



Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle

Holy Synod in Resistance



■ Panegyric on the Occasion of the *Synaxis* of the Three Holy New Hierarchs

Saint Photios the Great and the Eighth Œcumenical Synod

Patristic Conciliarity and Papism

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Acting President of the Holy Synod

Your Graces;
Brethren and Concelebrants;
Reverend Monastics;
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

May our Lord and God Jesus Christ, the True Light, sign the light of His countenance upon us, and may He guide aright the steps of our discourse and our thoughts at this sacred moment, by the intercessions of the Theotokos and by the prayers of our much-revered Elder, Metropolitan Cyprian.

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Today, the first Sunday of November, we celebrate the *Synaxis* of the Three Holy New Hierarchs, Sts. Photios the Great, Gregory Palamas, and Mark (Evgenikos) of Ephesus, whom our Holy Synod has, since 2005, proclaimed its special Patrons in its sacred resistance against ecumenism, that heresy provoked by the West.¹

These Holy Three Luminaries of our Church are truly Œcumenical Teachers, who initiate us unerringly into the Mystery of the Tradition im-

¹ Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, "The Divine Mystery of the Primacy of Truth," Panegyric delivered on November 5, 2007 (Old Style), <<http://hsir.org/p/xc>>.

parted through the Holy Fathers;² it is they who constitute the living voice of the Church—they are the trustees and continuators of Holy Tradition; it is they who acted and theologized “in accordance with the Divinely-inspired doctrines of the Saints and the pious mind of the Church”;³ it is they who have proved to be genuine exponents of the conscience of the Church and who perennially put the Primacy of Truth before the Primacy of Jurisdiction, power, and administrative unity.⁴

It is, therefore, fitting and right that we gratefully glorify our Lord, the Divine Founder of the Church, Who constantly renews the Sacred Tradition of Orthodoxy through the Holy Fathers, and that we chant:

Most glorified art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast established our Fathers as luminaries upon the earth, and through them didst guide us all to the true Faith. O Most Merciful One, glory to Thee.

* * *

However, the gratitude and joy of our tribute are dampened: firstly, because the Orthodox continue to be divided, as they have been since 1924, on account of the heresy of ecumenism and the calendar innovation spawned thereby; and secondly, because the adulteration of Patristic conciliarity by the innovationist and ecumenist Hierarchy of the so-called official Church of Greece⁵ does nothing to renew hopes that these Hierarchs are going to address the division among the Orthodox in a sober and responsible way.

In the wake of our previous observations on this subject,⁶ that is, the adulteration of Patristic conciliarity, recent developments appear to make the vision of reunion quite remote.

So what has happened? At the recent Synod of the New Calendar (official State) Church of Greece (October 2011), two presentations of a demonstrably anti-Papist nature were scheduled. The first would have dealt with the Eighth Ecumenical Synod, under St. Photios the Great, and the

² *Ibid.*

³ “Συνοδικὸν τῆς Ἁγίας καὶ Οἰκουμενικῆς Ζ΄ Συνόδου ὑπὲρ τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας” [“Synodal Decree of the Holy Seventh Ecumenical Synod in Defense of Orthodoxy”], in *Τριῶδιον Κατανυκτικόν* (Athens: Ekdoseis “Phos,” 1987), p. 162b.

⁴ See note 1.

⁵ Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, “Walling-Off from the Ecumenists Is a Matter of Urgency Envisaged by the Holy Fathers,” <<http://hsir.org/p/yy>>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

second with the Ninth Œcumenical Synod, during the time of St. Gregory Palamas.⁷

The aim of the presentations in question was to validate the œcumenicity of these important Synods, in order that “the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece might” subsequently “propose that this subject be discussed at the Pan-Orthodox Synod that is due to be convened,” since

these are serious dogmatic issues, which have a direct bearing on the definition of the doctrinal teaching of the Church and its proper orientation in the contemporary era of theological confusion and confessional syncretism.⁸

Unfortunately, however, in the end these presentations were not delivered, and the Synod voted to table them. The Hierarchy who was to have delivered the first presentation made the following truly distressing statement:

Since, as it was said, the Hierarchy is ‘not competent’ to discuss such dogmatic issues, but is competent to discuss VAT and the ESPA,⁹ these presentations can be dispensed with!¹⁰

It should be noted that, two years earlier, at the Synod meeting in October of 2009, the same Hierarchy had posed the following equally distressing and very telling question:

What is important for the Church? Financial matters, or the various inter-Orthodox, inter-Christian, and interfaith dialogues, in which the faith and life of the local Church ought to be expressed?¹¹

* * *

Through the prism, therefore, of this discouraging event, which is indicative of the ecclesiological and synodal decay of the New Calendarist ecumenists, but which also confirms the correctness of our walling-off and resistance, I deem it expedient to discuss in brief the Eighth Œcumenical Synod.

With God’s help, we will treat of the Ninth Œcumenical Synod on another occasion, contenting ourselves for the time being with the weighty opinion expressed by a distinguished theologian of our day:

⁷ See *Ἐκκλησιαστική Παρέμβαση* (Ναυρακτος), No. 183 (October 2011), p. 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ VAT: Value Added Tax; ESPA: Ἐθνικὸ Στρατηγικὸ Πλαίσιο Ἀναφορᾶς, an investment program financed by the European Union [NSRF].

¹⁰ See note 7.

¹¹ See note 5.

We believe that the Synod of Constantinople, at the time of St. Gregory Palamas in 1351, judging at least by its great theological work, can be, and deserves to be numbered among the Œcumenical Synods of the Orthodox Church, than which it is not in any way inferior as touching the soteriological significance of its theology. This Synod is proof of the continuity of the conciliarity of the Orthodox Church, of its living experience, and of its theology concerning salvation in Christ.¹²

The Eighth Œcumenical Synod was convened in Constantinople in the Church of the Wisdom of God [Hagia Sophia—Trans.], in the years 879-880 (November 879-March 880), during the second Patriarchate of Archbishop Photios I of Constantinople (877-886), in the reign of Emperor Basil the Macedonian (867-886),

for the purpose of accomplishing the restoration, on the one hand, of peace and unity in the Church of Constantinople, and on the other hand, of full communion between the Churches of Old and New Rome.¹³

However, restoration of full communion between the Churches of Constantinople and Rome could not be attained, owing to previous decisions directed personally against St. Photios the Great by the Roman Popes Nicholas I (858-867) and Adrian II (867-870) and, especially, the decisions of the false Latin Synod of Constantinople held in 869-870, which has never been recognized by the Orthodox Church, although ever since the eleventh century the Roman Catholics have regarded it as, allegedly, the Eighth Œcumenical Synod.¹⁴

The unjust and uncanonical decisions issued by the Latins against Patriarch Photios in Rome (863 and 869) and in Constantinople (869-870) had provoked a schism. Since, therefore, that accursed schism was lifted by the true Eighth Œcumenical Synod (879-880), the Orthodox called it a “Synod of Union,”¹⁵ and there is no doubt that, as President of this unify-

¹² Hieromonk Atanasije Jevtić, *Χριστός-Αρχή και Τέλος* [Christ, the Beginning and the End] (n.p.: Hidryma Goulandre-Chorn, n.d.), p. 195, cited in Archimandrite Hierotheos S. Blachos [now Metropolitan of Naupaktos], “Τὸ Συνοδικὸν τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας” [The *Synodikon* of Orthodoxy], in *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸ Φρόνημα* [The Mind of the Church], 2nd ed. (Lebadeia, Greece: Ekdosis Hieras Mones Genethliou tes Theotokou, 1993), p. 260.

¹³ Pavlos Menebisoglou, Metropolitan of Sweden, *Ἱστορικὴ Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τοὺς Κανόνας τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας* [Historical Introduction to the Canons of the Orthodox Church] (Stockholm: 1990), p. 494; cf. Blasios I. Pheidias, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἱστορία* [Church History] (Athens: 1972), Vol. II, pp. 102-131.

¹⁴ Or “Œcumenical Council,” according to the terminology favored by the Latin Church. [Trans.]

¹⁵ Ioannes Karmires, *Τὰ Δογματικὰ καὶ Συμβολικὰ Μνημεῖα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας* [The Dogmatic and Credal Monuments of the Orthodox Catholic Church], 2nd ed. (Athens: 1960), p. 266.

ing Synod, “St. Photios the Great contributed greatly to the restoration of peace.”

Without doubt, the Synod of 879-880, which convened in the Church of the Wisdom of God, under the presidency of the great and most wise Patriarch Photios, with official representatives of all the other Patriarchs in attendance, and which deliberated freely and decided, according to precedent, on very important matters, bears ‘not only the external, but also all of the internal hallmarks of an Œcumenical Synod,’ issuing momentous decisions for the entire Church.¹⁶

* * *

Before, however, we proceed any further in our exposition of the Eighth Œcumenical Synod, it would be good to advert to the robust personality of our Father among the Saints Photios the Great, Equal to the Apostles, Patriarch of Constantinople, the Confessor (*ca.* 820-891), whose memory is celebrated on February 6.

St. Photios the Great, a very gifted man, was one of the most important figures in the spiritual and ecclesiastical life of the Byzantine period. He received a very broad education, since from his youth

he showed great zeal for the study of philosophy, theology, mathematics, logic, philology, rhetoric, medicine, natural science, and, more generally, every discipline of his era.¹⁷

Even the West, in spite of its prejudices, bows before his greatness, for it recognizes that “Photios was one of the most wonderful men of all the Middle Ages” and regards him “as the greatest scholar of his time, and as, in every way, the greatest man in the Byzantine Church”; he was “a sort of universal genius, philosopher, philologist, theologian, lawyer, mathematician, natural scientist, orator, and poet. His extant works fill five volumes of Migne.”¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 262-263; Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, Archbishop of Athens, *Τὸ Πρωτεῖον τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου Ρώμης* [The Primacy of the Bishop of Rome], 2nd ed. (Athens: “Ekklesia,” 1964), p. 198.

¹⁷ Blasios I. Pheidias, “Φώτιος ὁ Μέγας” [Photios the Great], in *Παγκόσμιο Βιογραφικὸ Λεξικὸ* [Universal Biographical Dictionary], Vol. IXB (Athens: Ekdotike Athenon, 1991), p. 375d.

¹⁸ Adrian Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1908), pp. 138-139. Not only Fortescue, hardly an admirer of the Orthodox Church, is forced to admit to St. Photios’ genius, but even one of the Saint’s most implacable enemies, Niketas of Paphlagonia, was compelled to say of him:

Photios was not a man of ignoble and obscure origins, but was born to parents who were noble and eminent in worldly terms, and for his secular wisdom and understanding he was most highly esteemed of all who were involved with affairs of state. Indeed, he so excelled in grammar and poetry, in rhetoric and philosophy, and also in medicine, and in practically every secular discipline that he not only, one might say, surpassed those of his own generation, but also rivalled the ancients. For all things came together in him: natural aptitude, zeal, and wealth. On account of

This Saint, whose name is synonymous with light, was from an aristocratic family, which belonged to the Iconodules, and on account of this “suffered severe persecution from the Iconoclasts during the second period of Iconoclasm (813-843).”¹⁹ His parents, Sergios the *Spatharios* [a member of the imperial ceremonial bodyguard—*Trans.*] and Irene, are celebrated by our Church as Saints and Confessors on May 13: “Byzantine by nationality, Sergios the Confessor, the son of noble and wealthy parents, flourished in the time of the Iconoclasts,” during the reign of Theophilos (829-842), “in disagreement with whom he departed from Constantinople with his wife Irene and their children, and died in exile.”²⁰ Photios himself writes that a “heretical synod” and an “assembly of Iconoclasts...anathematized” not only his family, but also himself.²¹

After the collapse of Iconoclasm (843), he assumed high office in the Palace as *Protospatharios* [head of the imperial ceremonial bodyguard—*Trans.*] and *Protoasekretes* [chief imperial secretary—*Trans.*] and taught in the Higher School [university] of Magnaura. He ascended to the Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople for the first time in 858. He came into conflict with Pope Nicholas, owing to the interference of the latter in Bulgaria and the adulteration of the Symbol of Faith through the heretical addition of the *Filioque*, and also on account of the attempt to impose Papal Primacy. Uncanonically dethroned in 867, he ascended the throne again in 878, but was dethroned anew in 886. He reposed in peace as a monk on February 6, 891.

It has been very rightly observed that “the truly astounding missionary activity of the Byzantines throughout the Slavic world,” which altered the religious map of Eastern Europe in the ninth century, “was the lofty and inspired plan of the great Patriarch, who believed fully in the œcumenical outlook of the Christian Empire of Byzantium.”²²

The Divine Photios “proved through circumstances to be equal to the demands and dangers of his era,” and “was a twofold symbol throughout the Turkish domination: for the Orthodox; ...he was a symbol of Orthodoxy, whereas for the Latins he was a controversial object of hatred.”²³

the latter he was able to acquire books of all kinds.

See the *Life of St. Ignatios, Archbishop of Constantinople, Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CV, col. 509AB.

¹⁹ Pheidas, “Φώτιος ὁ Μέγας,” p. 375d.

²⁰ Menebisoglou, *Ιστορική Εισαγωγή εἰς τοὺς Κανόνας*, p. 501, n.

²¹ “Epistle LXIV,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. CII, col. 877BC.

²² Pheidas, “Φώτιος ὁ Μέγας,” p. 377d.

²³ Nikolaos B. Tomadakes, “Φώτιος ὁ Α΄” [Photios I], in *Θρησκευτική καὶ Ἠθική Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια*, Vol. XII (Athens: 1968), col. 30.

Let us return, though, to the Eighth Œcumenical Synod. The Synod convened under the presidency of the “most holy Œcumenical Patriarch Photios”,²⁴ around three hundred and ninety Bishops and Episcopal representatives took part;²⁵ Pope John VIII appointed three delegates; and representatives of the three Patriarchates of the East also participated. The proceedings of the Synod commenced in November of 879 and concluded in March of 880. Seven sessions were held in all, and the transactions of this historic Synod in Hagia Sophia, “composed in Greek and preserved,”²⁶ and published in 1705 by the illustrious Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem (1669-1707), as witnessed by a manuscript in the Athonite Monastery of Iveron.²⁷

The Holy Synod of 879-880 “was one of the most important Synods in the history of the Church,”²⁸ and, being comprised of three hundred and ninety “Fathers, both Eastern and Western, representing the five Patriarchates, presented an imposing spectacle such as had not been seen since the time of the Fourth Œcumenical Synod of Chalcedon.”²⁹

The Synod of Hagia Sophia under St. Photios the Great bears all of the hallmarks of an Œcumenical Synod, both outwardly and inwardly, and consequently “it is not at all surprising that it was regarded as the Eighth Œcumenical Synod by [Patriarch Euythmios I (907-917)], Theodore Balsamon, Neilos of Thessalonica, Neilos of Rhodes, Symeon of Thessalonica, Mark of Ephesus, Gennadios Scholarios, Dositheos of Jerusalem, Constantine Oikonomos, and” many “others,”³⁰ such as the important “Dialogue of a Certain Hieromnemon,”³¹ and by our contemporaries, St. Nectarios of Pentapolis, Archbishop Chrysostomos Papadoupoulos, Francis Dvornik,

²⁴ Mansi, Vol. XVII, col. 373A.

²⁵ Menebisoglou, *Ιστορική Εισαγωγή εις τοὺς Κανόνας*, pp. 499, 506-507.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 503.

²⁷ Dositheos, Patriarch of Jerusalem, *Τόμος Χαράς* [Tome of Joy] (Thessalonike: Ekdosis B. Regopolou, 1985), pp. 257-386, 387-433. See also Karmires, *Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα*, Vol. I, pp. 268-269; Protopresbyter John Romanides, *Δογματικὴ καὶ Συμβολικὴ Θεολογία τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας* [The Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church] (Thessalonike: Ekdosis P. Pournara, 1982), Vol. II, pp. 164-187.

²⁸ Menebisoglou, *Ιστορική Εισαγωγή εις τοὺς Κανόνας*, p. 263.

²⁹ Karmires, *Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα*, Vol. I, p. 262.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Dositheos, *Τόμος Χαράς*, pp. 594-595, §§78-80.

Archimandrite Basileios Stephanides, Father John Romanides, Protopresbyter George Metallinos, Metropolitan Hierotheos Blachos, *et al.*³²

And this Synod also called itself Œcumenical in many places in its Proceedings and Canons,³³ and Archimandrite Basileios Stephanides writes that “since it has not been officially recognized as the Eighth Œcumenical Synod, any Œcumenical Synod that may be convened in the future ought to deal with this issue.”³⁴

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It is, however, time for us to identify “all of the canonical elements necessary for the convocation, work, and decisions of an Œcumenical Synod,”³⁵ which elements, indeed, the illustrious and clearly anti-Papist Synod of Constantinople bring together in:

1. “Its convocation as an Œcumenical Synod, at which the five ancient Patriarchal thrones were represented”;
2. “its convocation by Emperor Basil I the Macedonian (867-886),” who “in fact, together with his sons, was the first to sign the dogmatic decree (*Όρος*) of the Synod and its Acts”;
3. “the large number of its members (338-390 Bishops)”;
4. “the functioning of the Synod in conformity with the traditional canonical functioning of the Œcumenical Synods”;
5. “its canonical regulations” (it promulgated three Canons);
6. “its stipulations about matters of Faith,” wherein, on pain of anathema, it designated that the Sacred Symbol of Faith (the Creed) was unalterable and inviolable;
7. “its clear awareness of its authenticity as an Œcumenical Synod,” as this is expressed “in its decision to number the Seventh Œcumenical Synod with the preceding Œcumenical Synods, which only Œcumenical Synods were entitled to do”;³⁶

³² St. Nectarios, Metropolitan of Pentapolis, *Μελέτη Ιστορική περί τῶν Αἰτίων τοῦ Σχίσματος* [An Historical Study Concerning the Causes of the Schism] (Athens: Ekdoseis N.D. Panagopoulou, 1988), Vol. I, pp. 273-292; Menebisoglou, *Ιστορική Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τοὺς Κανόνας*, p. 510; Archimandrite Basileios K. Stephanides, *Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία* [Church History], 6th ed. (Athens: Ekdotikos Oikos “Aster,” 1998), p. 364; Archimandrite Basileios Karagiannes, “Ἡ Σύνοδος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ 879-880 εἶναι Οἰκουμένη Σύνοδος” [The Synod of Constantinople of 879-880 is an Œcumenical Synod], *Ἀπόστολος Βαρνάβας* (Cyprus), No. 10 (October 1991), p. 317.

³³ Karmires, *Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεία*, Vol. I, p. 262; Menebisoglou, *Ιστορική Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τοὺς Κανόνας*, p. 510.

³⁴ Stephanides, *Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία*, p. 364.

³⁵ Karagiannes, “Ἡ Σύνοδος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ 879-880,” p. 315.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

8. and “the decisions made in this Synod, which were consonant with the decrees of the previous Œcumenical Synods, in accordance with the Tradition of the Church.”³⁷

The work accomplished by the great Synod of 879-880 was momentous both for that troubled period and for the future of the Church: it functioned in a unitive spirit on the basis of dogmatic Truth and canonical Tradition; it condemned the alteration of the Symbol of Faith through the addition of the *Filioque*; ratified the Sacred Symbol as it was handed down to us by the first two Œcumenical Synods; and rejected the distortion of the simple Primacy of Honor due to the Bishop of Rome, who had transformed this into an administrative Primacy of Power over the entire Church.

St. Photios the Great also acted in a unitive spirit, refuted the Papal Primacy of Power and the adulteration of the Symbol of Faith with incontrovertible arguments, set forth the Orthodox positions with candor and clarity, and called upon the representatives of Pope John VIII to renounce their errors, which had led to the schism of 867.

St. Nectarios of Pentapolis states emphatically that

[t]he Eighth Œcumenical Synod has great importance [because] in this Synod Photios was triumphant..., his struggles for the independence of the Eastern Church were crowned with total success, and the Truth of Orthodoxy, for which he had toiled so hard, prevailed.... In a word, the triumph was complete: it was a political, an ecclesiastical, and a personal triumph.³⁸

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Our awareness that the great Synod of 879-880 that met in Hagia Sophia was the work of the inspired and far-sighted Patriarch Photios of Constantinople, the Confessor and Equal to the Apostles, the great Father and Œcumenical Teacher of the Church, impels us to believe that “the most fitting honor for the Saint...is that this Synod be reckoned as the Eighth, together with the other seven Œcumenical Synods.”³⁹

Something else that prompts us to believe this is its designation as a model in efforts to reunite the divided Christians of East and West, since it attests to the Divine Mystery of Tradition imparted through the Holy Fathers about authentic Patristic conciliarity:

1. “It sought the unity of the Church first and foremost in the unity of Faith and in the preservation not only of the content of the Faith, but also

³⁷ Papadopoulos, *Τὸ Πρωτεῖον τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου Ρώμης*, p. 198.

³⁸ St. Nectarios, *Μελέτη Ἱστορικὴ περὶ τῶν Αἰτίων τοῦ Σχίσματος*, Vol. I, pp. 288-289.

³⁹ Karagiannes, “Ἡ Σύνοδος τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ 879-880,” p. 319.

of the formulation thereof by the Œcumenical Synods, and it anathematized any verbal addition, subtraction, or alteration of that content”;⁴⁰

2. it sought “the unity of the Church as it is founded also on the canonical regulations of the Œcumenical Synods”;⁴¹

3. and it sought an “ecclesiology as it ought to be expressed through the Synodal system.”⁴²

In conclusion, I hope that you will have understood to what a depth the Synod of the New Calendarist Hierarchy has fallen, for it not only makes financial matters its priority, but also devotes itself solely to them and to the discussion of the VAT and the ESPA, while the Orthodox flock remains exposed in an environment of inter-Christian and interfaith religious syncretism by virtue of the acquiescence and, as well, the participation of its Shepherds in the anti-Orthodox ecumenical movement.

May the beneficent Grace of our Triune God, through the intercessions of the Three Holy New Hierarchs, raise up inspired Hierarchs who with wisdom, boldness, and courage will lead the People of God on a great Exodus from the Egyptian bondage of the ecumenical movement.

Headquarters of the Metropolis of the Holy Synod in Resistance
November 7, 2011 (Old Style), First Sunday of November
Synaxis of the Three Holy New Hierarchs



⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.* p. 319.