical Movement, therefore, the Orthodox Churches are just so many more “incomplete, corrupt, unholy, and external” denominations within “The Visible Church.” Yet, for Ecumenism to escape its parochialism—for it to move beyond its pan-Protestant origins and to legitimate itself as a pan-Christian phenomenon—, its architects desperately needed the participation of the Orthodox Churches; and for this, they lobbied long and hard (and, eventually, successfully). Robert Hallowell Gardiner III (1855–1924) was a seminal figure in canvassing for the Ecumenical Movement. Through a massive letter-writing campaign—he wrote more than eleven thousand letters—he brought together an extensive network of religious and political leaders. One Orthodox clergyman whom Gardiner solicited was Saint Hilarion of Verey (1886–1929). In a letter written in 1917, on the eve of the Russian Revolution, when Ecumenism was still institutionally inchoate, Saint Hilarion, in response to his Protestant interlocutor, displays great dexterity with ecumenical ideology; and he does so, interestingly enough, by citing the thinking of a less-astute Orthodox clergyman who had come to embrace the ecclesiological presuppositions taken as “givens” by Protestants like Gardiner:

[...In Ecumenical theology,] all communities which call themselves Christian comprise one Church of Christ, albeit weakened in her unity. Such a theory on the unity of the church is not alien to some of the Russian theologians as well. Thus, the archpriest P[avel] Ya[kovlevich] Svetlov [1861–1945] asserts that the Christian creeds

⁴⁴ Carnegie Samuel Calian, *Icon and Pulpit: The Protestant–Orthodox Encounter* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 69, 72.

of the West comprise, along with the Orthodox faith, Christian churches belonging to the Catholic Church, and that they are not extra-ecclesiastical communities separated from the Church; that the extant Christian churches in the West and in the East are local churches or parts of the Catholic Church, and for any of them to assume the right of the Catholic Church constitutes misappropriation. At the same time, the Catholic Church is, in Fr. Svetlov's opinion, a unity of true believers, scattered everywhere in all local or particular Christian churches in the West and in the East, or, what amounts to the same thing, an aggregate of local churches of the East and the West which, in the absence of a possibility of convoking an Oecumenical Council and with the Church in a state of external division, is deprived of a complete outward or visible organization, yet in possession of an internal unity of faith and of grace-filled life in Christ, Who Himself is at the head of His Church or Body.⁴⁵

Clearly, Father Svetlov had accepted the distinction between a "Visible Church" and an "Invisible Church" as a valid ecclesiological premise. Saint Hilarion, however, was not so easily duped by this notion, which he outright rejected as incompatible with the Patristic ecclesiology of Orthodoxy:

Such a doctrine of the Church is absolutely inadmissible..., since it was, beyond any doubt, alien to the ancient Church, where no reduced concept of Church unity had ever been known and where faith 'in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church' had always and invariably been professed through the ninth article of the Creed. ...The Christian Church is not a philosophical or theological school, an affiliation with which is sufficiently determined by the acknowledgement of its theoretical precepts. The principal truth of Christianity, its great mystery—the Incarnation of the Son of God—is acknowledged by all Christian creeds, yet this alone cannot fuse them into one Church. For, according to the Apostle James (II, 19), the devils also believe; as attested by the Gospel, they confessed their faith like the Apostle Peter did (Matt. XVI, 16; VIII,

⁴⁵ *The Unity of the Church and the World Conference of Christian Communities (Letter to Mr. Robert Gardiner, secretary of the Commission to arrange a World Conference of Christian Communities)*, trans. Margaret Jerinec, ed. Monastery Press (Montréal, QC: Monastery Press, 1975), pp. 12–13.

26; Mark I, 24; Luke VIII, 28). But do they belong to one Church of Christ?⁴⁶

And by the “one Church of Christ,” Saint Hilarion obviously means, in the words of the late Bulgarian theologian, Archimandrite Sergius (1924–2008),

the Church of Christ that struggled for the triumph of Orthodoxy against heresy, [which] came to be called the *Orthodox Church*. ...[I]t logically follows that Orthodoxy is not just *one of the many forms of Christianity*, along with the legitimate existence of other, non-Orthodox forms of Christianity; *our Orthodox Faith is Christianity itself, in its most pure and one and only authentic form*. When juxtaposed to Orthodoxy, all of the rest of the so-called Christian denominations are essentially alien to true Christian—that is, *Orthodox*—spirituality and the essence of the Faith.⁴⁷

Saint Hilarion of Verey ultimately comes to a stingingly frank conclusion about the Ecumenical Movement: that it openly “proclaim[s] the greatest lie of all: that one can be a Christian while denying the Church.”⁴⁸

The Protestant lobbying of the Orthodox Church finally hit pay dirt, however, in 1920, when the Patriarchate of Constantinople issued a watershed document, an Encyclical entitled “Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere.” Its very title, which refers to *all* ecclesiastical bodies, whether Orthodox or not, ushered in a change in the Orthodox world, for it marked the first time that an Orthodox Church endorsed the use of the term “Churches” for heterodox bodies, not as *a terminological expedient*, but as *an ecclesiological concession*. Largely authored by Metropolitan Germanos of Thyateira (1872–1951), this encyclical was, as Father Heers demonstrates, an iconoclastic betrayal of traditional Orthodox ecclesiology and an opportunistic capitulation to Ecumenical Protestant ecclesiology:

In the Encyclical a new consideration was being urged upon the churches, ‘that they should no more consider one another as strangers and foreigners, but as relatives, and as being a part of the household of Christ and “fellow heirs, members of the same body

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.

⁴⁷ Archimandrite Sergius, “Christianity and Orthodoxy,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XV, No. 4 (1998), pp. 6–7.

⁴⁸ Holy New-Martyr Archbishop Ilarion (Troitsky), *Christianity or the Church?* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1985), p. 29.

and partakers of the promise of God in Christ” (Eph. 3:6).’ In commenting on this passage in 1929, Metropolitan Germanos himself... interprets it thus[ly]: ‘How wide the conception is which the Encyclical teaches at this point becomes clear in *that it widens the notion of the relationships between the members of a single church—* as members of one body according to St. Paul’s wonderful teaching—*so as to apply it to the relationships between several churches.*’ ...Here is the cornerstone of the ecumenical policy of the Patriarchate and the key point of synchronization with the developing ‘ecumenical ecclesiology’ of the Protestants. In widening the notion of the church to include bodies neither ecclesiastically, sacramentally, or dogmatically in communion with the Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Germanos is in perfect harmony both with...‘evangelical ecclesiology’ which speaks of a ‘fellowship of an *invisible* church of Christ to which all “vital” Christians belonged,’ as well as the succeeding ‘ecumenical ecclesiology’ which, although quite similar in its admission of an existing invisible ‘mystical’ Body of Christ, seeks a *manifest* unity in Christ. Metropolitan Germanos’ radical reinterpretation and ‘broadening’ of St. Paul’s teaching concerning the Body of Christ was not something limited to him, but, as would be natural in the overwhelmingly Protestant setting of the movement’s gatherings, such ecclesiological ‘broad mindedness’ permeated the entire atmosphere of ecumenical engagement. This led to the adoption by Orthodox ecumenists—consciously or unconsciously—of Protestant ecclesiological attitudes. ...With the encyclical, the Patriarchate did not simple [*sic*] change its stance vis-à-vis the heterodox confessions, it changed its understanding of the Orthodox Church itself.⁴⁹

This concurrence with the Protestant ideology of Ecumenism went hand-in-hand with the employment of the Papist methodology of Neo-Papism—“canonical subordinationism.” The Encyclical of 1920 listed several practical proposals intended to inaugurate its new ecumenical ecclesiology, the first and foremost of which was “the acceptance of a uniform calendar for the celebration of the great Christian feasts at the same time by all the churches.”⁵⁰ This principle was fully approved by

⁴⁹ Heers, “The Missionary Origins of Modern Ecumenism: Milestones leading up to 1920,” p. 12, 14.

⁵⁰ “Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1920,” *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements 1902–1975*, ed. Constantin G. Patelos (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978), p. 41.

the “Pan-Orthodox” Congress of 1923, leading to the adoption, in 1924, of the what was absurdly called the “New Julian” or “Revised Julian” Calendar—a thinly disguised version of the Gregorian Calendar (that is, the Papal Calendar) with the Orthodox *Paschalion* artlessly grafted onto it—by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. We see in action, here, the principle of self-validation spoken of by Father Schmemmann: The Encyclical of 1920 and the “Pan-Orthodox” Congress of 1923 became “canonical” because they were “recognized” as such by the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Yet, as Father Schmemmann reminds us: “This did not make...[them] either Orthodox or canonical.”⁵¹ As Bishop Photii of Triaditza points out regarding the former, “[T]he Encyclical [of 1920] became the first public attempt by the Constantinopolitan Throne to usurp the authority of the One, Holy, Orthodox Church”⁵²—it was a Neo-Papist power grab. With regard to the Church,

*[i]n agreement with the Holy Canons, ecclesiastical questions of a local and general significance are to be discussed exclusively by a council of Bishops who have flocks and Dioceses, and not by ‘congresses,’ ‘meetings,’ or ‘conferences.’ From a canonical point of view, the ‘Pan-Orthodox’ Congress in Constantinople was uncanonical in its formation, authority, and establishment. Therefore, its decisions, though made in the name of the entire Orthodox Church, are without any authority and have no significance for the local Orthodox Churches. Furthermore, the very content of these decisions is in direct opposition to the Canons of the Orthodox Church.*⁵³

Uncanonical or not, because the Patriarchate of Constantinople had “officially” accepted Ecumenism and its attendant calendar innovation, this made it “valid” for the Orthodox Church of Greece, the Patriarchate of Constantinople’s closest “daughter” Church, to imitate its example and adopt the New Calendar. This unquestioning “canonical subordination” to the authority of Constantinople, where no such authority existed, represents a tendency towards Neo-Papism. To understand this phenomenon better, one need only examine the archetypal paradigm of Papism, the Roman Catholic Church—a name for the Papal Church

⁵¹ Schmemmann, “The Canonical Problem,” p. 73.

⁵² Bishop Photii of Triaditza, *The Road to Apostasy: Significant Essays on Ecumenism* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1995), p. 13.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

which is actually a theological oxymoron. How so? Consider the doctrine of the Papacy taught in its own *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

Particular Churches are fully catholic through their communion with one of them, the Church of Rome ‘which presides in charity.’ For with this church, by reason of its pre-eminence, the whole Church, that is the faithful everywhere, must necessarily be in accord. ...The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter’s successor, is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful. For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ and as pastor of the entire Church, has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered. The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys... infallibility in virtue of his office...as supreme pastor and teacher of the faithful.... [T]he bishops should not be thought of as vicars of the Pope. His ordinary and immediate authority over the whole Church does not annul, but on the contrary confirms and defends that of the bishops. Their authority must be exercised in communion with the whole Church under the guidance of the Pope.⁵⁴

According to this teaching, a given Church is “Catholic” only insofar as it is “Roman”; that is, a Local Church’s catholicity—its integrity, wholeness, and universality—is dependent upon and mediated through another specific Local Church, Rome, which Local Church is said to be *the* Universal Church—exclusively. Hence there arises the self-contradictory concept of “*Roman Catholicity*.” Furthermore, Papist ecclesiology holds that the Pope preserves correct dogma and morals by sheer “virtue of his office,” as Bishop of Rome, and that, as “Vicar of Christ” and “Head of the Church,” he is the “Bishop of Bishops,” a notion that flagrantly contravenes the equality of Hierarchs unequivocally expressed in the Patristic ecclesiology of Saint Ignatios the God-Bearer, which we previously examined. In Roman Catholicism, then, we have not œcumenicity, the localization of the universal, but the very reversal thereof—*anti-œcumenicity*, the universalization of the local, *viz.*, the “Romanization” (or “Frankification”) of the world. Papism is a curious idea, and Saint Justin of Célije scathingly censures it as such:

⁵⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York, NY: Catholic Book Publishing, 1994), pp. 221, 234–235, 237.

In its essence, western Christianity is fundamentally humanistic since it has declared man infallible, thus transforming the theanthropic religion into a humanistic one. Proof of this is found in the fact that the Roman Church transported the God-man back to heaven and in His place put a substitute: *Vicarius Christi*.... What a tragic absurdity: to appoint a substitute and representative for the all-present Lord and God! It is, however, a fact that this absurdity was realized in western Christianity. Thus, the de-incarnation of the incarnate God, the de-incarnation of the God-man, was somehow accomplished. Western Christian humanism proclaimed that the all-present God-man was not present in Rome and thus appointed His substitute in the person of an infallible man. It is as if this humanism were saying to the God-man: Depart from this world and go to the next since we have your representative who infallibly represents you in everything. ...Through the dogma of infallibility the pope usurped for himself, that is for man, the entire jurisdiction and all the prerogatives which belong only to the Lord God-man. He effectively proclaimed himself as the Church, the papal church, and he has become in her the be-all and end-all, the self-proclaimed ruler of everything. In this way the dogma of the infallibility of the pope has been elevated to the central dogma... of the papacy. And the pope cannot deny this in any way as long as he remains pope of a humanistic papacy. ...The dogma of papal infallibility is not only heresy but the greatest heresy against the True Church of Christ, which has existed in our terrestrial world as a theanthropic body ever since the appearance of the God-man. ...This dogma is the heresy of heresies, a revolt without precedent against the God-man Christ on this earth...⁵⁵

It is to this same temptation that the Patriarch of Constantinople inclines each time that he promotes himself as the “Head of the Orthodox Church,” thereby gradually transforming the Œcumenical Patriarchate into the Ecumenist Neo-Papacy. Ironically, it was a Roman Hierarchy who first articulated the danger of this temptation to Patriarchal thinking. When Saint John the Faster (†595), Patriarch of Constantinople, adopted the title “Œcumenical Patriarch” in 587, Saint Gregory the Dialogist (*ca.* 540–604), Pope of Rome, took quick issue with “the proud and pestiferous title of œcumenical, that is to say, universal”:⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Father Justin, *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, pp. 90–91, 104, 111–112.

⁵⁶ “Selected Epistles of Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome,” trans. Rev. James Barmby, Vol.

Wherefore, dearest brother [John], with all thy heart love humility, through which the concord of all the brethren and the unity of the holy universal Church may be preserved. ...If...[Saint Paul] shunned the subjecting of the members of Christ partially to certain heads, as if beside Christ, though this were to the apostles themselves, what wilt thou say to Christ, who is the Head of the universal Church, in the scrutiny of the last judgment, having attempted to put all his members under thyself by the appellation of Universal? ...Certainly Peter, the first of the apostles, himself a member of the holy and universal Church, Paul, Andrew, John,— what were they but heads of particular communities? And yet all were members under one Head [Christ]. And (to bind all together in a short girth of speech) the saints before the law, the saints under the law, the saints under grace, all these making up the Lord's Body, were constituted as members of the Church, and not one of them has wished himself to be called universal.⁵⁷

Let us be clear though: Saint Gregory, the Pope of Rome, took umbrage with Saint John styling himself the “Œcumenical Patriarch.” Imagine what he would have thought of the prerogatives claimed by his later successors, who styled themselves the “Universal Pontiff.” Pope Gregory clearly appreciated the ecclesiological principle of genuine Christianity: that every Hierarch, be he Bishop, Archbishop, Metropolitan, Catholicos, Patriarch, or Pope, possesses, *qua* Hierarch, full œcumenicity and that “...if one... [Hierarch] is universal bishop, it remains that...[the other Hierarchs] are not bishops.”⁵⁸

Taking the lead in ecumenism has, however, provided an ideal opportunity for the modern Patriarch of Constantinople to behave more and more like a Neo-Papal “universal bishop”:

From the [Ecumenical] movement's very inception it was, significantly, the ecumenical Patriarchate which took the initiative and leadership by supporting a policy of full participation. That nu-

XIII, 2nd Ser., of *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1969), p. 18.

⁵⁷ “Register of the Epistles of Saint Gregory the Great,” trans. Rev. James Barmby, Vol. XII, 2nd Ser., of *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1969), p. 166–167.

⁵⁸ “Selected Epistles of Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome,” p. 19.

merous other jurisdictions followed suit is, in some measure, due to its encouragement and affirmative attitude.⁵⁹

So it was that the Orthodox Church of Greece, even though it consciously realized that the implementation of the farce that was Constantinople's "New Julian" Calendar was not only *uncanonical* but even *anti-canonical*, nevertheless proceeded to its implementation based on nothing more than the Œcumenical Patriarch's legitimation of the Papal Calendar, in an illicit act of reform, "by virtue of his office":

On January 16, 1923, a committee of theologians and clerics appointed by the Church of Greece to study the calendar issue submitted the following decision to the Church Prelacy: '...a regional Church cannot separate itself and unilaterally accept the New Calendar without rendering itself schismatic with respect to the other [Orthodox] Churches.' Despite this warning, a decision was made by the Church of Greece to adopt the Gregorian Calendar the following year. And, indeed, division was the outcome. Firstly, the Church of Greece divided itself from the Liturgical unity of the Orthodox Church, which is maintained by a Festal Calendar common to all local Churches. It also broke from the decisions of many inter-Orthodox synods, which had flatly refused to adopt the Gregorian Calendar, not only because such a change would interfere with the liturgical unity of the Church, but because they found something irregular about the authority by which the Latin Pontiff had so dictatorially imposed this change on society. [These include, in particular, the Synods of Constantinople of 1583, 1587, and 1593.] ...[Thus,] the Church of Greece became divided in 1924. It is not true that the Old Calendarists broke away from the Church. In fact, if one were to argue idly for a schism having taken place—and this is not perhaps wise—, it would be the State Church, in the view of its own theological advisors, that fell into schism. The fact is simply that the Church of Greece became divided with the calendar innovation and that it has not yet regained its ecclesiastical health and wellbeing in a much-longed-for unity in its ranks.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Aristeides Papadakis, "History of the Orthodox Church," *A Companion to the Greek Orthodox Church*, ed. Fotios K. Litsas (New York, NY: Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America, 1984), p. 28.

⁶⁰ Bishop Chrysostomos, Bishop Auxentios, and Bishop Ambrose, *The Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1994), pp. 55–57.

The uncanonicity of Ecumenism—which has long since transmogrified from a pan-Protestant, transdenominational pipe dream into a pan-religious, syncretistic circus—is thus emblemized by the New Calendar—to use the words of Father Schmemmann—

for the simple reason that it does not comply with the canonical tradition or the *truth* of the church. For the purpose of the Hierarchy is precisely to keep pure and undistorted the tradition in its fulness, and if and when it sanctions or even tolerates anything contrary to the truth of the church, it puts itself under the condemnation of canons.⁶¹

And it was not merely the calendar innovation that was in question; at every step along the way, the Orthodox Church's participation in the Ecumenical Movement has involved egregious and obstreperous breaches of the Holy Canons. Never one to equivocate, Saint Justin of Ćelije has no patience with those who pretend that participation in the Ecumenical Movement is a matter of canonical indifference:

The 45th Canon of the Apostles thunders: 'Let any Bishop or Presbyter, or Deacon that merely joins in prayer with heretics be suspended, but if someone has permitted them to perform any service as Clergyman, let him be deposed' (cf. 33rd Canon of the Synod of Laodicea). Isn't this canon obvious? Even to a gnat? The 65th Canon of the Apostles directs: 'If a clergyman, or layman, enter [*sic*] a synagogue of the Jews, or heretics, to pray, let him be both deposed and excommunicated,' and this is clear enough even for the most primitive mind. The 46th Canon of the Holy Apostles says: 'We command that any Bishop or Presbyter who accepts any heretic's baptism or sacrifice be deposed; for what accord does Christ have with Belial or what part has the believer with an infidel?' It is obvious even to a blind man that this commandment categorically directs us not to recognize any of the sacraments of the heretics and that we must consider them invalid and without divine grace.⁶²

Those clergymen and laymen of the Orthodox Church of Greece who rejected the Neo-Papist calendar reform and its Ecumenical justification, and who thereby proved themselves to be "the protector[s] of religion..., the very body of the Church, even the people themselves,

⁶¹ Schmemmann, "The Canonical Problem," p. 69.

⁶² Father Justin, *Orthodox Faith and Life in Christ*, p. 175.

who desire their religious worship to be ever unchanged and of the same kind as that of their fathers,”⁶³ came to be labelled “Old Calendarists,” an epithet that they embraced as an honorific comparable to the term “Iconodule” during the Iconoclastic Controversy (726–843). From 1924 to 1935, Athonite Hieromonks organized, consolidated, and expanded the Old Calendar movement into an Orthodox Ecclesiastical Community separate from the State Church of Greece. Then, in 1935, three Hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Greece agreed to shepherd the Old Calendarist flock and proceeded with the Consecration of additional Hierarchs; however, ecclesiological disagreements and defections marred the internal relationships of the “Old Calendar” Church, because once it had

gained a Hierarchy..., [s]ome of the less refined elements in the movement, motivated by true piety, but struck by the overzealousness that inevitably develops in movements that involve intensely held views, began to imagine that, since they now had Bishops and a Church, they were *the* Church of Greece.⁶⁴

However, one Hierarchy, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina (1870–1955), disputed this position as premature and triumphalistic, defining instead, as follows, the only viable canonical approach to the challenge of Ecumenism:

According to the spirit of the relevant Canons, when the Primate or the majority of the Hierarchs of a recognized Orthodox Church introduce into the Church an innovation that is contrary to the Canons and to Orthodox Divine worship, the right-believing Hierarchs of this Church are justified in breaking ecclesiastical communion with the innovators, even before a Synodal judgment, lest they, too, be responsible before the whole Church for the innovation that has been evilly and uncanonically introduced; but they cannot declare the innovating Hierarchs schismatics or subject them to deposition, for that is the exclusive prerogative of the entire Church when it comes together in a Synod, states its opinions with the aid of the Holy Spirit, and issues its verdict, after a thorough clarification and a detailed defense by the innovating Hier-

⁶³ “Encyclical of the Eastern Patriarchs: A Reply to the Epistle of Pope Pius IX, “To the Easterns”” (1848).

⁶⁴ Bishop Chrysostomos, Bishop Auxentios, and Bishop Ambrose, *The Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece*, pp. 62–63.

archs under judgment. When those who are right-believing sever ecclesiastical communion with a ruling Synod and cease to commemorate it, not only are they not condemned, but they are indeed extolled for *not* having created a schism, but rather having saved the Church from schism....⁶⁵

In his meticulous Patristic argumentation, Metropolitan Chrysostomos cites the Fifteenth Canon of the First–Second Synod as epitomical of the canonicity of breaking communion with and walling off from erring Hierarchs:

As for those who, on account of some heresy reprehended by Holy Synods or Fathers, separate themselves from communion with their First Hierarch, who, that is to say, is preaching this heresy publicly and teaching it brazenly in Church, such persons are not only not subject to any canonical penalty for walling themselves off, prior to a Synodal verdict, from communion with one who is called a Bishop, but will be deemed worthy of the honor due to Orthodox Christians. For they have not reprehended Bishops, but false bishops and false teachers, and have not sundered the unity of the Church through any schism, but have been sedulous to deliver the Church from schisms and divisions.⁶⁶

The repose of Metropolitan Chrysostomos in 1955 left the Old Calendarists temporarily without Episcopal leadership; however, this was soon rectified by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which continued the Hierarchy of the Greek “Old Calendar” Church by consecrating, in 1960, and co-consecrating, in 1962, new Hierarchs for this Ecclesiastical Community. Unfortunately, there remained extremist elements therein that regarded the Holy Mysteries of the State Church as devoid of salvific Grace. Eventually, these elements provoked endless schisms and divisions. To put an end to the scandalous internal vagaries of the Greek Old Calendarists, and to call it back to a united front against the real threat to all Orthodoxy—Ecumenism—, in 1979 there were attempts to reform the movement. This led to the formation, over time of the Synod in Resistance, under the Presidency of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle. This Synod has, since its inception, remained loy-

⁶⁵ *Resistance or Exclusion?: The Alternative Ecclesiological Approaches of Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina and Bishop Matthew of Vresthene*, trans. Hieromonk Patapios, ed. Archbishop Chrysostomos (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2000), p. 70.

⁶⁶ Fifteenth Canon of the First–Second Synod.

al to the vision of canonical unity championed by Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Phlorina, who,

[r]egarding the State Church, ...pointed out, in 1937, that it was not in actual schism, but that only a potential schism existed. He added that the Old Calendarists had walled themselves off from communion with the New Calendarists and organized in a proper Church structure, as the Holy Canons permit, since they were called by conscience to maintain the true and correct standards of the Church. He observed that this separation would exist until such a time as the calendar question and other innovations were decided upon in a lawful way, consistent with Holy Tradition—that is, by a general council of the whole Greek Church.⁶⁷

“[P]roper Church structure” calls for an Hierarchical Synod, “[t]he fundamental form and expression of episcopal unity,”⁶⁸ as Father Schmemmann points out:

It must be strongly emphasized...that...[canonical subordinationism] is the distortion of a fundamental truth: the unity and the interdependence of the bishops as the form of the Church’s unity. The error of canonical subordinationism is that it understands unity only in terms of subordination (of a bishop to his ‘superiors’) whereas, in Orthodox ecclesiology, subordination or obedience is derived from the unity of bishops. There is indeed no power *above* the episcopal power, but this power itself implies the bishop’s agreement and unity with the whole Episcopate, so that a bishop separated from the unity of bishops loses *ipso facto* his ‘power.’ In this sense a bishop is *obedient* and even *subordinated* to the unity and unanimity of bishops, but because he himself is a vital *member* of that unity. His subordination is not to a ‘superior,’ but to the very reality of the Church’s unity and unanimity of which the Synod of bishops is the gracious organ: ‘The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is first among them and account him as their head, and do nothing of consequence without his consent...but neither let him...do anything without the consent of all; *for so there will be unanimity*’ (Apost. Canon 34).⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Bishop Chrysostomos, Bishop Auxentios, and Bishop Ambrose, *The Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece*, p. 63.

⁶⁸ Schmemmann, “The Canonical Problem,” p. 80.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

The achievement of “the Church’s unity and unanimity”—specifically within the Orthodox Church of Greece and thence, generally, within the whole of the Orthodox Church—is thus the canonical *raison d’être* of the Synod in Resistance. To wit:

1. The Holy Synod in Resistance, with the help of God and the protection of the *Theotokos*, shepherds those pious Orthodox Christians who are, in the first place, *Anti-Ecumenists* and follow the *Patristic Calendar of the Church* (i.e., the Old Calendar), forming the *Ecclesiastical Community of the Anti-Ecumenists of the Patristic Calendar*.

2. The pious *Anti-Ecumenists* broke Mysteriological communion in 1924 with the so-called official Churches, which participate in the *Ecumenical Movement* and have adopted or accepted without protest the *New Calendar*, because they consider *Ecumenism* to be an ecclesiological heresy and the *New Calendar* a condemnable innovation.

3. The work of the Holy Synod in Resistance is primarily *unitive*, since it seeks to inform the faithful with regard to the heretical character of the *Ecumenical Movement*.

4. The sober and responsible promulgation of information on this subject will, with the help of God, awaken the *synodal (conciliar) conscience* of the Orthodox Church, with the aim of convoking a *General Union Synod* in the Truth of the Faith, so as to condemn heresy and to restore the festal unity of the Orthodox.⁷⁰

Metropolitan Cyprian augments this statement of the Synod in Resistance’s self-identity by delineating what it is and what it is not:

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.

It is, however, profoundly aware that

⁷⁰ Orthodox Church of Greece, Synod in Resistance, “The Orthodox Resistance Against the Ecclesiastical Heresy of Syncretistic Ecumenism: Basic Ecclesiastical and Canonical Positions,” (Phyle, Greece: 2006).

—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.⁷¹

Only when the so-called, self-proclaimed, and self-styled “official” Churches put aside their Neo-Papal lust for power, typified by “canonical subordinationism,” and return to the Orthodox “canon of truth,” incarnated by continuity, authenticity, and œcumenicity, will they be canonically validated:

Canonicity gains additional force, not when it is applied to claims concerning rank and jurisdiction, sees, prerogatives, and commemorations, in which it is possible for ignoble motivations such as egotism and primacy to intrude, but when it is applied above all to matters of faith, because these have to do with unselfish, disinterested, and dispassionate love for God and His Holy Church, the truth of which must remain genuine and unadulterated unto the ages.⁷²

So it is that, together with its canonical Sister Churches—the True (Old Calendar) Church of Romania, the True (Old Calendar) Church of Bulgaria, and the Provisional Supreme Ecclesiastical Authority of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad—, the canonical Orthodox Church of Greece, the Holy Synod in Resistance, issues a clarion call to “every Episcopate of the Orthodox...[to] teach aright the word of...[the Lord’s] truth”⁷³ by resisting the diabolical panheresy of Ecumenism. □

⁷¹ Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, *The Heresy of Ecumenism and the Patristic Stand of the Orthodox*, trans. Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna and Hieromonk Patapios (Etna, CA: Center for traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1998), pp. 50–51.

⁷² Protopresbyter Theodore Zissis, “What Synod Will Enforce Adherence to the Canons?” *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 1559 (July 16, 2004), pp. 3–4.

⁷³ Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostomos. Text translated and compiled by the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery.