The Old Calendar Greek Orthodox Church: A Brief History

By Bishop Ambrose

The Old Calendar Movement, 1924-1935. In the space of this short chapter, we will not attempt to outline the history of the calendar change itself, which was enacted in an atmosphere of reform and disdain for Orthodox tradition that still shocks even the most passive investigator. Nor is it possible within the scope of our present comments to assess adequately the poisonous and anti-Orthodox goals and effects of the calendar change, or to do true justice to the struggles of the Christians of Greece for the maintenance of the Old Calendar in these years. Our purpose is more specific—that of an accurate, if brief, account of the development of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece.

After the uncanonical introduction of the Gregorian Calendar by the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece in March, 1924, the number of those who initially rejected the innovation was very small. But the resisters included some noted Church historians and enjoyed the firm support of Patriarch Photios of Alexandria and others. It is to be noted that for six months the T.O.C. had to do without the services of a Priest, until the first two returned to the Old Calendar. The famous apparition of the Cross on September 13 and 14, 1925, at the celebration of the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross according to the Julian (Church) Calendar, in a tiny Church just outside Athens, was the cause of the sudden return of a great number of the faithful Orthodox of Greece to the Church Calendar. The Cross appeared in the heavens just before midnight and was visible for close to an hour to the gathered worshippers and to the police who had been summoned to stop the service.

Despite this astounding event, which is still remembered with awe in Greece, the foundation of the movement was nonetheless, on the whole, laid by Hieromonks and monks from Mount Athos, who travelled throughout Greece, enlightening the faithful about the dangers of the reform to Orthodoxy and founding the first Old Calendarist Churches and monasteries. Amongst these Hieromonks, several were renowned for their great holiness and asceticism, in particular the blind but clairvoyant Elder Hieronymos and Archimandrite Evgenios (Lemonis) of Piraeus, who all of his monastic life wore heavy chains. The State Church was not slow to do all that it could to impede the movement: Priests were arrested and sent into exile on the Holy Mountain (Mt. Athos), many Churches were closed, and services and processions were broken up. In 1925, there took place the first blessing of the waters at Theophany at Piraeus, the port of Athens, which became the traditional display—with tens of thousands in attendance each year—of the strength of the Old Calendarist Church.

Despite all of the measures on the part of the State Church against the T.O.C., by 1934 over eight hundred communities had been formed throughout Greece. These were served by a few Athonite Hieromonks, who used mostly private chapels and often celebrated all-night vigils on Feast Days, according to the Athonite custom, a practice which is maintained in our parishes even now. A fortnightly periodical, *Voice of Orthodoxy,* was begun in 1927, and the monthly *Orthodox Herald* in 1930, both of which are extant publications. Obviously, the greatest need for the movement at the time, however, was the acquisition of a Hierarchy in order to secure Priestly services for the faithful, until such time as, with God's help, the State Church returned to the Church Calendar. Contacts were maintained with the Old Calendarists of Romania and Alexandria, where the Gregorian Calendar had been introduced in October, 1924, and October, 1928, respectively, but they were also, at the time, without Bishops. An approach was therefore made to Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, at Karlovtsy in October, 1934, by the leaders of the movement (for it was well known how firmly he opposed the calendar reform and how much he labored against

it), with a request that he take the movement under his protection.

1935-1945. Before anything could come of this request, there took place an event which was to change the entire course of the movement. In May, 1935, eleven Bishops of the State Church agreed to return to the Old Calendar and assume the leadership of the communities of the T.O.C.. Of these, however, all but three withdrew at the last moment. These three were: Metropolitan Germanos of Demetrias, who was second in seniority in the State Church Hierarchy and who, in 1929 and 1933, had together with other Bishops appealed to the Synod for the restoration of the Church Calendar; Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Zakynthos; and Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Phlorina, who eventually came to be known as the leader of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece. (A short biographical sketch of Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Phlorina appears in chapter three.) In May, 1935, they issued a declaration that they were forthwith separating themselves from the State Church and were returning to the Old Calendar. The jubilation of the Old Calendarists was indescribable, and the three were almost *carried* in a triumphal procession across Athens following a festive Liturgy at the Church of the Dormition in Kolonos (Athens), which had been attended by more than 25,000 worshippers.

The Metropolitans, foreseeing their imminent arrests, proceeded immediately to consecrate four other Bishops, as follows: Germanos of the Cyclades, Polykarpos of Diavleia, Christophoros of Megara, and the Athonite Matthaios (Matthew) of V(B)restheni(e) (ancient Sellasia). Immediately, the three Metropolitans and the newly-consecrated Bishops were deposed by the official Church and sent to terms of exile in distant monasteries. Sadly, in the face of these threats, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Zakynthos and two of the new Bishops, Polykarpos and Christophoros, returned to the New Calendar Church. The other four, having served a few months in exile, returned to Athens with the quiet acquiescence of the authorities. Metropolitan Chrysostomos then set out on a visit to the Eastern Patriarchates to enlist their support, but without much success. On his return, the Bishops reassembled to form the first Holy Synod of the Church of True Orthodox Christians of Greece, with Metropolitan Germanos presiding, and set about organizing on

A rare historical photograph of Metropolitan Germanos of Demetrias and Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Phlorina

Athens, Greece,
January 6, 1938 (Old Style)

a canonical basis the movement which, up until then, had been directed by committees of laymen. This in itself presented difficult internal problems, though worse were to follow.

In 1937, Metropolitan Chrysostomos, when questioned as to whether the State Church still possessed the Grace of the Holy Spirit in its Mysteries, replied that, though the New Calendar Church was guilty before God for its actions, and for that reason the True Orthodox could have no communion whatsoever with it, nonetheless, insofar as its clergy did not depart in other ways from the traditions of the Church, it continued to possess the Grace of the Holy Spirit, and that as yet there existed a potential—ἐν δυνάμει (*en dynamei*)—schism rather than an actual—ἐν ἐνεργείᾳ (*en energeia*)—schism, until such time as the New Calendarists were specifically condemned by a pan-Orthodox council. Two of the Bishops, Germanos of the Cyclades and Matthew of Vresthene, were incensed by this declaration and, accusing Metropolitan Chrysostomos of having in effect denied the whole basis of the movement, separated themselves from him. The two rapidly disagreed amongst themselves, and thus, to the enormous detriment of Orthodoxy, the True Orthodox split into three factions. It is generally agreed that such was their strength before this, that the State Church *would inevitably have been forced to reintroduce the Julian Calendar*; and we know that such preparations were under way when the news of the split arrived and the plan was put aside.

Persecution continued sporadically during this time. Metropolitan Chrysostomos was summoned before the civil courts in 1937, 1938, and 1940, but in each case was found innocent of any wrong-doing against the State Church. The German-Italian occupation brought a temporary end to the open repression, but the civil war which followed brought to the T.O.C. the same savagery and barbarity which were meted out by the Communist partisans to all of the representatives of religion. In 1943, Metropolitan Germanos of Demetrias reposed[1] and Metropolitan Chrysostomos took up the government of the Church singlehandedly, a task which was a constant torture to him, for he was a man of extreme refinement and gentle disposition, while many of his clergy were men of little education and often possessed of an extremism which had no time for theological niceties. His absolute personal sincerity, his modesty, and his insistence on

canonical order were evident to all who knew him; in particular, he was noted for never judging anyone or for tolerating judgments of others on the part of those around him. Also, it should be mentioned that he was offered every bait and bribe by the State Church to return to them; however, he chose to follow to the end, with absolute devotion, the path of hardship and persecution on which God's Providence had set him.

1945-1955. The year 1945 saw the return of Bishops Polykarpos of Diavleia and Christophoros of Megara to the T.O.C., followed, in 1950, by Bishop Germanos of the Cyclades, who was re-united to Metropolitan Chrysostomos together with all of his clergy. The joys of these events were marred by Bishop Matthew, who remained stubbornly in his opinions and eventually, aided by those around him, reached the state of believing that he was the only Orthodox Bishop left in the world.[2] Thus, in 1948, he proceeded in an inarguably uncanonical manner to consecrate four other Bishops single-handedly. His action cemented the division amongst the T.O.C., as these Consecrations were, and still are, considered by the others to have been invalid and without basis. Many of his clergy were scandalized by this action and returned to Metropolitan Chrysostomos. These were joined by a number of others on Matthew's death in 1950. Thus, to the glory of God, the vast majority of Old Calendarists were again united. Metropolitan Chrysostomos attempted reconciliation with Matthew by every means and sacrifice possible, but all proved in vain before the extremism, not so much of Bishop Matthew himself, as of his followers, who largely directed his actions.

In 1949, the State Church elected Archbishop Spyridon to the primacy; he was to prove the fiercest persecutor yet of the Old Calendarists. Immediately after his election, he required his Bishops to submit details about Old Calendar clergy, parishes, and monasteries in their dioceses. The theological schools were also forbidden in the future to accept Old Calendarist students. Finally, on January 3, 1951, at the request of the Holy Synod of the State Church, a decree was issued by the Council of Ministers as follows: "...It is decided that: l) Old Calendarist clergy who do not have canonical ordination by canonical Bishops of our Orthodox Church, and who wear clerical dress, should be deprived thereof; 2) that monks and nuns following the Old Calendar should be arrested and confined to monasteries, and

those who wear the monastic dress uncanonically should be deprived thereof and prosecuted; 3) that the Churches which have been illegally seized by the Old Calendarists should be returned to the official Church, as also the monasteries they possess illegally and capriciously; and 4) that the execution of the above be entrusted to the Ministries of Public Order, Justice, Religion, and Education."

The foregoing plan was put into immediate effect. In a short while, the basement of the Archdiocese in Athens was filled with the clerical robes of the True Orthodox clergy who were taken there, shaved and shorn, often beaten, and then cast out onto the street in civilian dress. Many Priests underwent this process a number of times, while others were arrested and sent into exile. This occurred throughout Greece. One aged Priest, Father Platon, was beaten to death by the police in Patras, and then hastily buried in a field to cover up the crime. All the Churches in Athens were sealed and their holy vessels confiscated, and a few Churches in other parts of Greece were even demolished. Soon no Old Calendarist Priest could circulate undisguised, and even monks and nuns were not immune to these profane attacks. One of the victims of these policies was Bishop Germanos of the Cyclades, who died in the greatest grief while under house arrest on March 24, 1951, and who was buried by the faithful. By the personal order of Archbishop Spyridon, they were not permitted to take the body to a Church, and no Priest was allowed to assist; even so, many were arrested at the cemetery. Soon the orphanage of the T.O.C. was also seized by the State Church. There is no space here, unfortunately, to describe all of the heroic struggles of the Old Calendarists at this time, the demonstrations attended by many thousands in the squares of Athens, the catacomb Church services, and so forth.

The eighty-one-year-old Metropolitan Chrysostomos was arrested in February, 1951, and after repeated attempts to change his views, was exiled to the Monastery of St. John in Lesvos, situated on a remote 2,500-foot crag, where he was to remain for over a year. The monks of the monastery behaved sympathetically, but conditions were very hard for an infirm, elderly man. The Metropolitan, however, constantly expressed his joy at being found worthy to suffer for his Faith and his satisfaction at the resistance and perseverance of the faithful in

the face of persecution. We have a precious proof of his holiness from this bitter time. The police officer whose duty it was to guard him looked into the Bishop's cell one evening and, to his amazement, saw him standing in prayer with his hands raised, surrounded by a blinding heavenly light. The guard fell at his feet to ask forgiveness and subsequently became one of his most devoted spiritual children.

Great (Holy) Week of 1952 saw fearful scenes of impiety perpetrated on the T.O.C.. However, it was rapidly becoming clear to all that persecution was producing merely public disorder and complaint and was achieving nothing in the way of "reuniting" the faithful to the State Church; indeed, rather the opposite. Finally, in June, 1952, through the intervention of the newly-elected Prime Minister, Nikolaos Plastiras, Metropolitan Chrysostomos and the other Bishops were released. Slowly the pressure was relaxed, much aided by the constant protests of Patriarch Christophoros of Alexandria—a supporter of the Old Calendarists from the outset—and eventually two Churches were permitted to function in the city of Athens. There are now [in 1985—*Editor*] thirty-eight in the city, to give an idea of how far that corresponded to the needs. However, it was not until 1954 that the violent measures finally came to an end and the Churches could be safely reopened. By that time, sadly, two Bishops, Polykarpos and Christophoros, apparently in despair of any progress, once again returned to the ranks of the State Church, which accepted them as Bishops and assigned them to vacant Sees. Thus Metropolitan Chrysostomos was again left alone at the head of the movement and was unable to consecrate a successor, for lack of another Bishop, before his death.[3]

The death of the Metropolitan, which occurred on the Forefeast of the Nativity of the Mother of God, September 7, 1955 (Old Style), again permits us to glimpse the sanctity hidden behind the veil of great modesty and privacy that he always maintained in his contacts—even with his closest assistants. The Bishop, foreseeing his death, summoned his confessor, the Athonite Archimandrite John, on the night before, and made an hour-long general confession. Returning home that evening, he instructed his attendant to spread his bed with new white sheets and coverings. In the morning he was found with his hands crossed on his chest, reposed in the Lord, with no sign of illness.

The Remains of Metropolitan
Chrysostomos of Phlorina

September 8, 1955 (Old Style), Athens, Greece
(Prepared for Burial According to Byzantine Custom)

Metropolitan Chrysostomos' will reveals that he had no money or possessions to dispose of. The funeral, held in the Church of the Transfiguration at Kypsel(l)i, Athens, was attended by tens of thousands, who came in grief to venerate the body of their leader, which, according to Byzantine tradition, was seated in the center of the Church during the funeral; afterwards, the police had to drive back the crowds to permit the body to be taken to the place of burial, the Dormition Convent on Mount Parnes. By a curious coincidence, the bells of all the Churches in Greece were ringing mournfully as he went to his place of rest, the Synod of the State Church having so ordered as a sign of grief at the recent anti-Greek riots in Constantinople. When after six years, as is the custom in Greece, the bones of the Metropolitan were exhumed, the fragrance they produced filled the entire convent for several days, and is still often perceptible.

1955 to the Present Day. Again in 1955, the T.O.C. were left without Bishops. The group following Matthew, who took his name and are still known as "Matthewites," possessed only the Bishops ordained solely by him. Then, as now, they were a small minority among the Old Calendarists. Thus, the direction of the Church was temporarily entrusted to a council of Archimandrites, whose most important task was, naturally, to find a way to obtain a new Hierarchy. It was decided, as in 1934, to approach the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad with a request for help, and in December of 1960 Archimandrite Akakios (Pappas) was consecrated Bishop in the United States by two Hierarchs of the ROCA (Seraphim of Chicago and Teofil, a Romanian serving in the diaspora, who later left the ROCA). Subsequently, a third Bishop of the Synod Abroad (Leonty of Chile) went to Greece (with the express blessing of, and with financial support from, St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco) and, together with Akakios, consecrated other Bishops.

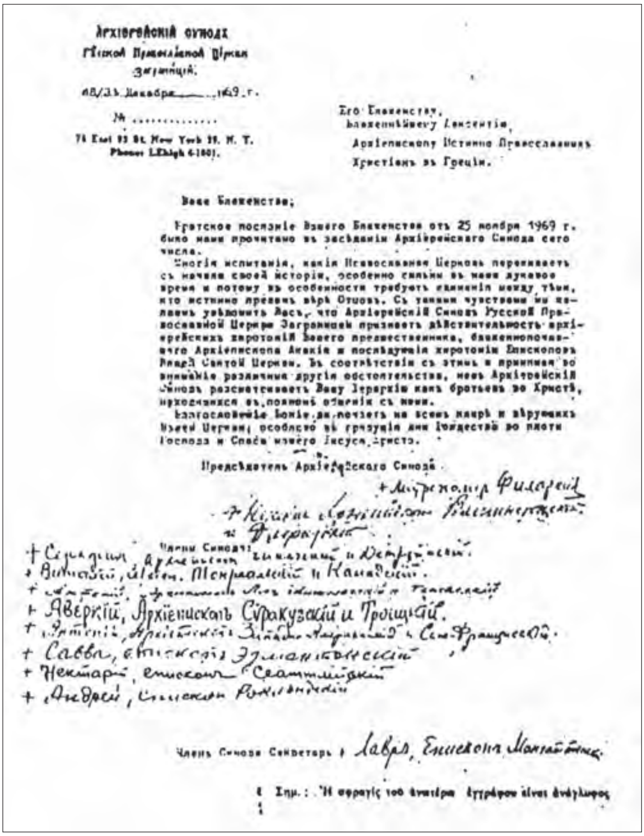
The Episcopal Consecrations in question were performed without the blessing of Metropolitan Anastassy and the rest of the Synod, and therefore were not officially recognized until 1969, when, by a decision of the Synod of Bishops (then under Metropolitan Philaret) dated December 18 and addressed to Archbishop Auxentios, it was declared that: "The many trials which the Orthodox Church has undergone from the beginning of her

history are especially great in the troubled times in which we live, and therefore demand a stronger unity amongst those who are truly devoted to the Faith of our Fathers. With these feelings, we would like to inform you that the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad recognizes the validity of the Episcopal Consecration of your predecessor, Archbishop Akakios of blessed memory, and the subsequent Ordinations of your Church. Therefore, in view also of various other circumstances, the Synod of our Hierarchy regards your Hierarchy as brothers in Christ in full communion with us."

On the death of Archbishop Akakios in 1963, Bishop Auxentios of Gardikion was elected as Archbishop of the T.O.C. of Greece. Within a few years after his election, some 200 Zealots on the Holy Mountain came into communion with him. The course of the Old Calendar Church of Greece seemed to be increasingly more positive. Two factors, however, proved to be crucial in impeding improvement and growth. First, in 1971, the Russian Church Abroad proceeded to rectify the uncanonical Episcopal Consecrations of the "Matthewites." The Russian Church was led by certain elements sympathetic to the "Matthewite" position to believe this would bring about a union of the two groups of Old Calendarists in Greece. This hope, however, proved vain and was eventually met with the ungracious response of May 1974, by which the "Matthewites" formally cut off all communion with the Russian Church Abroad, since the latter refused to condemn all those who follow the New Calendar as schismatics devoid of Grace.

In 1976, the "Matthewites" formally rejected the correction of their Consecrations by the ROCA, and the revered Metropolitan Kallistos of Corinth, loyal to Metropolitan Philaret and unable to accept this rejection, joined with Archbishop Auxentios. Metropolitan Kallistos, though strongly inclined towards the denial of Grace in the Mother Church of Greece, was unable to adhere to this view to the point of disavowing Metropolitan Philaret, who had told him, at the correction of his Consecration by the ROCA, that it was impossible, unilaterally, for a Bishop or Synod of Bishops to declare the New Calendarists to be without Grace, despite their errors and innovations.

It was this equivocal and considered position, and not, as many have claimed, his rejection of Grace among the New Cal-



Архiерейскiй Синодъ
Русской Православной Церкви
Заграницей.

18/31 Декабря 1969 г.

№ ....

75 East 93 St. New York 28, N. Y.
Phone: LEhigh 4-1601.

Его Блаженству,
Блаженнѣйшему Авксентiю,
Архiепископу Истинно Православныхъ
Христiанъ въ Грецiи.

Ваше Блаженство;

Братское посланiе Вашего Блаженства отъ 25 ноября 1969 г. было нами прочитано въ засѣданiи Архiерейскаго Синода сего числа.

Многiя испытанiя, какiя Православная Церковь переживаетъ съ начала своей исторiи, особенно сильны въ наше лукавое время и потому въ особенности требуютъ единенiя между тѣми, кто истинно преданъ вѣрѣ Отцовъ. Съ такими чувствами мы желаемъ увѣдомить Васъ, что Архiерейскiй Синодъ Русской Православной Церкви Заграницей признаетъ дѣйствительность архiерейскихъ хиротонiй Вашего предшественника, блаженнопочившаго Архiепископа Акакiя и послѣдующiя хиротонiи Епископовъ Вашей Святой Церкви. Въ соотвѣтствiи съ этимъ и принимая во вниманiе различныя другiя обстоятельства, нашъ Архiерейскiй Синодъ разсматриваетъ Вашу Iерархiю какъ братьевъ во Христѣ, находящихся въ полномъ общенiи съ нами.

Благословенiе Божiе да почiетъ на всемъ клирѣ и вѣрующихъ Вашей Церкви, особенно въ грядущiе дни Рождества во плоти Господа и Спаса нашего Iисуса Христа.

Предсѣдатель Архiерейскаго Синода
+ Митрополитъ Филаретъ
+ Никонъ Архiепископъ Вашингтонскiй и Флоридскiй
Члены Синода:
+ Серафимъ Архiепископъ Чикагскiй и Детройтскiй
+ Виталiй, Архiеп. Монреальскiй и Канадскiй
+ [illegible]
+ Аверкiй, Архiепископъ Сиракузскiй и Троицкiй
+ Антонiй, Архiепископъ Западно-Американскiй и Санъ-Францисскiй
+ Савва, епископъ Эдмонтонскiй
+ Нектарiй, епископъ Сеаттлiйскiй
+ Андрей, епископъ Роклендскiй

Членъ Синода Секретарь + Лавръ, Епископъ Манхаттенскiй

Σημ.: Ἡ σφραγὶς τοῦ ἀντιγράφου ἐγγράφου εἶναι ἀνάγλυφος

Russian text of the decision by Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad to recognize the Consecrations of the Hierarchy of the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece and to establish liturgical communion between the two Churches, December 18, 1969 (Old Style).

endarists, that marked Metropolitan Philaret's ecclesiology. This ecclesiology was mirrored in the *official* ecclesiology of the ROCA, as well, which never declared the Moscow Patriarchate and the New Calendarists to be without Grace, even in the face of individual Bishops who disagreed privately with their Church's official position. Nor was the Synod's famous condemnation of ecumenism (*viz.*, the "Branch Theory"), shortly before the repose of Metropolitan Philaret, meant as a rejection of the presence of Grace in the New Calendarist Churches, the majority of which have, nevertheless, been afflicted by the heresy of ecumenism. Reluctantly, Metropolitan Kallistos acknowledged the ROCA's official ecclesiological position, but assuredly without fully discarding his "Matthewite" inclinations. (A man of immense personal holiness, he wavered, as the authors of this book know personally, in his lifelong rejection of Grace in the New Calendarist Churches, though, as we shall subsequently see, at the end of his life he once again firmly embraced it.)

Unfortunately, after 1971 (and up to 1976 and the rejection of the correction of their Consecrations by the ROCA, prompting Metropolitan Kallistos to disavow his former Bishops), the "Matthewite" view of the State Church had come to assume more respectability among Old Calendarists. The extremism of this group and its black-and-white view of the division between the Old and New Calendarists could no longer be easily dismissed. Any union of Old Calendarists in Greece would thereafter have to view the "Matthewite" Bishops as speaking from a presumed position of canonicity that they could not previously claim. In view of this state of affairs, the Synod under Archbishop Auxentios, among whose Bishops were individuals reared with a "Matthewite" mentality (if not within the movement itself), issued an encyclical, in 1974, declaring the Mysteries of the State Church of Greece to be invalid—without Grace. This led to the resignation of Bishop Petros of Astoria (Exarch in the United States) from the Holy Synod and caused great consternation among other Old Calendarists of a moderate spirit, including Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, who had been received into the movement as a Priest from the New Calendar Church and who had made it clear, at the time, that he did not endorse anything even similar to a "Matthewite" mentality.

Secondly, the unfortunate administrative inabilities of Archbishop Auxentios led to many anomalies and canonical disorders, and also to the admission of many questionable elements from the ranks of the State Church: individuals seeking refuge in the Old Calendar movement because of various personal problems and not for reasons of Faith. This led to internal strife, the virtual crippling of the Synod of Bishops, and to such unfortunate results as the severance of relations, in 1975, by the Russian Church Abroad, as a protest against every sort of improper action, culminating in the uncanonical Consecration, by the Greek Old Calendarists, of a clergyman of the Russian Church Abroad—in the face of vocal dissent from within the ranks of the moderate Greek clergy—as Bishop of Portugal. Archbishop Auxentios himself openly acknowledged that the direction of the Church had fallen from his hands and that administrative chaos was a *positive term* by which to describe the state of the Church. Every sort of ecclesiological view was pronounced as the official view of the Synod, contradictory decrees were issued, and petty jealousy and personal resentment colored many of the actions of the Hierarchy.

Seeing that the Church was failing entirely in its witness, often sadly becoming a cause for scandal rather than edification, and further seeing that a number of unsuitable elements were being proposed for the Episcopate, Metropolitans Kallistos of Corinth and Antonios of Megara, two of the few remaining functional members of the Synod under Archbishop Auxentios (with his tacit encouragement and agreement) proceeded in February of 1979 to the Consecration of eight new Bishops, all considered to be of unquestioned moral and spiritual standing. The first to be consecrated was Archimandrite Cyprian (a spiritual son of Elder Philotheos [Zervakos]), whose monastery in Phyle (outside Athens), good repute, and moderate ecclesiology were known to all. Following these consecrations, which the fellow Bishops of Archbishop Auxentios refused to accept, Archbishop Auxentios was cajoled into consecrating a number of other new Bishops, many of an unfortunate reputation, to fill his ranks, thus creating two separate Synods.

No one on either side disputed the fact that the circumstances under which the new Bishops were initially consecrated were unusual, but the situation was such as to demand

drastic moves. The deposing of Bishops from the opposing side by both Synods did nothing to make the matter better, to the point that the mutual condemnations became patently absurd and moves toward union became utterly impossible. Enemies of the Old Calendarists naturally seized on all of this and, often through distortion and misrepresentation of the facts, used it to condemn one or the other of the two Synods, according to personal whim or disposition. Archbishop Auxentios, a man of good intention and character, but a pawn caught up in circumstances beyond his control and subject to the pressure of certain influential individuals, had created a situation which was tragic in every possible way.

With regard to the new Synod established by the Consecrations of Metropolitans Kallistos and Antonios, and under the Presidency of the former, many necessary and important decisions were made, such as the condemnation of the blasphemous works against Saint Nectarios by a notorious Old Calendarist extremist, which Archbishop Auxentios had been unwilling to enact; the establishment of communion with the martyric Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Romania, with which Archimandrite (now Metropolitan) Cyprian had established contact; the establishment of an Orthodox diocese in Sardinia; and honest moves toward ending the disruption in relations with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which were met with sympathy in many parts of the Church. All of these things were done with the constant hope that the Synod under Archbishop Auxentios might embrace the new spirit of reform and unite with the new Bishops.

Unfortunately, the Synod of Archbishop Auxentios continued in its policies of disorganization and, in total disarray, finally separated into yet two new groups, one headed by Archbishop Auxentios, the other by Metropolitan Gerontios of Piraeus. Meanwhile, the new Synod under Metropolitan Kallistos began to suffer from internal discord caused by the fact that, from the very beginning, there was always present the question of the difference of ecclesiological outlook on the part of its Bishops. It became increasingly clear that, while all of the Bishops were united in their desire to cleanse the witness of the Old Calendar Greek Church, it would not be possible to patch over the differences in ecclesiology for very long.

The Sister Old Calendar Churches of Greece and Romania, during a visit by the Greek Hierarchs to Romania in 1980. One of the outstanding accomplishments of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle was his success in uniting Metropolitan Kallistos' Synod with the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Romania. *Seated at left is the Greek Metropolitan Kallistos, at his left, the Romanian Metropolitan, St. Glicherie, and, standing to his left, the Greek Metropolitan Cyprian.*

The final result, in order not to enter into every detail of the matter (which details are usually recounted in the defense of one view of events over and against another, and seldom with the slightest eye towards objective narrative), was that the President of the Synod, Metropolitan Kallistos, a man of great and unquestioned personal holiness, but also, as we have said, inclined towards an extremist ecclesiology, published and distributed a book, the expressions of which were unacceptable to all, denouncing the State Church Mysteries as totally without Grace and invalid. As a result, he effectively cut off all communion with any who held different views, returning to the "Matthewite" mentality that many thought he had moderated. Quite graciously, one must acknowledge, he accepted retirement as President of the Synod, in view of his return to an extremist ecclesiology. He was replaced by Metropolitan Antonios, who was next in seniority among the Bishops.

In short time, the confusion and disarray in the Old Calendar movement in general led the Synod under Metropolitan Antonios to contemplate a reappraisal of its ecclesiological position. Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle was asked to submit an ecclesiological position paper for consideration by the whole Synod. (This paper appears in Appendix I.) The paper was distributed among the Old Calendarist Bishops in Greece. With absolutely no reasonable dialogue or consideration, Metropolitan Antonios and the remaining Bishops of the Synod, with the exception of Giovanni of Sardinia, decided to join themselves to the Synod of Metropolitan Gerontios, despite the fact that this entailed a rejection of the reform which they had begun and the acceptance of an ecclesiological stand quite close to that for which they had censured Metropolitan Kallistos of Corinth on his retirement. The tide seemed to be going in a new direction, and they were swept away with it. Certain financial considerations, unworthy of elaboration here and rather unedifying, also came to play in this "reorganization."

Subsequently, in 1985, the Synod of Metropolitan Gerontios reunited with that of Archbishop Auxentios. The newly-formed Synod of Bishops soon deposed Archbishop Auxentios. Declaring itself to be the sole criterion of Orthodoxy in the Old Calendar movement and, more generally, in the entire Orthodox

Church, and pronouncing the Mysteries of the State Church of Greece to be invalid and without Grace, it deposed all of the Old Calendarist Bishops who would not submit to it (including Metropolitan Cyprian and Metropolitan Giovanni). Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Thessaloniki, who had earlier separated from the Auxentian Synod for various personal reasons, was elevated to the rank of Archbishop of Athens as "Chrysostomos II," successor to Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Phlorina (though the latter actually never claimed the See of Athens). Bishop Petros, Synodal Exarch in America under Archbishop Auxentios, who had separated from the Holy Synod in protest over its pronouncement that the State Church of Greece was without Grace, nonetheless joined the Synod under Archbishop Chrysostomos, too, presumably acting in a spirit of unity.

In 1985 and 1986, Metropolitan Cyprian and Metropolitan Giovanni of Sardinia consecrated new Bishops to serve the Church both in Greece and abroad, and Metropolitan Cyprian was elected President of the Holy Synod in Resistance. The Old Calendar Romanian Bishops continued their communion with Metropolitan Cyprian and the Holy Synod in Resistance, remaining, with them, separated from the Old Calendarist Synod under Archbishop Chrysostomos II of Athens and the Synod under Auxentios (who refused to recognize his deposition by the Bishops under Chrysostomos). The Bulgarian Old Calendarists also remained faithful to Metropolitan Cyprian and the Synod in Resistance, which consecrated a Hierarch for them in 1993: His Eminence, Bishop Photii of Triaditza.[4]

In 1994, the Greek Old Calendarists under Metropolitan Cyprian, following the establishment of full liturgical communion between the Romanian Old Calendarists and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, restored liturgical communion with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which, as we noted above, had decided in 1975 to break liturgical communion with the Greek Old Calendarists and, in view of their separation into opposing factions, to forego concelebration with any specific group until unity was restored among them. However, already in June of 1987, Bishop Hilarion, then Deputy Secretary of the ROCA (and now Metropolitan of that Church) had written Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, Exarch for the Synod in Resistance in the Americas, to assure him of his Church's continued poli-

cy of communing Greek Old Calendarists, adding that the ecclesiology of Metropolitan Cyprian's Bishops was similar to that of his Church. This policy was reinforced when, in 1992, Archbishop Mark, the ROCA's presiding Hierarch in Germany, concelebrated in Romania with the Hierarchs of the True (Old Calendar) Church in that country and with Metropolitan Cyprian.

Having received two petitions from Metropolitan Cyprian and from the Romanian Old Calendarist Bishops asking for the restoration of liturgical concelebration between Metropolitan Cyprian's Synod of Bishops and the ROCA, the latter established a commission, in the summer of 1993, to investigate the possibility of such a move. The commission was comprised of Archbishop Laurus of Syracuse, Bishop Daniel of Erie, and Bishop Mitrophan of Boston. For almost a year, the Bishops received and sudied materials from various individuals opposed to and in favor of the union, including accusations, among others, against Metropolitan Cyprian that he had been deposed for ecumenism by Archbishop Chrysostomos II.

Meeting in San Francisco on June 28/July 11, 1994, following the Glorification of St. John (Maximovitch) of Shanghai and San Francisco, the Bishops of the ROCA decided to restore liturgical communion with the Greek Old Calendarists under Metropolitan Cyprian. The commission established to investigate the matter rejected as untrue, on the basis of their findings and deliberations, accusations that Metropolitan Cyprian and his Bishops held to an improper ecclesiology or any heretical doctrines, but rather affirmed that they abided by the very ecclesiological and dogmatic principles that guided the ROCA itself. The commission also found baseless the depositions imposed, *in absentia* and without trial, on Metropolitan Cyprian and his Bishops by Archbishop Chrysostomos II and his Synod, since neither Metropolitan Cyprian nor any of his Bishops ever belonged, or were in any way subject to, Chrysostomos' jurisdiction.[5] (See the official English text of the declaration of union between the two Churches on p. 36). Along with its decision to restore liturgical communion with Metropolitan Cyprian and his Synod, the ROCA also opened full communion with the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria.

Despite the hope of Metropolitan Cyprian and his Bishops that union with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad would

Extract From the Minutes of the Council of Bishops of The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

On 28 June/11 July, 1994, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia addressed the question of the possibility of entering into communion in prayer and the Eucharist with the group of Old Calendarist Greeks headed by Metropolitan Cyprian.

Circumstances of the case: A petition from the synod of Metropolitan Cyprian on this matter was received by the Synod of Bishops in 1993, but was not acted upon. Soon after, a new request was received, asking that the matter be reexamined. On 21 July/3 August 1993, the Synod of Bishops appointed a committee to study this question and present a report to the Synod of Bishops. In connection with this, the Council heard the following:

1) The report of the Committee, which consisted of Their Graces, Archbishop Laurus and Bishops Daniel and Mitrophan, who studied the question of the existing divisions within the Greek Old Calendar Church;

2) A short history of the Greek Old Calendarist Church from its beginnings to the present day;

3) During deliberations, attention was also given to statements of those opposed to the union, in which questions were raised as the the canonicity of Metropolitan Cyprian's groups and their allegedly un-Orthodox teaching on grace. The remarks of private individuals were also heard concerning this question;

4) In addition, petitions from the Romanian Old Calendarists and the Bulgarian Bishop Photios, and from several private individuals, all urging the reception of the groups of Metropolitan Cyprian into communion of prayer, were heard;

5) During the deliberation of all the question outlined above, it was established that:

a) The Synod of Metropolitan Cyprian adheres wholly to the exact same ecclesiological and dogmatic principals as our Russian Church Outside of Russia. This is set forth in detail in their pamphlet, "An Exposition of the Doctrine Concerning the Church, for Orthodox Opposed to the Heresy of Ecumenism";

b) In 1986, the Synod of Archbishop Chrysostomos II tried and deposed Metropolitan Cyprian *in absentia* for allegedly holding to heretical teaching and for refusing to unite himself to their synod. But as the history of the Old Calendar divisions shows, Metropolitan Cyprian had never entered the synod of Archbishop Chrysostomos II, which was only formed in late 1985, but was a member of the synod of Metropolitan Callistos in 1983. Metropolitan Cyprian headed the synod of the former. Metropolitan Cyprian had never submitted to his authority; the latter therefore lack the competence to discipline him.

After deliberation and analysis of all aspects of these questions, the Council of Bishops holds that at the present time, when apostasy is spreading and many official representatives of Orthodoxy, such as the Patriarchate of Constantinople and other patriarchates, are succumbing to and embracing the position of the modernists and ecumenists, it is very important for the true Orthodox to unite, stand together and oppose the betrayers of the Orthodoxy of the holy fathers. In connection with this, the Council of Bishops has decided:

1) To establish communion in prayer and the Eucharist with the Greek Old Calendarist synod of Metropolitan Cyprian, as well as with His Grace, Bishop Photios of Triaditsa, who heads the Bulgarian Old Calendar diocese.

2) All parties refrain from interfering in each others' internal ecclesiastical affairs. If any questions arise which require deliberation, it is essential to take counsel together.

RESOLVED: 1) To communicate the above-cited decision to Metropolitan Cyprian and Bishop Photios.

2) To inform our clergy and flock of the Council's decision through publication in church periodicals.

The Council of Bishops

Taken from *Orthodox Life*. See endnote 5, *infra*.

bring the Greek Old Calendarists into dialogue and perhaps, through the agency of the Russian Church Abroad, bring about a moderation of the extremist ecclesiology that had so long fostered division and disagreement, such was not the case. First, the various Old Calendarist groups simply became more entrenched in their positions and somewhat resentful of the ROCA for its recognition of the Holy Synod in Resistance. Secondly, in a bizarre turn of events, various extremist groups in the ROCA itself, despite the clear statement of its Bishops that its ecclesiological convictions were precisely those of Metropolitan Cyprian and his Bishops, accused the latter of leading their Church into a "quasi-ecumenical" confession. Such opinions proved poisonous for any hope of an expanded unity between Greek Old Calendarists and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, from which almost all of the Greek groups derived their Episcopacy.

After more than a decade of frustrated efforts to bring the Russian Church Abroad and the entire spectrum of Old Calendarists into communion (or at least dialogue), this aim hit a brick wall. Following years of resistance to the policies of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad decided to seek union with Moscow, from which they had resolutely separated after the submission of Patriarch Sergius to the atheist Soviet State. Reckoning the influence of the Soviet experience to have ended, and re-evaluating, in some cases, the nature of their rupture with the Church of Russia, they finally entered into full communion with the Patriarchate in 2007. Our Bishops, who are walled off from the Moscow Patriarchate because of its excessive ecumenism, after making several appeals that it reconsider its course, were regrettably forced to break communion with the ROCA on the day of its union with Moscow, as did our Sister Old Calendar Churches in Romania and Bulgaria.[6]

On a more positive note, though its Bishops decided to end this dialogue, for a full year between 2008 and 2009 informal discussions, sanctioned by both Churches, took place between a committee of Bishops from the Holy Synod in Resistance and the Old Calendarist Synod under Archbishop Chrysostomos II of Athens, the two major groups of Old Calendarists in Greece. These were conducted in a cordial atmosphere, led to greater mu-

tual understanding, and sparked at least hope for future fruitful exchanges. In the end, the two Synods disagreed, as one might expect, over ecclesiological matters, the Synod in Resistance taking a moderate stand towards the New Calendarists and ecumenists and the Synod of Archbishop Chrysostomos II casting its position in far more condemnatory and stark terms. Nonetheless, both sides agreed to disagree in a peaceful way, for the most part, and good contacts were established.[7]

In the end, in spite of the administrative disputes and differences in ecclesiological doctrine that divide the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece, the movement is nonetheless potentially a single entity. At some level, there is hope for unity. In fact, even now it is impossible to describe the True Orthodox Christians of Greece without admitting that, whatever may separate them into factions, they share certain traits. Their Churches are recognizable, generally, by the absence of electric lighting and pews, by pure beeswax candles and olive oil lamps, by fidelity to the *Typikon* and traditional Byzantine chanting (now sadly replaced in many New Calendar Greek Churches—even in Greece—by Western music accompanied by organs), and by frequent all-night vigils.

The faithful, who are, for the most part, simple and humble persons, are generally known for their old-fashioned modesty and Christian behavior, their careful keeping of the regulations of the Church—in particular the fasts, which are now almost totally disregarded by numerous Orthodox modernists—and by their love for the Traditions of Holy Orthodoxy, which makes many travel long distances, even from remote islands, in order to attend a parish of the T.O.C. of Greece, rather than the New Calendar Church at home. Many of their families could be better described as "little monasteries," which explains, in turn, the many monastic vocations among Old Calendarist adherents—one of their greatest strengths.

Notes

1. Towards the end of his life, somewhat in despair over the failure of his many struggles and sufferings in trying to bring the Church of Greece back to the Old Calendar, Metropolitan Germanos appealed to the State Church for readmittance to its ranks. Because of personal

opposition in the Holy Synod, he was not received. Thus, in view of these efforts, the T.O.C. ceased commemorating him, a fact which has prompted at least one ill-informed observer to say that some unknown rift existed between Metropolitans Germanos and Chrysostomos. This is simply untrue. The State Church of Greece, incidentally, conducted Metropolitan Germanos' burial at his death in 1943.

2. An interesting contrast of the ecclesiology and personalities of Metropolitan Chrysostomos and Bishop Matthew can be found in the book *Resistance or Exclusion? The Alternative Ecclesiological Approaches of Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Phlorina and Bishop Matthew of Vresthene* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2000), by Hieromonk Patapios Agiogregorites, which contains enlightening translations of the correspondence and pronouncements of both clergymen.

3. It has been long rumored that Metropolitan Chrysostomos left no Bishops to succeed him because he found no suitable candidates among his followers, even though at least one Serbian Bishop was ready to help him consecrate Bishops. This story is also wholly apocryphal. While several Bishops had been approached about such Consecrations, including an Albanian Prelate, the fact is that Metropolitan Chrysostomos was isolated and unable to carry out any of these tenuous plans.

4. His Eminence, Bishop Photii is a former university professor and was a spiritual son of the late Archimandrites Seraphim and Sergius, professors at the theological faculty of the University of Sofia who were dismissed from their posts for courageously opposing the calendar innovation in the Church of Bulgaria. As well, he was a spiritual ward of the late and revered Mother Seraphima (the former Princess Olga Lieven), Abbess of the historic Old Calendarist Convent of the Protection of the Mother of God, outside Sofia, who was a spiritual daughter of St. Seraphim of Sofia.

5. The decision of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad to restore liturgical communion with the Synod of Old Calendarist Bishops under Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle was reported in *Orthodox Life,* Vol. XLIV, No. 4 (1994), pp. 46-50.

6. We do, however, maintain communion with those Bishops and communities of the ROCA which did not reunite with Moscow, now organized under Metropolitan Agafangel of New York and Eastern America.

7. See a complete report on these dialogues in English, along with relevant documents at *http://hsir/info/p/td* on the World Wide Web. See the Greek-language report at *http://hsir.info/p/my.*