

A critique of Old Calendarist ecclesiology

Since its inception, the Old Calendarist movement has generated a substantial degree of debate. Although not all Old Calendarist groups share the same beliefs, the following three views are certainly among the most prevalent:

- 1) Ceasing commemoration of heretical hierarchs is obligatory (not optional)
- 2) Communion ought to be broken not only with erring clergymen, but also with those who, albeit Orthodox, maintain communion with them
- 3) Heretical clergy lose the grace of the mysteries even prior to synodal condemnations

The purpose of this paper is to critique these tenets using a range of examples from the history of the Church. Moreover, since several other matters relating to zealotry (such as the change in the Church's Calendar) also remain highly misunderstood amongst both Old Calendarists and New Calendarists alike, they too shall be addressed.

The New Calendar

Let us begin by addressing the claim, extraordinarily widespread in Old Calendarist literature, that the calendar currently in use by various Patriarchates was anathematised by the Pan-Orthodox Synods of the 16th century. Firstly, for the sake of accuracy, it must be noted that the 16th century condemnations applied only to the papal or Gregorian Calendar, which remains distinct from the Revised Julian Calendar currently in use today. It is also important to note that the Gregorian Calendar possesses a revised *Paschalion* (the set of rules for determining the date of Pascha), unlike the Revised Julian Calendar, which still retains the traditional *Paschalion*. Although the Revised Julian Calendar's *Menaion* (the yearly fixed cycle of services) was indeed changed, the only condemnation which applies to

the new Menaion – sometimes called the Menologion – is contained in the so-called Sigillion of 1583. Unknown to many, however, is the fact that this Sigillion is in actuality a forgery¹. This is not to say that the synod of 1583 itself did not occur, however – the historical facts are much more nuanced.

To summarise the matter briefly, the fabrications of an Athonite monk, Father Iakovos of New Skete, were eventually compiled into Codex No. 722 of the Monastery of St. Panteleimon. To this day, the codex is cited repeatedly by zealots in support of the claim that the Revised Julian Calendar is “under anathema.” Yet, to quote a well-documented Old Calendarist study on the supposed Sigillion^{1(pp5-6)}:

- a. The title: a pure invention of the compiler
- b. The date: this document was allegedly composed on November 20, 1583, which is actually the date of the joint Epistle of Patriarchs Jeremiah and Sylvester, whereas the text presented in the *Sigillion* was composed in 1616.
- c. The signatures: Patriarchs Jeremiah (+1595) and Sylvester (+1590) were no longer alive in 1616, and Patriarch Sophronios had already abdicated by 1608.
- d. The text: it belongs to Loukaris (1616) and not to the Synod of 1583, and its content is not only entirely unrelated to the calendar question, but is also appallingly garbled.
- e. The anathema: whereas in Loukaris’ text, there are six anathemas, pertaining to Roman Catholic teachings, the compiler has added to the *Sigillion* a seventh anathema concerning all who follow the “newly invented *Paschalion* and the New *Menologion* of the atheist astronomers of the Pope [*sic*].”

According to the “Father” of Old Calendarism, Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina^{2(p59)}, the synods of the 16th century

condemned the Gregorian Calendar, but... this condemnation concerns the Latins, who implemented this calendar in its entirety, whereas the Archbishop adopted half of it, applying it to the fixed Feasts and retaining the Old Calendar for Pascha and the moveable Feasts, precisely in order to bypass the obstacle of this condemnation.

Indeed, it should be made clear that the revised *Paschalion* was the primary reason why the Gregorian calendar itself was condemned. Thus^{1(p3)}

“Therefore, the Eastern Fathers, having convened a Synod in Constantinople [in 1583], **when the so-called correction of the date of Pascha devised by the Roman Church was first proclaimed, resolved to uphold the Tradition of the Fathers in every way possible...** I had previously sent word to Rome, proving that it was **correct to celebrate Pascha according to the rule (Κανόνιον) of the Fathers** and beseeching them not to increase the disagreements between the Churches...” (*Meletios Pegas, Epistle XXIII*)

In “the year of salvation 1587... those present **synodally rejected the correction of the date of Holy Pascha** made by Pope Gregory XIII as parlous, unnecessary, and the cause of many scandals to all Christian nations...” (*Hypselantes, Τὰ Μετὰ τὴν Ἄλωσιν, p. 113*)

On February 12, 1593...a permanent [Holy and Great, ‘Plenary’] Synod was convened... The decisions of this Synod were published in a “Synodal Act,” which included “**a rejection of the New Calendar, that is, the innovation of the Latins concerning Pascha.**” (Paraskevaïdes, *Μελέτιος ὁ Πηγᾶς, pp. 113ff*)

Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem, in the *Paralipomena* of Book XI of the *Δωδεκάβιβλος* (ch. 11, §18), repeats in summary form that the “Plenary” Synod in Constantinople in 1593 decided “**that Pascha should occur as determined by the First Synod and that the calendar concocted by the Latins should be anathematized.**”

[The synod of 1593] “subsequently promulgated Canons pertaining to Church order,” the eighth of which mentions the wish of the Hierarchs that “**what was decided by the Holy Fathers regarding the Holy and salvific Pascha should remain unshaken**”—“what was decided” being the First Canon of the Synod of Antioch (341), which the Synod of 1593 repeated verbatim (*Paraskevaïdes, Μελέτιος ὁ Πηγᾶς, pp. 113ff*) [Emphasis added]

Taking into consideration the above, it is evident that the anathematisation of the Gregorian calendar by the Pan-Orthodox Synods stemmed from its altered Paschalion, while the calendar in use today (*without* this condemned innovation¹) is not the same as that which was “concocted by the Latins.” To cite yet another “True Orthodox” source,³

...it was recognized by all soundly-believing zealots in the 1930’s that the Pan-Orthodox Synods only condemned the adoption of either the **complete** Gregorian Menaion and Paschalion Calendar **or** the adoption of the Gregorian Paschalion [Emphasis added]

Clearly, the Revised Julian Calendar remains untouched by these condemnations. This is not to say, of course, that the introduction of this Calendar was the best course of action. Indeed, it may certainly be criticised - particularly due to the fact that it was unilaterally introduced in a manner contrary to Orthodox ecclesiological principles. Yet, as this paper shall conclusively demonstrate, schism is not an appropriate solution to the problem.

Firstly, it may be useful to briefly examine the view of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) vis-à-vis the New Calendar. For one, ROCOR itself allowed the New Calendar to be used in some of its jurisdictions in order to accommodate converts⁴. Moreover, in his letter to the Hieroschemamonk Theodosius, who was considering breaking from his Archbishop, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) stated the following⁵:

Of course, I do not agree with your conclusion at all. The question remains that while recognizing holy tradition and witnessing their violation, in this case by the Greeks, one must still pose the following question: does such violation justify ecclesiastical separation or only reproof? You, Father, are one step away from falling into prelest [spiritual delusion]. May the Mother of God preserve you from the next step. I write to you as a benevolent friend: do not destroy your 40-year podvig [spiritual struggle] by a judgment of the Church on the basis of your relative formalism—relative and also arbitrary. The new calendar is no less distasteful to me than it is to you, but even worse is a break from Orthodoxy and its hierarchy by self-loving monks.

The synod of bishops itself was categorical⁶:

Our Church keeps the Old Calendar and considers the introduction of the New Calendar to be a mistake. Nevertheless, according to the policies of Patriarch Tikhon of blessed memory, we never broke spiritual communion with the canonical Churches in which the New Calendar had been introduced.

Do ecclesiastical penalties apply automatically?

Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that the Revised Julian Calendar presently in use *was* condemned by the synods of the 16th century. This raises a very important question – do the ecclesiastical penalties of excommunication, deposition, and anathematisation apply *automatically* to wrongdoers? If this were the case, then the legitimacy of every Old Calendarist hierarchy in existence would be in doubt (as we shall see). But first, let us consider the viewpoint of St Nikodemos the Hagiorite in his famous Rudder^{7(pp5-6)}:

We must know that the penalties provided by the Canons, such as deposition, excommunication, and anathematization, are imposed in the third person according, to grammatical usage, there being no imperative available. In such cases in order to express a

command, the second person would be necessary. I am going to explain the matter better.

The Canons command the council of living bishops to depose the priests, or to excommunicate them, or to anathematize laymen who violate the canons. Yet, if the council does not actually effect the deposition of the priests, or the excommunication, or the anathematization of laymen, these priests and laymen, are neither actually deposed, nor excommunicated, nor anathematized. They are liable to stand trial, however, judicially, here as touching deposition, excommunication, or anathematization, but there regarding divine vengeance...

So those silly men make a great mistake who say that at the present time all those in holy orders who have been ordained contrary to canons are actually deposed from office. It is an inquisitional tongue that foolishly twaddles thus **without understanding that the command of canons, without the practical activity of the second person, or, more plainly speaking, of the council, remains unexecuted, since it does not act of itself and by itself immediately and before judgement.** The Apostles themselves explain themselves **in their c. XLVI (46) unmistakably**, since they **do not say** that any bishop or presbyter who accepts a baptism performed by heretics is already and at once actually in the state of having been deposed, **but that they command that he be deposed, or, at any rate, that he stand trial**, and, if it be **proved** that he did so, then “we command that he be stripped of holy orders by your decision,” they say. [Emphasis added]

The words of St Nikodemos are clear and conclusive – canonical penalties do not apply automatically prior to a synodal trial and verdict. A competent ecclesiastical authority must actually apply the penalty (i.e. deposition, excommunication, or anathematisation) to the offender in question. Moreover, it may be observed that a wide range of canons (such as those of Carthage, which anathematised Pelagianism) condemn not only disciplinary errors, but also heresies⁷. As such, it is interesting that St Nikodemos uses Canon XLVI (46) of the

Holy Apostles as an example in his passage quoted above. The canon itself reads as follows^{7(p68)}:

We order any Bishop, or Presbyter, that has accepted any heretics' Baptism, or sacrifice, to be deposed; for "what consonancy hath Christ with Beliar [Belial]? or what part hath the believer with an infidel?"

The issue here is not merely disciplinary (after all, according to St Nikodemos himself, the Church often allowed the use of *oikonomia*), but also *contains a dogmatic component relevant to contemporary ecumenism*. Indeed, the Saint notes in his commentary that the canon applies to those who accept heretical baptisms/sacrifices as "correct and true."^{7(p68)} It is telling that this canon was used as an example by the Saint ***in a section explaining that no one is excommunicated, or deposed, or anathematised automatically***. It would appear that St Nikodemos was providentially rebuking those Old Calendarists who declare New Calendarists graceless and automatically condemned, in direct opposition to the holy canons.

Simony

One example of a rather severe violation during the time of St Nikodemos is the widespread simony (the buying or selling of church offices/roles) which plagued the Church under the Sultans. According to Canon 22 of Trullo^{7(p315)} (cf. Apostolic Canon 29; Canon 2 of Chalcedon; Canon 90 of St. Basil the Great; the Epistles of St Gennadius Scholarius and St. Tarasius of Constantinople, etc.)

We command that those men be deposed from office, whether they be Bishops or Clergymen whatsoever, who have been ordained or are being ordained for money, and not in accordance with a test and choice of life.

Commenting on this in the Rudder, St. Nikodemos remarks^{7(p315)}

Read, and sigh, my brother, at the violation of such sacred and such momentous Canons; for today that is manner in which simony is practiced, as though it were a virtue, and not a heresy detested by God, as most saintly Gennadius calls it.

Indeed, the clergy of those times often purchased their orders and subsequently forced the laity to pay them back for their expenses, a practice strongly criticised in a document from 1806^{8(p134)}:

...Oh, you vile Synod of Constantinople, in what way do you resemble the holy and God fearing apostles who carried the word and wisdom of Jesus Christ? Perhaps in the poverty and disinterestedness which you preach? But you are full of the money you steal every day from miserable Christians... Your rage for money is indescribable.

St Nikodemos presents the patristic perspective on simoniacs^{7(pp44, 958-959)} as follows:

Pope Gregory in writing to Regas Carolus says that “the simoniacs are the greatest of all heretics” (p. 323 of the Volume of Love); and Gennadius Scholarius says that simony was the cause of Christians incurring the disasters inflicted by godless barbarians, because it is the greatest of sins and a most terrible piece of ungodliness, **and because it is a heresy regarding the first article of the faith”** (p. 207 of the same volume). Isidore the Pelousiotes says: “Everyone, then, that buys Holy Orders is in the same category as Caiaphas the Christ-killer. For what he cannot get entrusted to him by works, he manages to secure **with ungodly dogmas”** (Epistle 315)...

At this point the Saint [Tarasius] turns to the Pope and tells him that **the ungodly heresy of the simoniacs is worse than the heresy of the Pneumatomach Macedonius** and his party. **For those persons used to say that the Holy Spirit was a creature and servant of the Father, whereas simoniacs make the Holy Spirit out a servant of their own.** [Emphasis added]

Thus, the saint grieved over the violations of the canons in his own time, yet without entering into schism or establishing parallel hierarchies. Although many other transgressions (also criticised by the saint) occurred in those days, this example is significant because simony, as mentioned above, may be considered not only a canonical violation but also a **heresy strongly condemned by holy councils and fathers** [“greatest of all heretics”; “worse than the heresy of the Pneumatomach Macedonius” etc]. The fact that the Kollyvades did not wall themselves off raises the question – were they therefore “infected” by the errors of their hierarchs? *Were they sinning in not breaking communion?* If such an action is somehow *obligatory*, we would be forced to condemn these saints (and many others), an absurdity which no Old Calendarist would admit. Moreover, as we shall see, this example is but the “tip of the iceberg.”

Opposition to Hesychasm

In 1341, 1347 and 1351, authoritative synods (which have already *in essence* been accepted as Ecumenical by the Orthodox Church, with a formal declaration likely to follow in the future) defended the doctrine of Saint Gregory Palamas on the essence-energies distinction and condemned his opponents. What is little known, however, is that the distinction itself was not the only matter under debate. Thus, in the Tomos of the synod of 1341⁹ (pp329-330, 332-333) we read:

Furthermore, Barlaam was found to have made many misrepresentations and accusations in writing against the practitioners of the silent life. At the same time he attacked the **prayer** customary with them, or rather with all Christians, **the “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.” ...**

So by these words Barlaam was revealed and refuted as speaking blasphemously and **heretically** both about the divine light on Tabor **and** in his allegations against the monks concerning **the sacred prayer which they practice and recite repeatedly...**

And therefore we declare that if, on the one hand, he [Barlaam] shows true repentance and corrects himself, and is no longer found speaking and writing concerning such matters, it is well; but if not, he shall be excommunicated and cut off from the holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ and from the orthodox community of Christians.

Furthermore, **if anyone else** should appear again repeating **any** of his blasphemous and **heretical spoken or written accusations against the monks or in any way harassing them in such matters**, he will be subject to the same condemnation from Our Modesty; **he shall also be excommunicated and cut off from the holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ and from the orthodox community of Christians.** [Emphasis added]

This condemnation of those who reject the Jesus Prayer/Hesychasm is important due to the fact that there have been numerous cases in Church history where it was explicitly violated. A prime example of this is in the Church of Russia. According to Grillaert^{10(p191)},

Although Nil's type of spirituality attracted a lot of followers in both monastic and lay circles, hesychasm and the related type of monasticism was suppressed by the church authorities and pushed into the margins of Russian Orthodoxy: there was a series of persecutions against Nil's followers and the church started consciously suppressing the hesychast movement (Billington 1966: 63-64; Figes 2003: 294). The ban on Nil's monasticism cut Russian religious consciousness off from the hesychast tradition, as practiced on Mount Athos and deeply rooted in the patristic tradition. Russian spiritual life and monasticism was even further in decline after the church reforms of Peter the Great in the beginning of the 18th century. Peter the Great's (and Feofan Prokopovic's) installation of the "Spiritual Regulation" in 1721 turned out to be detrimental for Russian spirituality: the Russian church

was turned into a state-controlled and secularized institution that served the tsar's political ambitions rather than guarding its spiritual life.

Thankfully, the patristic revival initiated by St Paisius Velichkovsky, the Optina elders and St Seraphim of Sarov gradually restored hesychasm in Russia. However, as late as 1913, S.V Bulgakov's handbook for church servers^{11(p85)}, officially sanctioned and published by the Russian Orthodox Church, refers to hesychasm in a fashion very similar to Barlaam himself:

One finds a stunning distortion of Hesychasm in the *Nastol'naia Kniga* [Handbook], which has an entry on Hesychasm in a section dedicated to "Schisms, Heresies, Sects, Etc." that informs us that the Hesychasts were

"a group of monastic mystics in Greece in the fourteenth century distinguished by the strangest reveries. They honored the navel as the center of spiritual energies and, consequently, the center of contemplation; they thought that, by lowering their chin towards the chest and gazing at their navel, they would see the light of Paradise and rejoice in seeing celestial inhabitants."

The entry concludes by telling us that, happily, the

"nonsensical opinion of the Hesychasts about the means of the apprehension of the uncreated light was soon given over to oblivion on its own" ...

As for the state of Hesychast practice in Russian monasteries at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, one need only recall the letters of Bishop Ignatii (Brianchaninov) or the persecution endured by many of the Elders of Optina Pustyn' for the perceived novelty of Eldership.

Were the pre-revolutionary Russian bishops automatically deposed for espousing a doctrine "condemned by holy Councils, or Fathers?"^{7(p471)} The answer to this question must be yes

only if the flawed Old Calendarist interpretation of canon 15 (of the First-Second Synod) is adhered to.

Additionally, St Barsanuphius of Optina^{12(pp138-139)}, in his talk on August 11, 1909, noted that the Jesus Prayer was treated with distrust by his contemporaries:

He (Fr. Benedict) was given several tasks to perform by the elder—among other things, to find out if the Jesus Prayer was being done in monasteries. He travelled to many monasteries and convents and came to a sad conclusion: this most necessary prayer has been abandoned almost everywhere, especially in convents. Those who are still doing it are like candles that are almost burnt down.

Earlier, it was not only monks who did the Jesus Prayer—it was also done without fail by people in the world (for instance, the famous historical figure Speransky did the Jesus Prayer and was always joyful, despite his many labors). But now even monks regard this labor distrustfully. For example, one might say to another, “Have you heard?”

“What?”

“Fr. Peter has begun doing the Jesus Prayer.”

“Really? Well, he’ll probably go out of his mind.”

Fr John Romanides refers to a similar phenomenon in Greece¹³:

It [hesychasm] was persecuted because the countries in which it had flourished started to become Westernized politically as was the case in Russia after the reforms of Peter the Great and in Greece after the revolution of 1821...

The Franks knew full well that they had correctly identified hesychasm as the source of Orthodoxy’s strength. So what did they do to get rid of it? After the Revolution of 1821 and the founding of the Modern Greek State, the Franks deliberately set out to undermine hesychasm, and Adamantios Korais took it upon himself to do just that. After the revolution

of 1821, Korais declared war against hesychasm at the same time that the Russians and the Europeans were also setting their sights at undermining hesychasm and uprooting it from the Christian tradition. This is how we have reached the point where today we consider hesychasm to be an unimportant detail within Orthodox tradition and an insignificant phenomenon from the past. **In fact, we learned from the textbooks that we used in junior high that hesychasm is a heresy, a trivial and marginal tradition...** [Emphasis added]

In the meantime, a renowned Roman Catholic specialist on Orthodox subjects named Martin Jugie (1878-1954) writes a book in Latin about the dogmatic teaching of the Eastern Church. In this book, he announces the death of hesychasm. He writes, "We can now say that hesychasm has disappeared." A contemporary Greek historian and author of *The History of the Greek Nation* has said the same thing. He triumphantly announces that hesychasm is dead, that the words *romaios*, *romios*, and *romaiosyni* have now disappeared from the Greek language, and that modern Greeks no longer have a problem with their ethnic identity. Since hesychasm and Roman culture are not unrelated, the plan was to extinguish them both.

Of course, Jugie was not entirely correct - hesychasm was never *completely* forgotten, though at times it undoubtedly existed on the periphery. Thus, in Russia, through the efforts of St Paisius^{14(p37)},

Athonite hesychasm re-vivified the corpse of Russian monasticism in the late 18th century, culminating in Optina. Nevertheless, these groups, while manifestly saintly, existed on the fringes of Russian life, and were held in suspicion by the increasingly secular and servile Synod.

Yet, as there was no synodal trial or condemnation, the Russian Church remained inside the bosom of the Church *despite* the widespread Barlaamism which plagued its existence,

undoubtedly condemned by both holy fathers and synods. The fact that such teachings were being promulgated, and that this did not only touch the hierarchy but even monks and laity, is significant. Contemporary ecumenism as an ecclesiological heresy is promulgated today primarily by erring hierarchs, as opposed to the many monastics, laity, and clerics who are very often opposed to such abuses.

Yet even the hierarchies in modern times are not entirely compromised. Indeed, the jurisdictions of Georgia and Bulgaria have already synodally rejected ecumenical heresies while also refraining from participating in the WCC, and a significant proportion of bishops in the Serbian and Greek hierarchies also strongly oppose syncretistic ecumenism - to provide the more obvious examples¹⁵. Moreover, many clergymen and laypeople even in the Ecumenical Patriarchate retain fully orthodox beliefs (in addition, of course, to the Athonite monks), and it could even be argued that the heresy of anti-hesychasm was more widespread in medieval Russia than ecumenism is in some "New Calendarist" jurisdictions. Since zealous Old Calendarists declare New Calendarists to be deprived of grace, by their own reasoning the abuses listed above should have rendered the Church of Russia (and Greece) equally graceless. Furthermore, if those who remain in communion with those in heresy are also under anathema, then Orthodoxy itself would have ceased to exist in those times, as no "walling off" occurred. Indeed, none of the other local Churches broke off from the Russian Church – despite the fact that in 1727 the patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem and Constantinople, as well as the Greek bishop of Trnovo, synodally reaffirmed the theology of Saint Gregory Palamas^{16(vol 37)} – and neither did the persecuted Russian hesychasts/saints enter into schism. Ultimately, today's Old Calendarist groups should - by their own reasoning - trace their roots to self-anathematised and invalid hierarchies.

Anti-Palamism in the 14th century

On the matter of whether depositions occur automatically, it is also worth quoting the Palamite synod of 1351⁹ (pp336-337, 345-346):

But he who always rejoices at our calamities [the devil] did not even thus know how to keep peace, nor did he go around seeking to remedy a lack of agents. He still had some who had kept company with Barlaam and that Akindynos, and were fatally ill with their disease. Through them he subjected to himself the one who is called bishop of Ephesus and the bishop of Gannos, Gregory and Decius. These men formed a society and collected other persons as companions, never thinking up anything healthy at any time, stirring up dissension against the church of God, zealously striving to lead the many astray and to cut them off pitifully from the church, supposing that they would obtain glory from this for themselves. **So it was necessary because of this to assemble a great council, as our most clement emperor took pity on the souls which were perishing...**

When these men had been altogether refuted in this way, they were summoned by the church to repentance. First our most clement emperor with attractive and appealing words exhorted them vehemently not to turn away from the good medicine of repentance. **But they did not accept, saying openly, "I do not wish to know your ways."** For they persisted in what they understood badly from the beginning. Therefore by the glorious command of our mighty emperor and the most holy ecumenical patriarch **a tome was read which had been decided a little time before for deposition of the bishops of Ephesus and Gannos and others,** on the grounds that they had caught the disease of Barlaam and Akindynos. **It had not yet taken effect, because they were waiting for their change of heart and repentance,** and were trying by every manner and means to elicit this with all eagerness and zeal...

But as he saw that even so these men were incurably ill, holding once and for all to the former blasphemies and altogether rejecting repentance, taking up zeal worthy not only of

himself and his virtue since childhood, but worthy also of his patriarchal throne, **he stripped the bishops of Ephesus and Gannos of their episcopal insignia and of all priestly functions, with the agreement of the holy synod...** [Emphasis added]

Evidently, despite the fact that the bishops of Ephesus and Gannos preached heresy, and had a tome prepared for their deposition, the 1351 Tomos explicitly states that it “had not yet taken effect” as the church was eagerly awaiting their repentance. Evidently, the abovementioned bishops were *not* automatically condemned/expelled from the Church, even though the synods of 1341 and 1347 had already condemned the heresy of Barlaamism. Can one imagine any “True Orthodox” synod adopting this same attitude? Let us also examine how the 1351 synod treated the *other* Barlaamites, after the deposition of the abovementioned bishops^{9(p346)}:

but the **others** with them, the leaders of the heresy and those who followed them in wickedness and were subject to condemnation with them, were dismissed. Some of them sought forgiveness and obtained this through repentance. And so this session ended.

From that time a few days passed, as our most clement and holy emperor had commanded, wisely keeping open the door of repentance for the dissenters. But as they still were incurable, he decided to gather another synod again [the fifth session], so that through examination the truth of orthodoxy concerning the problems raised would become more evident from the theological writings of the saints. [Emphasis added]

At the conclusion of this fifth session, the unrepentant dissenters who had been confronted with significant patristic testimony and *still* refused to accept Orthodoxy were **“expelled from the catholic and apostolic church of Christ.”**^{9(p371)} Evidently, prior to the synodal

verdict they were understood to be *within* the Church, as the Church would not have needed to “expel” or cast out those already outside its boundaries.

Ultimately, in the above passages one may observe a truly Orthodox ethos. Rather than a rabid disdain for the heterodox, we see a deep concern for those in heresy, and a sincere desire for their conversion. It is clear that the deposition of heretical hierarchs does not occur mechanically, *but rather is contingent upon the Church’s will. The Church ultimately decides who to expel from her midst, and if she chooses to give heretics time to repent, this is her prerogative.*

To provide another example, in 1368 (*after* the authoritative synods of 1341, 1347 and 1351), Prochoros Kydones propounded *the already-condemned claim* that the light of the transfiguration was created, among other heresies. However, he was not at all considered *automatically* deposed in relation to the issue of Barlaamism. According to Russell¹⁷(pp82, 85),

a local council was held, presided over by the bishop of Hierissos and the Holy Mountain, which anathematized Prochoros as an incorrigible heretic. When the patriarch [St. Philotheos Kokkinos] received the council's report, together with a copy of Prochoros's *pittakion*, **he decided that the matter had to be brought as soon as possible before the 'holy and great synod' of metropolitans and bishops resident at the capital.** Up to this point Philotheos had been hoping to deal with the affair himself on an administrative level. Events now forced him to **initiate a legal process.** The synod met in the spring of 1368. Philotheos presided and also led the **interrogation** of Prochoros...

Philotheos rested his case. After evidence was produced at some length of the cult rendered to Gregory Palamas in various places, each of the assembled metropolitans and bishops was asked his verdict. All found Prochoros's writings heretical - **worse than those of Barlaam and Acindynus - and recommended his excommunication and deposition from the priesthood.**

Prochoros asked for a day's adjournment to reflect on the matter and prepare a **defence, which was granted**. But when the synod was reconvened, he refused to appear. **After the canonical two summonses** by the Great Church's legal officers, he was declared obdurate **and sentence was confirmed**. [Emphasis added]

Evidently, the initial council presided over by only a single bishop was not considered sufficient by Saint Philotheos, Patriarch of Constantinople. More importantly, the fact that Prochoros faced a “legal process” indicates that he was not at all considered automatically deposed by, or mechanically “under,” the previous synodal anathemas of 1341, 1347 and 1351. *He was still considered a priest, subject to deposition*, which is significant. He was, moreover, ***canonically summoned, given the opportunity to prepare a defence, and properly sentenced/condemned by the synod***. By comparing this summary of the 1368 synod with various Old Calendarist actions against the “World Orthodox” (which we shall soon analyse), it should become rather obvious that the Old Calendarist perspective on synodal condemnations is far from “patristic.”

In short, then, the 14th century Palamite synods demonstrate that when a clergyman is accused of “falling under” a past condemnation, a competent synod shall summon that bishop or priest to trial to determine the truth of the accusations, and then (if the charges are found to be true and they refuse to repent) provide a sentence.

Canon 15 and other Old Calendarist misrepresentations

Before presenting additional examples from Church history, it is necessary to once again refer briefly to the much-abused canon 15 of the first-second synod. It may be noted that this particular ruling obviously cannot be used as a means for establishing new ecclesial bodies, as have the “True Orthodox.” Rather, it merely sanctions preliminary separation

from a bishop who preaches heresy (openly) prior to an ecclesiastical trial. Thus, it has rightly been remarked¹⁸ that the term “pseudo-bishop”

prior to a synodal decision is heuristic or diagnostic in nature and not final and juridical or condemnatory. As a consequence of this grace-filled mysteries are still performed by the "pseudo-bishop" before a Synodal condemnation.

Given the examples that have been (and shall be) presented in this paper, it is impossible to read canon 15 as compulsory.

As an aside, it should also be mentioned that the majority (perhaps all) of the patristic proof-texts cited by Old Calendarists in support of breaking communion with “heretics” actually fit within one of the following three categories:

- I. Preliminary separation from a heretical hierarch (*without* establishing parallel jurisdictions or breaking off from the Orthodox hierarchs in communion with him), in accordance with canon 15. In these cases, grace has not yet departed, as the hierarch has not been deposed.
- II. Breaking communion with *synodally-condemned* hierarchs, which is indeed required.
- III. Avoiding communion with schismatic groups (which may or may not hold heretical beliefs). It is often forgotten that, notwithstanding synodal condemnations, individuals can also sever *themselves* from the Church - *not* by propounding heresy, but by entering into schism and thereby forfeiting divine grace. For example, even if no synod had ever condemned the Papists for their heresies, they would nonetheless have remained outside of the Church as, according to Balsamon¹⁹ (writing in 1190),

For many years the Western Church has been divided in spiritual communion with the other four Patriarchates and has become alien to the Orthodox...

The Pope ultimately established parallel jurisdictions in the sees of Antioch, Constantinople, and Jerusalem, obviously indicating the existence of a schism²⁰. St Basil, with reference to the views of Sts Cyprian and Firmilian, stated the following regarding schismatics in his first canon²¹:

For the beginning of the separation came about by schism, and those who revolted from the Church no longer possessed the grace of the Holy Spirit. For the imparting thereof ceased with the interruption of the continuity...But in breaking away, they became laymen, and thus they had no authority either to baptize or to ordain, since they no longer had the power to grant others the grace of the Holy Spirit from which they themselves had fallen.

The schismatics referred to by St Basil were generally Orthodox in their beliefs, but formed their own churches and thereby “no longer possessed the grace of the Holy Spirit.” Thus, the beliefs of schismatics are not necessarily relevant to the fact that they find themselves outside of the Church (though of course dogmatic differences do exist between the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholics). One additional example from Church history involving heretical schismatics may be observed in the Non-Chalcedonians, who rejected the Fourth Ecumenical Council, established their own hierarchies, and splintered into a range of different sects²². In principle, however, no trial was required for each of their hierarchs for violating Chalcedon, as they had already left the unity of the Church by establishing their own.

Thus, it is evident that synodal condemnations not required *only* in the case of schismatic bodies. In the present circumstances, however, the New Calendarist jurisdictions have not

entered into schism or established parallel hierarchies – indeed, it is the so-called “True Orthodox” who have done so prior to any synodal verdict (in a manner at least somewhat similar to the “Old Believers” in the 17th century, who also splintered many times amongst themselves). Obviously, this cannot be defended on the basis of the canons. To conclude the present section, we quote the succinct words of the archimandrite and canonist Epiphanius of Athens in his letter to a certain Fr Nicodemos (dated 22 July 1971):

there are two kinds of heretics: Those whom the Church has put on trial and has convicted and excised from Her Body, and those who have neither been convicted as yet by the Church, nor have left the Church of their own volition, but instead have remained in the Body of the Church. One such case is the case of the Patriarch. Patriarch Athenagoras has preached heretical beliefs. But he has not been convicted yet by the Church, nor has he renounced the Church and removed himself from Her. He has remained inside the Church and continues to minister inside the Church and consequently, he is still a channel of Grace; He performs Sacraments.

The Seventh Ecumenical Synod

Let us now return to our investigation of examples from Church history by presenting an anathema promulgated by the Seventh Ecumenical Synod (eighth proceeding), which decreed that *“If anyone breaks any ecclesiastical tradition, written or unwritten, let him be anathema.”*¹⁶(vol 3, p416) Of course, it is undeniable that many Church traditions have fallen into disuse, or been replaced, since the 8th century. One such practice is the “papaethra” tonsure of clergymen (an ancient haircut designed to resemble a crown of thorns, as seen in some icons of St Gregory Palamas) which, to quote St Nikodemos, was “adopted by the entire Church, both the Eastern and the Western”⁷(p315). Indeed, canon 21 of Trullo alludes to the ancient practice⁷, which was a distinctive mark of the clergy. Interestingly, this

“ecclesiastical tradition” (to quote the anathema) fell into disuse centuries ago, and today not even Old Calendarist clerics implement this form of tonsure. If synodal condemnations are somehow “automatic,” it follows that clergymen and even entire local churches throughout the centuries have been mechanically and unknowingly placed “under anathema,” without the offenders even being summoned to court. Indeed, Old Calendarist clerics, being human, have in all likelihood violated a range of written or unwritten “ecclesiastical traditions” throughout their lifetimes (including, but not limited to, the abovementioned tonsure). To be consistent with the overly rigid and “strict” ecclesiology propounded by many zealots, it would appear that they must of necessity consider *themselves* under condemnation and mechanically expelled from the Church. By treating ecclesiastical condemnations as automatic, and dismissing the need for conciliar trials, many “True Orthodox” have forced themselves into such an absurd ecclesiological position.

The 1913 Russian synod

At a Russian synod in 1913, the theology of St Gregory Palamas was yet again contradicted.

According to Kenworthy,^{23(pp99-101)}

Given the general ignorance of Palamas’s theology, therefore, it should not be surprising that the Synod’s reports and final epistle were inconsistent and contradictory in the ways in which they grappled with the distinction between the essence and operations of God.

[Archbishop] Nikon likewise struggled to define his position...

In short, he is willing to define the energies as “divine” and as belonging to God, but asserts that it is incorrect to call them “God” because he equates this term with the divine essence. Although Nikon is aware of the distinction between the essence and operations of God, he (like others in the debate) was only superficially familiar with the theology of Gregory

Palamas and therefore was groping for language and concepts to articulate that the energies are divine and yet not the same as God's essence. The result is confused and contradictory...

Nikon... equated it [the term "God"] only with the divine essence. This point has continued in more recent debate, in which Alfeev and others assert that the opponents... did not understand the theology of Palamas, which made no firm distinction between *theos* and *theotis*, and that it would be proper to term the divine energies "God."

The synod itself made the same error, as another scholar points out²⁴:

...it should again be emphasized that the Palamite dogmas in fact remained *terra incognita* for the Russian ecclesiastical society: even if Gregory Palamas was remembered in the nineteenth century, this did not reflect in Russian theology. This ignorance is quite well revealed in the Synodal Letter **where it was claimed that Gregory Palamas "nowhere called energies 'God,' but taught to call them 'divinity' (not Theós, but Theótis)," which was absolutely contrary to the doctrine of the Palamites.**

Indeed, St Gregory did of course refer to the energies/activities/operations as "God"

(Theos), while the Tomos of the synod of 1351^{9(p357)} reported and confirmed the following:

Saint Anastasius says, "**The designation 'God' obviously refers to energy. It does not represent the very essence of God; for it is impossible to know this;** but 'God' represents and reveals his theoretic energy to us." And again the same saint says: "The name 'God' **does not signify the essence of Godhead**, for this is incomprehensible and nameless; but from his theoretic energy he is called '**God [theos]**', as the great Dionysius says, either from *thein*, that is 'to run,' or from *aithein*, which is 'to burn.'"

But the great Dionysius says, "If we should name the supersubstantial hiddenness 'God' or 'life' or 'essence' or 'light' or 'word,' we do not have in mind anything other than the **powers**

brought forth from it to us, which are deifying or essence-making or life-generating or wisdom-giving...

Besides this, the great gift and energy of the Spirit, namely deification, according to which the saints are deified, is called "**Godhead**" by the saints, but the opponents of the metropolitan of Thessalonica say it is created Godhead." [Emphasis added]

According to Sinkewicz^{25(p137)}

The synod [of 1351] laid down six principal doctrinal tenets: [1] there is in God a distinction between his substance and his energy; [2] the energy is uncreated; [3] this distinction does not involve composition in God, for it is not a question of two substantial realities, since both belong to one unique God; [4] the Fathers used the term 'divinity' or '**God**' (theotis, **theos**) for the energy; [5] the Fathers also spoke of the substance that surpasses or transcends the energy; [6] likewise, the Fathers asserted very clearly the incommunicability of the divine substance, while at the same time they speak of the real participation in the divine life or energy (PG 151, 732 C 754 B). [Emphasis added]

Of course, it may be said that the sparsity of Palamas' works in Russia led to this error on the part of the synod, that it was made in ignorance, or that there was a misunderstanding. This might well be true, and it is **not** the intention of this writer to univocally label the Russian synod as heretical. Yet, it cannot be denied that from a purely factual perspective, Archbishop Nikon and the 1913 synod contradicted the Tomos of 1351 by stating categorically that "God" – a term of no small importance – cannot be applied to the energies. This would at least appear to place them "under" the anathema of the abovementioned synod⁹ – only if, of course, anathemas are treated as automatic and self-acting.

Furthermore, how is one to judge whether any adequate defences apply to the Russian bishops in this case? Is this not precisely the purpose of a synodal trial (which zealots deem unnecessary)? ***Certainly, if the current Ecumenical Patriarch were to make the same remarks, it is indisputable that he would immediately be labelled a Barlaamite by the zealots without the slightest trace of goodwill or concern for his circumstances.*** And yet, if Old Calendarists are to be consistent with their own “logic,” the Church of Russia fell into heresy in 1913 (*or much earlier, due to the abovementioned examples of widespread Barlaamism throughout its history*) and lost all grace - as if such absolutism has any place in the Church.

The 1983 anathema

Let us now return to present-day circumstances. What is one to make of ROCOR’s 1983 anathema against ecumenism? Is this the “smoking gun” that many “True Orthodox” writers desire? Absolutely not. For one, most Old Calendarist groups created a schism *prior* to the anathema. Secondly, let us consider a letter addressed to Fr. Ephraim of Holy Transfiguration Monastery dated December 22/January 4, 1986/7, written by starotsa John Hudanish:

This [the 1983 anathema] is an eloquent condemnation of ecumenism and a clear statement of our Synod’s rejection of it. What is not so clear, however, is the fact that this anathema is **legislative in nature, rather than judicial**, i.e., it is a codification of a theological principle into law, but not a verdict—much less a sentence... **It is legislation. It is not judgment.** And this is borne out by Metropolitan Vitaly in an article he wrote for "Orthodox Life" (No. 4, 1984, p. 32) while he was still Archbishop of Montreal and Canada. He wrote:

"Time will tell whether or not the other local Churches will adopt our resolution on ecumenism as the acts of the Ten Local Councils were, in their time, entered into the Books of the Canons of the Holy Apostles, the Sacred Ecumenical Councils and the Holy Fathers of the Universal Church."

"It is important to understand that since the 1983 anathema was promulgated by our Synod of Bishops, we now have a canonical basis for dealing with ecumenism and its adherents within our midst. But as with all other laws, **the penalty prescribed by the 1983 anathema cannot be meted out to anyone without due process. Stated otherwise, before anyone can be excommunicated, there must be a determination of guilt in a canonical trial or synodical investigation....**

"Therefore, strictly speaking, neither the Patriarch of Constantinople nor the Patriarch of Jerusalem has been excommunicated by the anathema of 1983... Furthermore, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad **has not** subsequently convened to investigate allegations against either patriarch, nor to anathematize them under the 1983 resolution... [Emphasis added]

Again, according to Metropolitan Vitaly²⁶ (*after* 1983):

At the present time, most other Orthodox Churches have been shaken to the core of their being by two successive blows: the new ecclesiastical calendar and ecumenism. Despite their impoverished state, however, we do not declare and may the Lord save us from ever having to declare them as having lost God's grace.

It is important to note that *none* of the ROCOR bishops at that time contradicted the Metropolitan on his interpretation of the anathema, which is very revealing with regards to their overall intentions. Moreover, to quote one ROCOR clergyman²⁷,

They [anathemas] do not impose themselves on those who violate them. Anathemas are warnings to the faithful, and individuals or local Churches are only separated from the Church by an anathema when a Synod of Bishops with the authority to do so, pronounces such a verdict on them. The purpose of an anathema is the salvation of the faithful, not their damnation. Anathemas guide us to the truth, and away from error. They are not legalistic traps, designed to catch the unsuspecting and send them off to hell. [Emphasis added]

Additional evidence that the anathema has been misinterpreted by zealots is the fact that ROCOR continued to concelebrate with “World Orthodox” jurisdictions even after its pronouncement, and performed many other actions inconsistent with the view that hundreds of millions of Orthodox believers had simply been expelled from the Church on one fateful day in 1983.

Nonetheless, let us first examine the view of ROCOR *prior* to the anathema (when syncretistic ecumenism was already being preached bare-headed by hierarchs in Constantinople and elsewhere). Without hoping to undertake a comprehensive analysis, which would go well beyond the scope of this paper, it will suffice for us to cite the illuminating letters of Fr Seraphim Rose, who reposed in 1982²⁸:

“When our bishops in 1971 condemned the decision of the Moscow Patriarchate to give communion to Roman Catholics, they used strong language, calling it a “heretical” act; but they did not proclaim the Moscow Patriarchate to be deprived of grace, or to be totally fallen away from the Church. The bishops, on various occasions, have specifically refused to make such a proclamation; and in their statement at the 1976 Sobor they specifically addressed the sincere and struggling priests of the Moscow Patriarchate in terms reserved

only for priests who possess and dispense the grace of God (as noted in our article on Fr. Dimitry)" [Letter 304; Dec. 28/Jan. 10, 1981]

"Evidently you [Dr. Johnstone] agree with Fr. Michael Azkoul who recently stated (Orthodox Christian Witness, Aug, 10/23) that "heresy has negated these ancient Sees. There is no 'church,' hence no Mysteries " in the Churches of Moscow and Constantinople. I hope you are aware that our Russian Church Outside of Russia has never taught and does not now teach this; this is an opinion which has been introduced into our midst by some converts who think themselves wiser than our bishops. I am sorry that you seem not to see the obvious meaning of our Church's not having communion with the Soviet Church: that way we stay free of politics and do not bind ourselves to bishops who are not free and who are often forced to betray the truth. But to state that this Church has no grace is a presumption our bishops have never dared to make. This view, in my opinion, is not at all the result of a sound or strict ecclesiology, but is the result of a too-strict logic (a typical disease of our Western mentality) being applied where it does not fit." [Letter 311; August 13/26, 1981]

"Even today our bishops refuse to "define" in this manner and make everything "black and white"; and I am sure that, perhaps without exception, our bishops not only refuse to declare them [Moscow and Constantinople] without grace, but positively believe (at least by giving the benefit of any doubt) that they do have grace." [Letter 207; May 22/June 4, 1976]

"Recently some wished to see such a "rebaptism" performed in our Western American diocese, but our Archbishop Anthony wisely refused to allow it, in which we gave him our full support—for indeed, it would have been tantamount to an open declaration of the absence of Grace in the Greek Archdiocese. Our bishops, by the way (whether at the 1974 Sobor or later, I don't know) explicitly refused to make such a declaration when asked to do so by one of the Greek Old Calendar jurisdictions." [Letter 216; [April 18/May 1, 1976]

“... our Church has open communion with the Serbian Church, Jerusalem, and probably others, and leaves separate hierarchs free to serve even with Constantinople if they wish.”

[Letter 227; June 30/July 13, 1976]

Elsewhere, referring to an ultra-strict zealot, Fr Seraphim made the following comment which is still relevant in our days, given the sheer number of “True Orthodox” splinter groups²⁹:

...he [the zealot] is in communion with only his own priest and ten other monks in his group on the Holy Mountain; all of the rest of the Orthodox Church is not "pure." Perhaps there are only ten or twelve people left in the world who are perfectly "strict" and "pure" in their Orthodoxy -- this I really don't know; but it simply **cannot** be that there are really only ten or twelve Orthodox Christians left in the world with whom one can have true oneness of faith, expressed in common communion. **I think that you can see that there is some kind of spiritual dead-end here; even if we had to believe such a narrow view of Orthodoxy according to the letter, our believing Christian heart would rebel against it. We cannot really live by such strictness; we must somehow be less "correct" and closer to the heart of Orthodox Christianity.** [Emphasis added]

And again³⁰:

...our Church suffers attacks both from the left side (from ecumenists who accuse us of being uncharitable, behind the times, and the like) and from the right side (by groups in Greece that demand that we break communion with all Orthodox Churches and declare them to be without grace)...

A few years ago one of these [Old Calendarist] groups cut off communion with our Russian Church Abroad because our bishops refused to declare that all other Orthodox Churches are without grace; this group now declares that it alone has grace, only it is Orthodox. Recently

this group has attracted some converts from our Russian Church Abroad, and we should be aware that this attitude is a danger to some of our American and European converts: **with our calculating, rationalistic minds it is very easy to think we are being zealous and strict, when actually we are chiefly indulging our passion for self-righteousness...** [Emphasis added]

Fr Seraphim's comments would have had him defrocked in many "True Orthodox" jurisdictions. In any case, let us now examine the post-1983 situation. In addition to the aforementioned remarks of Metropolitan Vitaly (which, again, were never disputed by the synod), let us consider the testimony of one ROCOR clergyman³¹:

I was ordained a Priest in the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese in the United States. When I requested a canonical release to transfer to the ROCOR in 1983, it was granted by Metropolitan Philip, who could not have done so canonically had the AA [Antiochian Archdiocese] not been "in communion" with the ROCOR.

Having served for over 20 years as a Priest in ROCOR, I have **always** been invited to serve on any occasion that I have visited a parish of **any** Orthodox jurisdiction...in spite of the fact that I was unable to accept those invitations in some cases, the offer was always made. Nor have any parishioners of mine ever been denied Holy Communion in any Orthodox Church they have visited, nor has any Orthodox Christian (who was properly prepared) been denied Holy Communion in our parish. Probably many of us can relate opposite experiences on both sides: ROCOR and non-ROCOR. Those are sad exceptions to the real general practice.

The ROCOR protopriest George Larin, in a letter dated August 18/31, 1997 (to Fr. Stefan Krasovitsky), wrote³²:

...we do not even have the right to perform Divine services in our churches in the Holy Land without the blessing of his Beatitude Diodorus, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and... we perform the Divine Liturgy on antimens sanctified by his Beatitude, ... we pray for him and commemorate him in the litanies before our First-Hierarch... When hierarchs and priests and deacons arrive on pilgrimage in the Holy Land, they do not have the right (according to the canons of the Orthodox Church) to perform Divine services even in our churches without the Patriarch of Jerusalem's special permission, which is why we go from the airport first to his Beatitude for a blessing!

Yet another ROCOR clergyman verifies the aforementioned testimony and adds some interesting historical remarks³³

I have been a clergyman of the Church Abroad since 1968. I was the Chancellor of the Eastern-American Diocese under Metropolitan Philaret for six years (1976-1982) and acted as his personal secretary during that time, seeing him almost every day. I can tell you unequivocally that concelebrations with clergy of the Jerusalem Patriarchate and the Serbian Patriarchate continued unabated before 1983-1986, during 1983-1986 and after that time to this day.

There was never even one moment where the clergy (both permanent and visiting, including all of the bishops of the ROCOR) did not commemorate the Patriarch of Jerusalem at all Divine Services, or did not serve on antimensia that the Patriarch had given. There was never one moment when clergy of the Church Abroad withdrew from receiving communion at the Holy Sepulchre. And in all dioceses of the Church Abroad where concelebrations with Serbs (and, in some cases, EP and Antiochicans) took place, they continued to take place throughout this entire period to this day. This included the Dioceses of Western America, Syracuse and Holy Trinity, Washington and Florida, Chicago and Detroit, Australia and all of the European Dioceses.

I and my family took a five week trip all over Europe and the Holy Land precisely in the summer of 1985, i.e. after the Anathema of 1983, and I participated in concelebrations with Serbian clergy with our Bishops in the Western-European Diocese, and in the German Diocese, as well as with clergy of the Jerusalem Patriarchate in the Holy Land... And other senior clergy of the Church Abroad will happily corroborate, from their own experience, what I have written.

Given the duration and broad scope of these post-1983 activities (spanning at least four continents), they certainly cannot be regarded as “one-offs”. Obviously, ROCOR (following the undisputed sentiments of Metropolitan Vitaly) did not interpret its own anathema in the same fashion as the zealots. *Legislative anathemas, in accordance with the writings of St Nikodemos, do not act mechanically.* Until such a time as an erring hierarch is subject to a synodal trial, he retains his orders and the grace of the mysteries.

The Old Calendarist Encyclicals

It is also important to briefly analyse the Old Calendarist encyclicals of 1935, 1950 and 1974, which “True Orthodox” writers occasionally refer to as “synodal condemnations.”

Interestingly, these documents refer to the Church of Greece as somehow *schismatic* over the mere adoption of the New Calendar in 1924, and the matter of ecumenism is not referred to at all³⁴, casting severe doubt upon the initial justifications of those who established parallel ecclesial bodies. It would appear that the encyclicals rest upon the incorrect *historical* claim that the Revised Julian Calendar has been anathematised, as well as the manifestly false *ecclesiological* presupposition that an uncanonical action somehow equates to a schismatic action. Was the 17th century Russian Church in schism for introducing the three-fingered sign of the cross (which appears to have been condemned by the Russian Stoglav Council), and for persecuting those Old Believers who opposed the

change? Were the simoniacs and other transgressors of the canons throughout history in schism and deprived of grace, in contradiction to St Nikodemos's clear remarks about non-automatic canonical penalties?

The fact remains that the New Calendarist Churches remained in communion with those local Churches which retained the Old Calendar, and certainly cannot be considered as schismatic under St Basil's first canon. Nor did those local Churches which retained the use of the Old Calendar (e.g. the Church of Serbia) perceive their New Calendarist brethren as schismatic. Moreover, not one of the abovementioned encyclicals may be called a synodal trial - rather, each document merely *claims* that the New Calendarists entered into schism due to their acceptance of the RJC, and therefore lost all grace (a patently absurd assertion).

Even various post-1974 documents, which finally addressed the matter of ecumenism itself, explicitly adhered to these earlier faulty encyclicals, and instead of initiating any sort of trial or conciliar expulsion, erroneously *declared* that the ecumenists had already *removed themselves* from the Church.³⁴ Of course, even if the zealots had taken the care to hold an actual trial (with a canonically adequate number of bishops), they nevertheless deprived themselves entirely of the opportunity to "cast out" ecumenists as they not only unjustifiably established parallel hierarchies, but also considered all New Calendarists (incorrectly) to be in schism. How could they legitimately "expel" or cast out those who they mistakenly assumed to have already left the unity of the Church? Ironically, if the "True Orthodox" were to ever hold an actual conciliar "expulsion" of ecumenists *from the Church*, they would implicitly be recognising that their founding documents were mistaken and, indeed, that their movement itself has held an incorrect ecclesiological position for over half a century. The fact that the "Father" of Old Calendarism, Metropolitan Chrysostom of

Florina, did not consider the zealot declarations of lack of grace (which he inconsistently signed) to be sufficient, and continued to await a Pan-Orthodox Council², is certainly revealing. Indeed, the Metropolitan explicitly referred to the words of St Nikodemos we quoted earlier in this paper, and commented that

...Unless it is actually implemented by a Synod, the imperative force of the Canons remains unexecuted and does not act of itself, either immediately or before a decision...From this it follows that no clergyman who deviates from the boundaries of Orthodoxy is reckoned to be actually deposed...Thus, from a canonical standpoint, the following basic legal principle and dictum holds good: “No one is to be condemned without a defense.” Hence, in order for us to declare the innovating Hierarchs schismatics in actuality, as the conventicler Bishops have arbitrarily and uncanonically done, **we would have to have all the requisite ecclesiastical and canonical wherewithal for setting up an ecclesiastical tribunal. This cannot be done, except by a Church that is recognized by all the local Orthodox Churches as autocephalous and endowed with the right validly to condemn those of her clergy who sin, whether in faith or in morals.**

Ultimately, rather than undertaking a fair and competent conciliar evaluation, the authors of the abovementioned Old Calendarist encyclicals adhered to a naïve and simplistic ecclesiology completely at odds with the Orthodox ethos observed in the examples throughout in this paper. As we have seen, even the hieromonk Prochoros Kydones had legitimate ecclesiastical proceedings initiated against him, was *canonically summoned* and given the opportunity to prepare a *defence*, and eventually had a synod of bishops deliver a *sentence* against him⁹. The Old Calendarists, on the other hand, felt content to label entire local Churches as graceless (based solely on a Calendar change) without initiating a single trial against any of the leading innovators.

Proto-ecumenism in Greece

Returning to our examination of circumstances from Church history, it might also be noted that ecumenism as an ecclesiological heresy arose *prior* to the commencement of the Old Calendarist movement. Indeed, the 1920 encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, “Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere,” states the following regarding the various denominations^{35(p2)}:

that they should no more consider one another as strangers and foreigners, but as relatives, and as being a part of the household of Christ and ‘fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the promise of God in Christ’ (Eph. 3: 6).

Metropolitan Germanos, the primary editor of the document, interpreted it thus^{36(p30)}:

How wide the conception is which the Encyclical teaches at this point becomes clear in that it widens the notion of the relationships between the members of a single church – as members of one body according to St. Paul’s wonderful teaching – so as to apply it to the relationships between several churches.

To quote Fr Peter Heers³⁷,

The importance of this interpretation of the encyclical by its main author and the architect of the Patriarchate’s ecumenical involvement cannot be underestimated. Here is the cornerstone of the ecumenical policy of the Patriarchate and the key point of synchronization with the developing “ecumenical ecclesiology” of the Protestants. **In widening the notion of the church to include bodies neither ecclesiastically, sacramentally, or dogmatically in communion with the Orthodox Church,** Metropolitan Germanos is in perfect harmony both with the foregoing “evangelical ecclesiology” which speaks of a “fellowship of an invisible church of Christ to which all ‘vital’ Christians belonged,” as well as

the succeeding “ecumenical ecclesiology” which, although quite similar in its admission of an existing invisible “mystical” Body of Christ, seeks a manifest unity in Christ. [Emphasis added]

Interestingly, no schism occurred as a result of the 1920 encyclical. As we have seen, it was the calendar issue (and the many misinterpretations which flowed from it) four years later that precipitated the first Old Calendarist schism. If “walling off” is obligatory in the face of heresy, or if grace is immediately lost, then 1920 is the year that should be recorded in the history books. Yet, Old Calendarist sources³⁸ (perhaps not recognising the potential implications of this) acknowledge that, at least 35 years prior, the Ecumenical Patriarchate enacted a decision allowing Armenian Monophysites to partake of holy communion. This was apparently preceded by an agreement recognising their priesthood and mysteries.

Of course, no other local church broke communion with Constantinople at that time in response to its “uniatism.” Did the Church cease to exist prior to the advent of the Old Calendar schism? It should also be noted that *the phenomenon of “proto-ecumenism” extends even further back in time in the case of Russia*, when the Greek Church still held to a correct ecclesiology (we shall address this in the section below). But it should also be made clear that in more recent times, Saints praised even by Old Calendarists - such as Archimandrite Justin Popovich - did **not** wall themselves off from ecumenists when confronted with heresy.

To quote Bishop Athanasius Yevtich^{39(pp36-37)},

We were closely acquainted with the Blessed Father Justin and we know that he had never broke communion with any of the Orthodox Churches or a Bishop or a Patriarch, not even with the Serbian Patriarch Germanos (1958-1990)– as some zealots ‘shamelessly lie’ — not even when the Patriarch Germanos was one of the ‘presidents of the WCC’ (a formal and

honorary title without any binding conditions or duties as indeed was the participation of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the WCC). As a free and responsible member of the Church of Christ, Justin prophetically reproved and, when necessary, criticized in written form (having written a couple of criticism letters to Patriarch Germanos and the Synod, *inter alia*, the letters pertaining to superficial western ecumenism). But on no account did he ever create a schism, but on the contrary used to say: “Schisms are easily made but they are enormously difficult to heal” (therefore he opposed the unwisely made and increasingly deepening ‘American Schism’ just as he was against ‘the Macedonian Schism’).

Moreover, according to another source⁴⁰

Few know that, while openly denouncing the teaching of Patriarch Athenogoras as heretical, he [St Justin] felt that **since the latter was not condemned by the Church, he, consequently, remained a part of her**. That is why, when he learned of the death of the Patriarch, he served a pannikhida for his soul. [Emphasis added]

It is also worth mentioning that the great Elder Joseph the Hesychast (who is also highly esteemed by the zealots) experienced – along with his entire brotherhood – an outpouring of grace upon leaving the Old Calendarists. To quote just one of his disciples, Elder Charalambos⁴¹:

After siding with the monasteries [leaving the zealots], at first we did not commemorate the Patriarch. After we moved to New Skete, it was necessary one day to serve Liturgy at St. Paul’s Monastery where it was definitely required to commemorate the Patriarch. “What do I do now?” I asked Geronda. “Go and commemorate him, and when you return tell me what you felt.” I did as he said, and rarely have I received so much grace during the Divine Liturgy as I did that time! The tears flowed like a river throughout the Liturgy. I could barely say the petitions. When I returned back to Geronda, he said, “Surely you were flooded with grace.”

“Yes, Geronda,” I said, and I told him what I had experienced. **“Do you see, my child, that you are not sinning by commemorating the Patriarch, no matter what he said or did, since he has not been deposed?”** [Emphasis added]

This is experiential theology at its most sublime heights. If only Old Calendarists could comprehend this principle! Ceasing commemoration is indeed allowed in some circumstances, but it is not obligatory, and certainly does not involve condemning everyone who remains in communion with a heretic as somehow deprived of grace. Matters are not so simplistic. It should also be noted that Elder Joseph’s brotherhood opposed ecumenism and was certainly Orthodox in its orientation. For example, Elder Ephraim of Katounakia, who reposed in 1998 (in communion with Ecumenical Patriarchate), at one time experienced by divine revelation that ecumenism is of unclean spirits⁴². Yet, he refused to create a schism, and followed a truly discerning course.

Proto-ecumenism in Russia

Many Old Calendarist synods passionately condemn those groups which believe that “World Orthodoxy” possesses grace-filled mysteries. It would be pertinent, therefore, to draw attention to the fact that many clergymen in the Russian Church during the 19th century regarded Roman Catholic sacraments as valid, grace-filled, and even effectual for salvation. Thus, William Palmer notes that in his discussion with a Russian Archpriest, the question of heterodox sacraments arose. Although the clergyman did indeed assert that the Orthodox Church is the true Church, and that those outside of its boundaries ought to become outwardly reconciled to it, he also claimed that⁴³ (pp268-271)

though we are unbending concerning the Eastern Church, which we believe to be altogether right, while all others have fallen away, still we are not unreasonable towards those other

erring Churches and Societies, but think that, **wherever there is true baptism in the name of the Trinity, there may by God's grace be good Christians, though the Society itself may be heretical...** Christ is the centre of all; for belief in Him and love of Him is all in all by which **the soul regenerated in baptism grows in life, and attains a more and more perfect state,** or repairs by penitence what it may have lost by sin. **So if there are, as there have been many,** who, under difficulty and disadvantage, **having been regenerated in baptism, have cultivated this inner life,** not dwelling wilfully or maliciously on the errors of their society, nor making them their own, such men are Christians indeed, and we may cultivate a fraternal charity with them **in consciousness of our inner invisible unity;** though we must each remain outwardly separated... [Emphasis added]

In response, Palmer pointed out that

it is a dangerous doctrine to popularize, as it may lead those who are in error to underrate the importance of Orthodoxy and of conformity to the whole will of God...When it is evident that Churches and societies excommunicated by the Orthodox Church have erred in such various degrees, and that so many men have attained in them so high a degree of divine grace, when the grace of the Holy Spirit has so shone their lives and deeds and writings; how can we do otherwise than acknowledge them for Christians?

The Archpriest replied:

The fact is that some err more, some less, and the grace of God seems to work in all according to that truth which they have retained, and according to the dispositions of each individual to seek and love God. It seems to me like a great sphere revolving round the sun. All the different Churches and sects are attracted to the same centre and revolve round the same centre, but at different distances, that Church which is simply True, Orthodox, and Catholic, that is, the Eastern, being the nearest, and being joined to it by a more close and legitimate connexion : but of the rest some are farther off, some nearer, **without there**

being any distinct separation or difference in kind. And since it is not that formal Orthodoxy of dogmatic opinion or of rite distinguishing the Orthodox Church from all others, but that principle of faith and love, that attraction to its centre, common to it with all the rest, which constitutes essential Christianity, hence, though it can never fraternize outwardly with any of them, **yet inwardly there is no definite line of demarcation, but some who are without the pale may be better Christians than many of those who are within; the only difference being that they attain eminent sanctity with a certain herculean labour, and in spite of great obstacles, while in the true Church they have great facilities.** [Emphasis added]

Sanctifying/deifying/mysteriological grace was explicitly acknowledged to operate *outside* the boundaries of the Church. Indeed, apart from the benefit of an easier path to sanctity, there appears to be little difference between those who remain inside the Orthodox Church, and those who are outside its boundaries - according to this view.

Moreover, similar sentiments were not uncommon in those times - thus, few are aware that⁴⁴ (p386)

One of the major Russian works on Dogmatics in the nineteenth century was that of M. Bulgakov who applied Western criteria for the recognition of heterodox sacraments. In dealing with the question of baptism he accepts that even of heretics, if performed in the name of the Trinity, and rejects the idea of rebaptism, which he states was not the practice of the early Church. N. Milas, the great canonist of the Serbian Church, also applied Western criteria for the judgement of the validity of heterodox sacraments.

It is interesting that Old Calendarists often cite (Bishop) Milas as an authoritative source in claiming that walling off from heretical hierarchs is obligatory, rather than optional. Yet, they ignore the fact that if they are to treat this particular canonist as an authority, then

they ought to also adopt a Western understanding of the mysteries in which they may occur outside of the Church. Indeed, Milas⁴⁵ explicitly contradicted the “Greek” view in this regard, arguing (inconsistently) that

if there are other Christian groups who are **outside** the Orthodox Church and who have conscientious intention to bring a newly-baptized person **into the Church of Christ (that is, they intend to impart divine grace to him through baptism, that by the power of the Holy Spirit he will become a true member of the Body of Christ and a reborn child of God)**, then the baptism received in such a group will be considered **valid** insofar as it has been performed on the basis of a faith in the Holy Trinity, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; **for when baptism is given and received with faith, it must be effective to impart grace and Christ's help will not fail to be made manifest.** [Emphasis added]

This is not to mention the tensions that exist between Milas’ approach and the actions of the Church’s saints throughout the past millennium. Furthermore, according to the “True Orthodox” writer Vladimir Moss^{46 (p61)},

...in 1847 Emperor Nicholas I concluded a concordat with Pope Gregory XVI which envisaged that **the Russian Orthodox Church would carry out all the sacraments and needs for those who turned to her with such requests from the Catholics** exiled for their participation in the Polish rebellions against Russia, if they were living in places where there were no Catholic churches or Catholic clergy. In accordance with the meaning of this concordat and the order of the Emperor, **the Synod then issued the corresponding command, which was obligatory for the Russian Orthodox clergy, to satisfy the requests of exiled Catholics, if such requests came from them.** [Emphasis added]

If this occurred today in the Ecumenical Patriarchate, claims of uniatism and gracelessness would erupt in old-calendarist circles. Those remaining in communion with the Patriarch would undoubtedly be deemed heretics themselves. And yet, inconsistently, Russia in the 19th century remains immune from criticism. The local churches which did not wall themselves off from the Russians (namely, the entire Orthodox world) certainly did not sin in remaining in communion (and obviously did not automatically “lose grace”), as otherwise the gates of hell would well and truly have prevailed over the Church.

Continuing to the next example, after 13,000 uniats reunited with the Russian Church in 1841, Bishop (at that time an Archimandrite) Porfiry^{47(p173)} told the Ecumenical Patriarch that “the Uniats, by their inner conviction and faith, have always been in communion with our Church and had no need to be re-baptized.” Evidently, the Russians accepted the validity of heterodox baptisms *per se*, and not out of any sense of oikonomia. Nevertheless, the Greek Church, despite its general disagreement with the Russian position at that point in time, wisely did not pursue the path of schism.

Perhaps the most striking example of this phenomenon is Saint Philaret of Moscow⁴⁸, who, although rightly rejecting intercommunion, appears to disagree entirely with the theology of the Kollyvades (expressed by Constantine Ikonomos) in relation to the validity of heterodox baptism, writing that

If Palmer were not a reliable witness it would be difficult to believe that the learned Ikonomon considers Western Baptism at the same time both valid and invalid, depending upon the will of the Church that the affused person be baptized or unbaptized. **Surely the efficacy of Baptism is in the name of the Trinity and in the sacramental grace given to it by the action of its founder, Christ the Lord.** Surely human will, even though it were the will of

the Church, **cannot** make Baptism to be a simple laver, **or a simple laver to be Baptism.**

[Emphasis added]

These were not the only claims made by St Philaret in this regard, who also stated that “an Orthodox Christian is supposed, in the spirit of love, to joyfully find outside of the Orthodox Church a preserved grace”^{49 (p29)} and, moreover, that “**no church which believes Jesus to be the Christ will I dare call false**”^{50 (p24)} – a claim explicitly rejected by St Hilarion Troitsky.

Although the writer of this paper agrees with Sts Hilarion and Nikodemos on ecclesiological matters, the issue does raise an important question – was much of the Russian Church at the time deprived of grace for recognising valid and grace-filled mysteries amongst heretics? What is one to make of the fact that a synodal decree advocated the administration of communion to Roman Catholics? If today’s “True Orthodox” had lived in those times, they undoubtedly would have entered into schism and thereby severed communion with countless saints of the Church. Yet in those times, the differences in outlook between the Church of Russia (and perhaps Serbia) on the one hand, and various other local Churches on the other, *did not result in schism* - even after the Constantinopolitan synod of 1755 officially pronounced that the heterodox do not possess the grace of the mysteries and consequently are entirely unbaptised. This decree was signed by the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem,⁵¹ and was preceded by the Ecumenical Patriarch publishing an “Anathema of those who accept papal sacraments,” which was read aloud in the churches during those times.²¹ Additionally, as is well known, the Kollyvades Fathers vigorously rejected the validity of Roman Catholic sacraments, with the Rudder referring to their baptismal rites as “pseudobaptism[s].”^{7(p73)} Also of relevance in this regard is apostolic canon 46 (ecumenically confirmed by canon 2 of Trullo and canon 1 of Nicaea II)⁷ which, as

we have seen, commands the deposition of clergymen who recognise the mysteries of heretical groups. To this, one may add the early synods of Carthage and Iconium (attended by Saints Cyprian and Firmilian, respectively) which also firmly rejected the validity and efficacy of heterodox baptisms⁷. Thus, we must ask again: were the pre-revolutionary Russian bishops automatically cast out of the Church for espousing a doctrine which all Old Calendarists would agree is a heresy?

It is also important to note that Patriarch Anthimos of Constantinople understood very well the obvious differences that existed between the Churches of Greece and Russia on this issue during his time, as well as its enormous significance, and consequently arranged for a council to be held in 1853 so that the matter could be discussed⁴⁴. He refused to rashly condemn anyone, and did not create a schism, as today's Old Calendarists would advocate. Moreover, it is interesting that the Russian hierarchs in those times also understood that differences existed between the two Churches, *and even feared that the Greeks would consider them heretical*.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, due to a range of factors (including the onset of the Crimean war) the desired council never took place⁴⁴, and in lieu of any synodal condemnations the Church of Constantinople *remained in communion* with the Church of Russia. Were the Greeks (and, indeed, the other local Churches) under condemnation?

Sergianism

Finally, it may be pertinent to briefly address the matter of Sergianism. For many Old Calendarists, the subordination of 20th century Russian hierarchs to the interests of the secular state *automatically* deprived the Russian Church of grace and rendered it schismatic. And yet, if this is the case, Old Calendarists would necessarily be forced to admit that the Russian Church lost divine grace much earlier, in the 18th century. This is due to the fact that

a very similar phenomenon occurred in Russia during those times, particularly under the reign of Peter the Great. To quote one scholar^{52(p216)}

No doubt the Petrine reforms led to the decisive triumph of secular principles over confessional and religious ones... the Petrine transformations are noteworthy not just for a speed and scope unseen earlier in society's transition to secular foundations, **but for the consequences stemming from the conversion of the Orthodox Church into a government institution...The Church started to serve the regime of autocracy and started submissively to consecrate all the latter's initiatives.** The conversion of the church into an office of religious affairs and the subordination of all its values to the needs of autocracy signified for the people the destruction of a spiritual alternative to the regime and to the ideas coming from the state and having their source in statism, statist concepts, and secular authority. The church, with its thousand-year traditions of preaching morals and defending the downtrodden and those subordinated by the state...**became a submissive tool of the authorities and thereby largely forfeited the people's respect as a preserver of spiritual principles.** [Emphasis added].

Moreover, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), with reference to the Russian Church's synodal structure after the 18th century (which was still present at the time of his writing in 1912), observed that⁵³

Our Church [in Russia] is governed by a layman, or, to say it officially, by a collegial institution never seen by the Church of Christ before... **The [Russian] Church is deprived of its lawful head and is given over for enslavement to lay officials,** which hide behind an assembly of six or seven hierarchs who are changed every half a year, and two presbyters. **Who is not aware that such an institution is uncanonical?** That it was not approved at its very inception by two Patriarchs; and even if it had been approved by all four, this would only show the unlawful deed of the Patriarchs and not the canonicity of

[Russian] synodal rule, **because no Patriarch can establish and authorize an institution which is unknown to Holy Orthodoxy and which was invented only to bring weakness and decay...** [Emphasis added]

Indeed, it is also important to note that^{54(A5053)}

Religious persecution and genocide were integral parts of the Russification programs launched by Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, and Czar Nicholas I. This program was merely perfected by Stalin and his able pupils, Khrushchev, Bulganin and Molotov.

The historical record ultimately verifies the above observations. Intimidation, execution, torture and imprisonment were aimed at^{55(pp 115, 111-112)}

turning the clergy away from any form of independent thought, to force them to give up their dreams of some Byzantine symphony or dualism of power. The terror began under Peter, reached its extremes under empress Anna (Peter's niece: 1730-40), and did not end even under Catherine II... [The clergy] had to pledge at their ordination to report to the police any person who confessed any intended or committed actions against the tsar or his government. **This was a scandalous breach of the universal Church tradition of secrecy of the confession...** In January, 1721, all bishops were forced to pledge their acceptance of the new system and give an oath of loyalty, not only to the tsar but to all members of the dynasty, **blasphemously recognising the tsar as their ultimate judge... This oath was to be repeated by every bishop called to a term of service in the Synod until 1901, when the bishops protested to Tsar Nicholas II that even senators were not required to give such an oath, while the Final Judge for a Christian is God, not the monarch**. Nicholas agreed and had that phrase eliminated. [Emphasis added]

Ultimately, in the 18th century^{14(pp30, 116)}

the totalist and secular Russian state declared war on the monasteries, destroying over half of them and confiscating their property and treasures by 1800, a clear precedent for the later Bolshevik excesses... **There seems to be no real difference between this era and that of the Bolsheviks, albeit one of scale.** [Emphasis added]

Indeed, even the forced ecumenism under the Soviets was by no means the first time that the state manipulated the Church in a heretical fashion, as we observed earlier in this paper^{46(p61)}

...in 1847 Emperor Nicholas I concluded a concordat with Pope Gregory XVI which envisaged that the Russian Orthodox Church would carry out all the sacraments and needs for those who turned to her with such requests from the Catholics exiled for their participation in the Polish rebellions against Russia, if they were living in places where there were no Catholic churches or Catholic clergy. In accordance with the meaning of this concordat and the order of the Emperor, the Synod then issued the corresponding command, which was obligatory for the Russian Orthodox clergy, to satisfy the requests of exiled Catholics, if such requests came from them.

The Russian Church (by Old Calendarist logic) should have lost divine grace centuries ago, meaning that those Churches which remained in communion with it (i.e. every other Patriarchate), and all of the saints who refrained from establishing parallel hierarchies, should have also been deprived of grace. Once again, the inevitable conclusion is that the Church of God on earth would have been eradicated.

Furthermore, any radical statements made by individual clergymen in ROCOR about the supposed gracelessness of the Moscow Patriarchate were never propounded the synod itself, nor by Saint John Maximovitch, as acknowledged in 1979 by an Archbishop of ROCOR⁵⁶

[T]he free part of the Russian Church that exists abroad has never considered the Patriarchate of Moscow, officially recognized in the USSR, void of grace... In recent times we have been guided in our relationship with the Patriarchate by the opinion of the universally respected and venerated Archbishop John [of Shanghai], who said that of course the mysteries of the official Church in the USSR were valid; however, he maintained that the behavior of its leaders was unacceptable.

As demonstrated earlier in this paper, the synod of ROCOR did not, either before or after 1983, deny the presence of grace in the Moscow Patriarchate or any other "World Orthodox" jurisdiction.

Moreover, since ROCOR maintained communion with "World Orthodoxy" (who were believed to be graceless by most zealot groups) it should, logically speaking, been graceless and schismatic itself - according to Old Calendarist ecclesiology. How, then, can those Old Calendarist groups which trace their origins to ROCOR justify their existence? In fact, the ordinations of several Greek Old Calendarist hierarchs were performed *uncanonically* by a very small number of ROCOR bishops (*one of whom was on the New Calendar, and another of whom taught that the Eucharist of the Roman Catholic Church was valid until Vatican II*), without the blessing of Metropolitan Anastassy.^{57, 58} Once again, the historical data bears witness to the many contradictions which underlie the Old Calendarist movement as a whole.

Ultimately, according to the unsophisticated reasoning of many self-proclaimed "True Orthodox," the Church of Russia should have fallen into uniatism (not to mention Barlaamism and Sergianism) long ago and thereby ceased to exist. A similar outcome should apply to the Greek Church which, as we have noted, also adopted various heresies at different times prior to advent of the Old Calendarist movement. The 14th century Palamite

synods, as well as the other examples from Church history presented throughout this paper, would similarly be rendered incomprehensible by such a crude and rigid ecclesiology. If anyone who remains in communion with an erring hierarch automatically falls under their condemnation, it follows that grace must have “departed” the entire Orthodox Church centuries ago. All Old Calendarist groups, therefore, would trace their origins to invalid hierarchies.

As the examples throughout this paper have abundantly demonstrated, countless “True Orthodox” arguments, promulgated widely, quite simply do not withstand serious scrutiny. It would appear that the *phronema* (mindset) of many Old Calendarists, although professing to be patristic, is actually quite distant from historical Orthodoxy. Although the allure of zealotry may be strong for some, the Orthodox Christian must resist all temptations – not only from the “left,” but also from the “right.”

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