

# The *Kollyvades*<sup>1</sup> Movement and the Advocacy of Frequent Communion

The following essay constitutes Section 2 of Part I, the introductory remarks to the first annotated translation into the English language of the treatise on Holy Communion, *Concerning Frequent Communion*, by St. Makarios of Corinth and St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain, contained in a recent book by Hieromonk Patapios and Archbishop Chrysostomos, *Manna from Athos: The Issue of Frequent Communion on the Holy Mountain in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Vol. II in the series Byzantine and Neohellenic Studies, edited by the Reverend Professor Andrew Louth and Professor David Ricks (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Mount Athos, or the Holy Mountain (*Hagion Oros*), as most Greeks call it, has been the subject of literally hundreds of books in many different languages in modern times and has captured the attention of writers and travellers for many centuries, beginning only a few years after its founding more than a thousand years ago. For the contemporary English reader, there are two interesting volumes that capture the spiritual character and history of this semi-autonomous monastic republic in northern Greece: that of Constantine Cavarnos, *Anchored in God*,<sup>2</sup> a kind of “spiritual travelogue” of the au-

1 We should, for those readers not conversant with Greek, note that the word “*Kollyvades*” is variously spelled, in the relevant literature, sometimes with a double *lambda*, sometimes with a single. With regard to transliteration, except in the case of titles, quotations, and encyclopedic entries, we have also retained the contemporary use of “v” for *beta* – hence, “*Kollyvades*” instead of “*Kollybades*.” We might also note the variant transliterations of the Greek letter *kappa* and our use of both “*Macarios*” and “*Makarios*” and “*Nicodemos*” and “*Nikodemos*.”

2 Constantine Cavarnos, *Anchored in God*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1975).

thor's visit to the Holy Mountain, first published more than fifty years ago while he was Fulbright Scholar in Greece; and a recent volume by Graham Speake, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise*.<sup>3</sup> The latter volume contains a rich historical account of the Holy Mountain, "from earliest times to the present,"<sup>4</sup> and describes the customs of the Holy Mountain, touching on various subjects – from the spiritual life of the monks to the widely misunderstood rule prohibiting women visitors – with sympathetic objectivity. There is also a remarkably useful thumbnail sketch of Mount Athos in the introductory pages to Nicholas Fennell's study of the Russian presence on Mount Athos (which appeared in 2001), wherein the author discusses the history and ethnic make-up of the twenty major monastic houses and smaller dependencies and communities that constitute this unique monastic center, as well as the general administration of the peninsula.<sup>5</sup> From these sources, there emerges a portrait of Athos as a barometer of the spiritual life of the Orthodox Church, even if the multi-national and more catholic flavor of the place has grown somewhat dimmer over the last several centuries. It was in this arcane realm, this laboratory for spiritual pursuits, that a relatively small group of Athonite monks, struggling to restore under the aegis of the so-called *Kollyvades* movement the ancient practice of frequent Communion in the Orthodox Church, provoked a controversy that was to have ramifications for the entire Orthodox Church, both in their age and subsequently. Indeed, the issues which they raised and championed are still at the forefront of efforts to address the spiritual needs of the Orthodox Church and the formalism in piety and decline in Eucharistic participation that we traced, in the preceding section, to a certain rupture with the zeal and practice of the early Church, in which Orthodoxy finds its source, integrity, and ethos.

No single debate, after the Hesychastic Controversy in the fourteenth century, had such an impact on the life of the Holy Mountain as the *Kollyvades* Controversy. It began somewhat inauspiciously in 1754 with a conflict at the Athonite Skete of St. Anne regarding the

3 Graham Speake, *Mount Athos: Renewal in Paradise* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

4 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

5 Nicholas Fennell, *The Russians on Athos* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2001), pp. 17–22.

day on which the dead (in this case, the deceased benefactors of this small monastic community) were to be commemorated. According to ancient custom, the Orthodox Church has commonly commemorated the dead at memorial services following the Divine Liturgy on Saturdays or weekdays, but very seldom on Sunday, which has always been considered the day which pre-eminently represents the Resurrection and Christ's victory over death: a day of joy anticipating eternal life and separated from death. One faction of the monks in the skete reacted to the sudden innovation of celebrating memorial services on Sundays, which had been adopted to save time on Saturdays and to facilitate certain work projects at the skete. The dissenters pointed out that this change in practice was a violation of ancient tradition and wholly at odds with the image of those in the monastic estate as defenders and preservers *par excellence*, as one authority puts it, "ton hieron tes Ekklesias paradoseon" (of the sacred traditions of the Church).<sup>6</sup> Another faction of the monks, perhaps correctly noting that the commemoration of the dead has a Resurrection theme, in fact, and arguing that every Liturgy celebrated, whatever the day of the week, commemorates the Resurrection, downplayed the issue of tradition as a hallmark of Orthodox piety. They reacted, therefore, to their traditionalist fellows with derision, calling them "*Sabbatianoï*," from the Greek word *Sabbaton* (Saturday), in reference to their insistence on Saturday memorials for the dead, or "*Kollyvades*" and "*Kollyvistai*," after the *kollyva*, or boiled wheat<sup>7</sup> that is offered up and blessed during such memorial services in the Orthodox Church. All of these epithets were, of course, meant as bitter insults and "*eironikos*" (with ironic intent), as Konstantinos Papoulides writes in his short summary of the *Kollyvades* Controversy.<sup>8</sup> Archimandrite Eirenaios Deledemos, in his

6 Spyridon Makres, "Kollybades," in *Threskeutike kai Ethike Enkyklopaideia* (Athens: 1965), vol. VII, col. 742.

7 This boiled wheat is variously combined with honey, sugar, nuts, or dried fruits and often very ornately decorated on a tray or in a large bowl and placed on a table in the Church (usually in front of the icon of Christ on the *templon*, or iconostasis, or in the center of the nave), where it is blessed at the conclusion of the Liturgy in a special memorial service where the names of the dead to be commemorated are read by the Priest.

8 Konstantinos Papoulides, *To Kinema ton Kollybadon* (Athens: Ekklesiastikai Ekdoseis Ethnikes Hekatonpentekontaeteridos, 1971), p. 24.

extensive introduction to the 2002 edition of the standard compilation of the Church Canons, complains about the use of these terms, in contemporary times, to describe the holy personages who emerged from the *Kollyvades* movement as an “*anexegeton paradoxon*” (unexplained paradox) and decries this practice as inconsistent with the words of St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, who demanded, in his own day, that the critics of the movement “*pausoun apo to na onomazoun hemas Kolybadas*” (cease calling us *Kollyvades*).<sup>9</sup> However, another source points out that, over the passage of time, these contemptuous appellations became a “*timetikos titlos*” (title or badge of honor).<sup>10</sup>

As this dispute spread, with “the innovators insulting and persecuting the traditionalists,” as Professor Cavarinos observes, significant animosity arose between the two parties. Though the *Kollyvades* Fathers were frequently called fanatics and condemned for their adherence to what they saw as a defense of tradition, their movement was, in fact, a measured and considered attempt to address the deficits in spiritual life which had arisen in the post-Byzantine Church. In fact, one of their primary concerns, aside from the issue of fidelity to the proper ritualistic traditions of the Church, was a return to a Eucharistic-centered spirituality and the precepts preached by the Hesychasts in the fourteenth century. As Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia succinctly points out,

[t]hroughout the Turkish period the traditions of Hesychasm remained alive, particularly on Mount Athos. Here during the second half of the eighteenth century there arose an important movement of spiritual renewal, whose effects can still be felt today. Its members, known as the *Kollyvades*, were alarmed at the way in which all too many of their fellow Greeks were falling under the influence of the Western Enlightenment. The *Kollyvades* were convinced that a regeneration of

9 See *Syntagma ton Theion kai Hieron Kanonon*, ed. G. Ralles and M. Potles (Thessaloniki: Basil Regopoulos, 2002), vol. I, p. 14, n. 30. In this same note, Deledemos observes that the Serbian Archimandrite (now Metropolitan) Amfilohije Radović, in a lecture in Thessaloniki in 1984, suggested that a better term for the *Kollyvades* Fathers might be the “*neoneptikoi*” Fathers, or Neo-Neptic Fathers, from the Greek word *nepsis*, or spiritual watchfulness (inward vigilance over the thoughts and passions), a fundamental characteristic of Hesychastic spirituality.

10 Makres, “*Kollybades*,” col. 743.

the Greek nation would come, not through embracing the secular ideas fashionable in the west, but only through a return to the true roots of Orthodox Christianity – through a rediscovery of Patristic theology and Orthodox liturgical life. In particular, they advocated frequent communion – if possible, daily – although at this time most Orthodox communicated only three or four times a year. For this the Kollyvades were fiercely attacked on the Holy Mountain and elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

We must admit that this link between the *Kollyvades* Fathers (or Neo-Hesychasts and Neo-Neptics) and the high spirituality championed by the Hesychasts was not acknowledged by their critics, who often misunderstood the lofty theological precepts that the more erudite among the traditionalists upheld under the banner of Saturday commemorations of the dead and the practice of frequent Communion. And their critics are not confined to their era; indeed, there are contemporary critics of the *Kollyvades* Fathers who believe that the connections between them and the Hesychasts are tenuous at best.

For example, Charilaos Tzogas, in his doctoral dissertation on the *Kollyvades* movement, argues that, though certain analogies can be drawn between the Hesychastic movement and the *Kollyvades* movement, there is no “amesos schesis kai synapheia” (direct relationship or connection), since the former concerned theological matters and the latter matters of ritual.<sup>12</sup> He further contends that the *Kollyvades* Controversy was symptomatic of the “*synteretikon pneuma*” (conservative spirit) among certain elements on the Holy Mountain and that it is characteristic, not of healthy spiritual renewal, but of a tradition of extremism that he attributes to a “*austeran paradosin*” (strict tradition) on Mount Athos, a tradition which it, and the many other products of monastic zealotry, share in a kind of conceptual kinship.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly enough, his rather negative assessment of the *Kollyvades* traditionalists is capped with an offhand reference to the Old Calendar movement, which is frequently used as a disparaging referent by Orthodox clergy of more

11 Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), pp. 99–100.

12 Charilaos Tzogas, *He Peri Mnemosynon Eris en Hagio Orei Kata ton IH Aiona* (Thessaloniki: Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, 1969), p. 142.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 142–143.

modernistic bent.<sup>14</sup> Tzogas' caricature of the *Kollyvades* movement notwithstanding, Kallistos' assessment of it seems to reflect the prevailing attitude of scholars, who praise the constructive and positive aims of the movement and typically characterize its leaders as "men of high intellectual caliber, educated in the ancient Greek and Christian literatures and well versed in the biblical and Patristic sources of the Church."<sup>15</sup> Cavarnos, echoing these positive sentiments towards the *Kollyvades* Fathers, writes: "The eighteenth century was a high point in Athonite scholarship, as well as in moral and spiritual vigor, rivaling the fourteenth, which is particularly known for the spirited and victorious defenses of Hesychasm by St. Gregory Palamas."<sup>16</sup> He goes on to quote Archimandrite Gabriel (1886–1983), Abbot of the Monastery of St. Dionysios on Mount Athos, who portrays the leaders of the *Kollyvades* movement with unbridled positive enthusiasm:

From the middle of the eighteenth century there began a spiritual endeavor which soon created a movement for [...] arousing the aspiration for learning, awakening the Greek people spiritually and

- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 143. Like the monks on Mount Athos, the Greek Old Calendarists (*Palαιοemerologitai*), and groups of Old Calendarists in Romania and Bulgaria, follow the Orthodox Church Calendar, a solilunar calendar based on a liturgical year calculated in part by the Old, or Julian, Calendar. When, in the early 1920s, the State Church of Greece adopted the Revised Julian Calendar (which sets the liturgical year, in part, by the New, or Gregorian, Calendar, except for the Saturdays and Sundays of Great Lent and Pascha, or Easter), the Old Calendarists resisted what they saw as a departure from Church tradition. In the 1930s, when several Bishops from the State Church returned to observance of the Church Calendar, the Old Calendarists organized a separate Church administration. Despite persecution during the early years of the movement, "[i]n the 1930s and 1940s," as Bishop Kallistos comments, they constituted a large part of the Church of Greece, with their own hierarchy "with some 800 parishes and as many as a million sympathizers" (in addition to a huge number of monastic communities). "But more recently they have split into a number of rival groups" – primarily over the question of Grace among the New Calendarists – "and lost most of their influence." See Ware, *Orthodox Church*, p. 302.
- 15 George S. Bebis, introduction to *Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain: A Handbook of Spiritual Counsel*, by Peter A. Chamberas, George Bebis, and Stanley Harakas (New York and Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 12.
- 16 Constantine Cavarnos, *Orthodoxy and Philosophy* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2003), p. 128.

transmitting to them the truths of Christianity through the publication of the writings of the Fathers in simple idiom, and through sermons. This movement produced fruits which both in quality and in quantity surpassed all other periods of Hagiorite life.<sup>17</sup>

The reputed good aims and intentions of the *Kollyvades* Fathers aside, the dispute over memorial services for the dead and frequent Communion provoked astonishingly fierce hostility and crude reactions from the opponents of the movement. For the most part, the issue was little understood by the simple monks who took up the battle against the traditionalists and, as is often the case with popular resistance, they were occasionally more motivated by zeal than perspicacity. Among their leaders, some of whom were quite adequately schooled in theology and Patristics, there was a tendency towards acrimonious condemnation that simply flamed the fires of dissent. Theodoretos of Ioannina († 1823), for one, was a polemicist of no mean ability. A monk of the Skete of St. Anne, where the *Kollyvades* movement first began, he was aided in his writing by his nephew, a monk at New Skete. The author of a history of Mount Athos, his formidable scholarly skills apparently did not prevent him from employing forgery and chicanery against his opponents, if more conventional methods failed.<sup>18</sup> He was also apparently not beyond the expression of odiously anti-Semitic remarks against one of the leaders of the *Kollyvades* movement, who was a monk of Jewish descent (*vide infra*). Another of the opponents of the *Kollyvades* traditionalists was the monk Bessarion (b. ca. 1738 in Rapsane, Thesaly), a superbly educated monk from New Skete who had studied in Ioannina, on Mount Athos, and in Constantinople. Bessarion was nothing short of vicious in his opposition to the *Kollyvades* Fathers, and his accusations against and misrepresentations of them in divers complaints to the Oecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople, both with regard to their opposition to Sunday commemorations of the dead and their emphasis on frequent Communion, undoubtedly led

17 Quoted by Cavarnos, *ibid.*, pp. 127–128, from *Lausaikon tou Hagiou Orous* (Volos: 1953), p. 10. Translation that of Professor Cavarnos.

18 Papoulides, *Kinema ton Kollybadon*, p. 41. The author repeats a shocking accusation widely made against Theodoretos; that is, that he intercepted a letter from St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite to a certain savant in Constantinople, unsealed it, and then sent it on with various adulterations.

to the harsh pronouncements against the principals of the movement by Constantinople in 1776, which we will discuss shortly.<sup>19</sup>

It must also be said that some of the accusations of the opponents of the *Kollyvades* Fathers were simply beyond the pale of what one would expect from monastics and churchmen of any rank. For example, Tzogas reports that St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, on account of his support of frequent Communion, was accused of having a portable *artophorion* (tabernacle) hidden in his *kalymmauchion* (the cylindrical hat worn by Orthodox clerics), from which he would communicate at will, and in particular during his travels.<sup>20</sup> This absurd rumor was, in fact, so ubiquitous that the Saint felt obliged to address it in one of his apologetic texts. He states that, on hearing this ludicrous story, he found it laughable – if not to be condemned for the implicit hatred and slander from a brother monk – since the opportunity to communicate properly in church and from a Priest was at all times available to him.<sup>21</sup> There is also the rather unseemly claim attributed to a certain Gregory, an anti-*Kollyvades* monk, that one of the *Kollyvades* Fathers was found dead “*en apochoreterio*,” that is, in the privy, with the “Body of Christ on his chest” (presumably in a container of some sort around his neck).<sup>22</sup> The implication here is, of course, that in prescribing frequent Communion, the *Kollyvades* followers had developed an impious attitude towards the Eucharistic Mystery. Aside from derision, there were also instances of book-burning by anti-*Kollyvades* monks. Athanasios Parios (*vide infra*), in his life of St. Makarios of Corinth, makes reference to such an instance, attributing it to demonic inspiration.<sup>23</sup> And finally, some of the *Kollyvades* traditionalists are said to have lost their lives at the hands of their monastic opponents. Astonishing as this seems, Athanasios Parios reports, in

19 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

20 Tzogas, *Peri Mnemosynon Eris*, p. 120.

21 Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Homologia Pisteos etoi Apologia Dikaiotate* (Venice: 1819), p. 84.

22 Monk Gregory, “Hypomnema eis eidos epistoles stalen ek Boukourestiou tes Dakias kat’ aitesin tou Panierotatou Archiepiskopou Myron tes Lykias Iouannou Lindou, paroikountos en To Hagio Orei Atho, en te Hiera Mone ton Iberon,” Koutloumousiou Monastery, codex 530, folio 268a.

23 *Ho Megas Synaxaristes tes Orthodoxou Ekklesias*, 5th ed. (Athens: Matthew Langes, 1979), vol. IV, p. 308.

a rather detailed description, that two monks from the Skete of St. Elias – Hieromonk Paisios and his Elder, Father Theophanes – were actually drowned by the leader of a band of brigands, “Captain Markos,” who was ordered by anti-*Kollyvades* monks from the Skete of St. Anne, with the collaboration of monks from New Skete, to kill them.<sup>24</sup>

This is not to say that there were not, among the *Kollyvades* traditionalists, individuals of austere character. In addition to simple monks who also fought the traditionalist fight with more fervor than reflection, among the significant leaders of the movement there were allegedly some tumultuous voices. St. Athanasios Parios († 1813), for example, is accused by Tzogas of being contentious, anti-Western, and even anti-scientific. He cites, as evidence of these foibles, a letter from one of Parios’ more famous students, the educator Benjamin of Lesbos, to the teacher Dorotheos Proios, in which Benjamin refers to his former instructor as “*athliotatos*” (most wretched), as well as an objection, expressed by the Saint, to the “*epistemikon charaktera*” (scientific character) – a veiled reference to Western thinking – of the curriculum of the school in Kydonia which Benjamin served as Principal.<sup>25</sup> Tzogas likewise excoriates Neophytos Kavsokalyvites († 1784), a Peloponnesian of Jewish ancestry, for his belligerence in criticizing those whom he considered un-Orthodox in their views.<sup>26</sup> These tenuous charges aside, there is little doubt that Father Athanasios Parios, despite his putative anti-Western sentiments (in fact, his “anti-European” sentiments were directed against the atheistic elements of the Enlightenment), was a notable scholar, a master of Greek letters, and a man of marked holiness who suffered unjust punishment from the Church authorities, having been falsely condemned “*hos hairetikos dia tous hyper tes Orthodoxias agonas tou*” (as a heretic for his struggles on behalf of Orthodoxy).<sup>27</sup> The graciousness of Parios, in contrast to the bombast of such anti-*Kollyvades* activists as Bessarion of Rapsane, is evident in his life of St. Makarios of Corinth, where he describes the malicious reports of Makarios’ teaching on frequent Communion to Constan-

24 Athanasios Parios, *Delosis tes en to Hagio Orei Tarachon Aletheias*, ed. Hieromonk Theodoretos Hagioreites (Athens: 1988), pp. 95–99.

25 Tzogas, *Peri Mnemosynon Eris*, p. 35.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

27 Papoulides, *Kinema ton Kollybadon*, p. 37.

tinople as the words of “a thoughtless Hagiorite monk.”<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Neophytos was also a monk of admirable virtue and immense learning, even if, as Papoulides – who holds him in great esteem – concedes, his “synteretikotes tou proekalesen ischyran antidrasin” (conservatism provoked strong opposition)<sup>29</sup> and, eventually, led to his departure from the Holy Mountain. Whatever the case, one would be hard-pressed to equate the alleged truculence of these two proponents of the *Kollyvades* movement with the reprehensible actions and offensive comportment of their opponents.

The two most outstanding *Kollyvades* figures – both, like Parios, recognized as Saints in the Orthodox Church – were Metropolitan Makarios of Corinth and Nikodemos the Hagiorite, whom we have mentioned and who co-authored the treatise *Concerning Frequent Communion*. Both of these remarkable men were unarguably of a character surpassing that of their opponents. They remained above the fray surrounding their efforts at the spiritual regeneration of the Orthodox faithful and avoided the scurrilous tactics of their opponents. And both personalities certainly confirm what we said earlier about the high level of scholarship and theological acumen that the leaders of the *Kollyvades* movement brought to bear on the issues that concerned them. St. Makarios Notaras hailed from a famous Byzantine aristocratic family and was a relative of St. Gerasimos of Kephallenia. In the life of the Saint penned by Athanasios Parios, it is said that he was distinguished by his “extreme brotherly love [...] and his great compassion for the needy.”<sup>30</sup> In fact, as evidence of his reputation for charitable works and dedication to his fellow man, when, in 1764, the Metropolitan of Corinth died, the populace of the city, out of their great respect and love for Makarios (or “Michael” – his secular name – who was then a teacher in Corinth and working without a salary),<sup>31</sup> elected him, as a layman, successor to their reposed Hierarch. He was sent to Constantinople, where he appeared before the Holy Synod and, in January of 1765, was at the age of thirty-four elevated to the rank of

28 Athanasios Parios, “Life of St. Macarios,” in Cavarnos, *St. Macarios of Corinth*, p. 59.

29 Papoulides, *Kinema ton Kollybadon*, p. 31.

30 Parios, “Life of St. Makarios,” in Cavarnos, *St. Macarios of Corinth*, p. 58. Translation that of Professor Cavarnos.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Metropolitan and assigned to the city of Corinth.<sup>32</sup> With regard to his service at Corinth, we read the following in his life:

When he returned to the province that had been entrusted to him by God, he saw how greatly he was loved by all; for the entire Christian population of the province celebrated the day of his return, rejoicing and glorifying God for having listened to their prayers and given them a *good Shepherd*. And indeed they were not at all wrong in their good expectations. For just as from his early youth Saint Makarios had manifested signs of greatness of soul and zeal for what is good, so now when he became a Bishop he confirmed all these things by deeds.<sup>33</sup>

Metropolitan Makarios was forced to abandon his see in 1768, when the Ottomans and Russia declared war, fearful of the dire consequences portended by the conflict. When the conflict finally ended, the Metropolitanate of Corinth was given to another person, though the Holy Synod in Constantinople gave Makarios the right to serve as a Bishop wherever he went. In subsequent years, he served the faithful in many parts of Greece and, in 1777, went to Mount Athos, where he perhaps wished to settle, as Parios seems to suggest in his life of the Saint. However, given the agitation of the anti-*Kollyvades* and the threats against him, he did not remain there. For the remainder of his life, he continued with indefatigable vigor his formidable efforts to educate the Orthodox faithful and to make spiritual texts available to them. Among those which he prepared for publication were such monuments of Orthodox mystical theology as the *Philokalia*, the *Evergetinos*, the works of St. Symeon the New Theologian, and, of course, *Concerning Frequent Communion*. In these projects, he worked with the aid of St. Nikodemos, who edited, emended, and expanded the works in question, and others, translating many of them, as well, into vernacular Greek.

The character and life of St. Nikodemos, too, bears witness to the refined and extraordinary men who led the *Kollyvades* movement. St. Nikodemos was born on the island of Naxos, in the Aegean. It was there that, according to Basileios Sphyroeras, he

32 Ioannes Konstantinides, "Makarios ho Notaras," in *Threskeutike kai Ethike Enkyklopaideia* (Athens: 1966), vol. VIII, col. 486.

33 Parios, "Life of St. Macarios," in Cavarnos, *St. Macarios of Corinth*, p. 45.

received his primary education, “most likely from some Priest.”<sup>34</sup> Cavarnos says that he was, in fact, educated by Archimandrite Chrysanthos Aitolos, the brother of the famed Apostle of the Greek nation, St. Kosmas Aitolos.<sup>35</sup> From Naxos the Saint went to Smyrna, where he studied for five years at the *Evangelike Schole*, a distinguished school for theological studies that also featured a curriculum of secular subjects and instruction in foreign languages. Thus Nikodemos became proficient, not only in theology and the various forms of the Greek language, but in Latin, Italian, and French also. After his studies in Smyrna, he visited Hydra, where he first met St. Makarios, a benchmark, as one source points out, of his “*carrière littéraire*” and the beginning of his long spiritual and scholarly association with the Saint.<sup>36</sup> By disposition, it is almost universally acknowledged that Nikodemos was a man of great refinement and personal kindness: “He was humble, sweet, meek, and without possessions,” one contemporary writer observes, and, despite accusations by some scholars that he was anti-Western,<sup>37</sup> “he did not hesitate to participate in a dialogue with Roman Catholic theologians.”<sup>38</sup> Though the Saint was uncompromising in his belief in the primacy of Orthodoxy, he did not hold this view to the point of a doctrine of exclusion or of antagonism towards the West; nor, indeed, was he at all sympathetic to religious intolerance. Thus, in responding to one of the more anserine accusations leveled against him by the anti-*Kollyvades*, that he and St. Makarios had taken their

34 Basileios Sphyroeras, “Nikodemos ho Hagioreites,” in *Threskeutike kai Ethike Enkyklopaidia* (Athens: 1966), vol. IX, col. 499.

35 Cavarnos, *St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite*, p. 12.

36 *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1931), s.v. “Nicodème l’Hagiorite.”

37 *Ibid.*, col. 490. In this entry, the French Assumptionist Venance Grumel takes umbrage with St. Nikodemos’ insistence that the entry of Roman Catholics into Orthodoxy must be through the administration of the Baptismal rite of the Orthodox Church, alleging that such views serve to explain “le sentiment antilatín qui anime le *Pedalion*,” or the Saint’s compilation of Church Canons. In fact, the Saint is simply expressing the *akribeia* (or exactitude) of the canonical witness. He does not, in fact, rule out the reception of converts by *oikonomia* (or canonical flexibility), nor do his views in this regard make him “anti-Western” in spirit.

38 Bebis, *Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain*, pp. 14–15. Cf. Cavarnos, *St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite*, pp. 61–62.

treatise on frequent Communion from a tract written by the Spanish Catholic cleric Miguel de Molinos (1640–1696)<sup>39</sup> – a charge revived in Tzogas’ assertion, in our day, that the treatise is “probably” a compilation of material taken both from de Molinos and “the Latin teacher Thomas à Kempis, the author of a work on the imitation of Christ”<sup>40</sup> – he characteristically states, referring to Latin custom, that

- 39 Dr. Michael de Molinos, Priest, *The Spiritual Guide*, ed. Kathleen Lyttelton (London: Methuen, 1907). The tract in question, “(Breve) Tratado de la Comuni3n cuotidiana,” is appended to the foregoing text in English translation: “A Brief Tract on Daily Communion.” The original MS is variously dated to 1675, 1685, and 1687. About de Molinos, who was condemned for the heresy of Quietism by Pope Innocent XI in 1687, see *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), s.v. “Miguel de Molinos.” While this work advocates frequent Communion, Father Theodoretos Hagioreites observes that de Molinos’ sources are primarily Latin Fathers and that he cites only three Greek Fathers (though, in fact, he cites twice that number, Father Theodoretos’ point is well taken); nor, as Theodoretos also remarks, does de Molinos cite a single Canon of the Eastern Church (see Monk Theodoretos Hagioreites, *Peri tes Synechous Metalepseos* [Athens: Ekdoseis “Tenos,” (1976)], p. 28, n. 21).
- 40 Tzogas, *Peri Mnemosynon Eris*, p. 129. As for the added reference to Thomas à Kempis, data supporting such speculation are simply nonexistent. One cannot find even traces of Thomas’ mysticism in *Concerning Frequent Communion*. It also goes without saying that, given the theological and Patristic erudition of Sts. Makarios and Nikodemos, they would have had no reason to turn to secondary sources for materials to support their views on frequent Communion, as amply evidenced in their work itself. Unfortunately, this kind of idle speculation is perpetuated without careful investigation. For example, in a chapter appended to the English translation of Schema-monk Metrophanes’ fascinating Russian tome, *Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky: The Life and Ascetic Labors of Our Father, Elder Paisius, Archimandrite of the Holy Moldavian Monasteries of Niamets and Sekoul. Optina Version* (Platina, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1976), the editors of the translation, dismissing the *Kollyvades* movement as one concerned with “pedestrian and rather narrow disputes [...] over the strict observance of Orthodox laws” (p. 96) – a peculiar assessment of such central issues as correct worship and frequent Communion – also contend that the *Kollyvades* Fathers were preoccupied with Western spiritual books, including de Molinos’ ideas about frequent Communion (p. 93). In the first place, their preoccupation was with the voluminous Greek Patristic texts which they compiled and edited, and not the several Western spiritual tracts that caught their attention adventitiously. As for de Molinos, there is not a shred of credible evidence that either St.

Hoi idikoi mas meta to schisma, antipheromenoi me alogon kai me kat' epignosin zelon kata ton Latinon, kai ta kalos kai kanonikos echonta par' ekeinois ethe kai nomima apebalon kakos kai adiakritos [...] (Our own [faithful], after the Schism, contending against the Latins with irrational and unwise zeal, have wrongly and indiscriminately rejected those customs and regulations of theirs that are good and canonical [...]).

Ta kakodoxa phronemata, kai ta paranoma ethe ton Latinon kai ton allon hairetikon prepei na misomen kai na apostrephometha; ei ti de heurisketai en autois orthos echon kai hypo ton kanonon ton hieron Synodon bebaioumenon, touto den prepei na misomen kai na apostrephometha, hina me lathomen kai autous tous kanonas misountes kai apostrephomenoi (The heterodox convictions and unlawful customs of the Latins and other heretics we must abhor and turn away from; but whatever is found in them to be correct and confirmed by the Canons of the Holy Synods, this we should not abhor or turn away from, lest we unwittingly abhor and turn away from those Canons).<sup>41</sup>

Therein lies the royal road of a man committed to the orthodoxy of his precepts in a spirit of Christian charity which also embraced what was good in those who, to his mind, had gone astray – a path that led him away from reputed anti-Western antipathy or enmities.

Makarios or St. Nikodemos ever saw or read his tract on frequent Communion.

In yet another instance of erroneous scholarship, Hieromonk Seraphim Rose claims that St. Makarios gleaned his ideas about frequent Communion from two seventeenth-century Westerners – “a man in France named Ardenon” and “someone named Miguel De [*sic*] Molinos” in Spain – and “translated whole chapters from one or both of these books” for his *Concerning Frequent Communion*, though he admits that “we cannot prove it right now” (“The Theological Writings of Archbishop John, and the Question of ‘Western Influence’ in Orthodox Theology,” *The Orthodox Word*, vol. XXX, Nos. 2–3 [1994], p. 155). Such regrettable musings simply reinforce the unfounded ideas put forth by Father M.-J. Le Guillou: *viz.*, that “[d]ans la question de la fréquente communion [...] il est clair aussi que l’inspiration est venue de l’Occident” (see his essay, “La renaissance spirituelle du XVIIIe siècle,” *Isis*, vol. VII [1960], p. 119). Indeed, Le Guillou even contends, in this same passage, that St. Nikodemos was “*sans doute*” influenced by the “Jesuit Fathers of Naxos.” Once more, even a cursory reading of the myriad texts from the Greek Fathers and Orthodox Canons cited by Sts. Makarios and Nikodemos in their work on frequent Communion would impugn such tendentious asseverations.

41 Nikodemos the Hagiorite, *Heortodromion* (Venice: 1836), p. 584, n. 1.

These, then, were the issues and players in the *Kollyvades* movement. Makarios and Nikodemos produced their work on frequent Communion in the midst of controversy, assailed by critics who were at times hostile and violent, and supported by monastic zealots not always working within the framework of the spiritual renewal to which the two Saints were so profoundly committed. In addition, they and their supporters risked harsh criticism from the Church authorities, exile, and, as we have seen, even death in their defense of Church tradition. To complete this picture, let us briefly summarize the manner in which the *Kollyvades* Controversy was eventually resolved – a resolution that came by way of compromise and which was not resolved until the eve of the Greek Revolution in 1821, when other matters held the attention of the Greeks and of the Orthodox Hierarchy. Reacting to the turmoil on Athos and petitions from the various parties in the dispute (in fact, primarily from the anti-*Kollyvades*, who, as in the case of Bessarion [*vide supra*], fueled the flames of the conflict with egregious polemics and hyperbolic accounts of events on the Holy Mountain), the Patriarchate in Constantinople convened several Synods and issued a number of decrees about the *Kollyvades* Controversy. This was in part a natural and appropriate response to the tumult surrounding the dispute, but also partly prompted by the captive Patriarchate's sensitivity to the responsibility entrusted to it by the Ottoman rulers for preserving peace among the Orthodox population.

The first response from Constantinople to the issue of Sunday commemorations of the dead came in the form of a letter from Patriarch Theodosios II in 1772, wherein he stated that those who performed Saturday memorials did so appropriately in conformity with ancient tradition, whereas those who performed them on Sundays “ouch hypokeintai krimati” (do not sin).<sup>42</sup> This attempt at reconciliation having failed, the Patriarch's successor, Samuel, issued a Synodal Encyclical (1773) directing all monastics to adhere to the policies enacted by their monasteries and avoid strife over the issue of commemorations. Once more, this tactic, also in the spirit of compromise and aimed at a reconciliation of the two factions, failed. Therefore, a Synod was convened in 1774 at the Koutloumousiou Monastery, on Mount Athos, at the order of the Oecumenical Patri-

42 Cavarnos, *St. Macarios of Corinth*, p. 17. Cf. Makres, “Kollybades,” col. 743.

arch. It was comprised of two former Patriarchs of Constantinople, four retired Metropolitans, two active Metropolitans, and two Bishops from Thessaloniki. There were also about two hundred monks present at the convocation. The Synod declared that all of those who did not accept the Synodal Encyclical of 1773 were subject to anathema. Despite this determination, the controversy went on. Thus, in 1776, yet another Synod was convened in Constantinople, under Patriarch Sophronios II, at which the Patriarch of Jerusalem and sixteen other Hierarchs were also present. It was declared by the participants that memorial services could be celebrated on either Saturday or Sunday, and that the issue was not to be discussed further. It was at this Synod that St. Athanasios Parios, Neophytos Kavso-kalyvites, and St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite, among others, were excommunicated.<sup>43</sup> These individuals were of course subsequently vindicated.

The debate over frequent Communion – bound up with the *Kollyvades* movement – also came to the attention of Constantinople. As Makres comments, Patriarch Theodosios II, writing to the Athonite Fathers regarding the commemoration of the dead, also made mention of the issue of frequent Communion, offering what Makres calls an “arketa hikanopoietiken apantesin” (fairly satisfactory answer) to the problem.<sup>44</sup> Professor Cavarnos, rightly pointing out that the dispute over frequent Communion predated the publication by Sts. Makarios and Nikodemos of their treatise on frequent Communion and did not spark it – even if both they and their writings did play an important role in the *Kollyvades* movement – succinctly summarizes what Theodosios wrote, again, in a spirit of compromise and hoping to reconcile the disputing parties, about the controversy and how it was finally resolved just before the Greek Revolution:

He wrote to the monks of Athos saying that the early Christians received Holy Communion every Sunday, while those of the subsequent period received it every forty days, after penance; he advised that whoever felt himself prepared should follow the former, whereas

43 Makres, “Kollyvades,” *ibid.* Tzogas contends that Neophytos and St. Nikodemos were not, in fact, among those excommunicated at this Synod (*Peri Mnemosynon Eris*, p. 161).

44 *Ibid.*, cols. 744–745.

if he did not he should follow the latter. But this did not bring to an end the dispute. Like the contention about memorial services, it continued until the early part of nineteenth century. In 1819, Patriarch Gregory V wrote to the monks of the Holy Mountain declaring that Communion should not be received at certain set times, but whenever one felt himself ready for it, following confession and other necessary preparation.<sup>45</sup>

We should note that, in the course of the dispute over frequent Communion, when *Concerning Frequent Communion* appeared it did, indeed, “provok[e] a storm of criticism” in the anti-*Kollyvades* movement on Mount Athos. Cavarnos writes, in this vein, that

[s]eeking to have it banned, they wrote a letter full of condemnatory statements and sent it, together with a copy of the work, to the Ecumenical Patriarch. This resulted in a hasty condemnation of the book as opposed to the Canons and provoking dissensions. But later, in 1789, a new Patriarch, after careful examination of the book, annulled the decree of his predecessors. He issued a synodical decree declaring the book canonical and recommending it to all Christians.<sup>46</sup>

It was from the *Kollyvades* movement, therefore, that concern for the frequent partaking of the Eucharistic Manna spread from Athos to the whole Orthodox world, where the matter is still central to the renewal of spiritual life in the Orthodox Church....

45 Cavarnos, *St. Macarios of Corinth*, p. 21.

46 *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.