



ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΓΗΝΣΙΩΝ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΩΝ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ
ΙΕΡΑ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ Γ.Ο.Χ. ΕΤΝΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΡΤΛΑΝΤ

CHURCH OF THE GENUINE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS OF GREECE
HOLY DIOCESE OF ETNA AND PORTLAND
SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS MONASTERY
POST OFFICE BOX 398
ETNA, CA 96027

An Unpleasant But Necessary Statement About Certain Misrepresentations of Historical Fact

by

Bishop Auxentios of Etna and Portland
with the editorial collaboration of
Bishop Chrysostomos,
Metropolitan *emeritus* of Etna

«Καὶ μὴ συγκοινωνεῖτε τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἀκαρποῖς τοῦ σκούτου, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγχετε.»
“And take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”
(Ephesians 5:11)

July 2, 2015 (Church Calendar [Old Style])
Deposition of the Precious Robe
of the All-Holy *Theotokos*

To the Faithful and Clergy of the Diocese
and to All Truth-Seeking Christians,

May our Lord richly bless you.

Drawing on the foregoing exhortation of St. Paul to the Christians of Ephesus, I will begin my present statement, an unpleasant but necessary one, by an affirmation drawn from another letter of St. Paul, his second Epistle to the Corinthians. In it, St. Paul says, “Therefore, since we have this ministry... we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness... but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God” (4:2). I also affirm that, as a “bondservant for the sake of Jesus” (4:5), my concern is to speak the truth as it is, “lest,” on account of deceit and untruths, “there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, [and] tumults” (12:20). I do not speak the truth in order “to become your enemy because I tell the truth” (Galatians 4:16), but so that we will all be made “free” by the “truth” (St. John 8:32) and that the “conscience” of those who “[speak] lies in hypocrisy” will be “seared with a hot iron” (I St. Timothy 4:2), to the end that we might ultimately preserve “the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

Little more than a year ago, the two major canonical groups of Old Calendarists in Greece and in this country united, doing so on the basis of a confession of Faith that was acceptable to all, bringing an end to the ecclesiological arguments and contentions that for so long sadly divided them. There were those who, tenaciously fixed on their personal views and interpretations, opposed the union and who, to this day, would like to bring it to an end. But the great majority of those who desired union, and even those who expressed misgivings and doubts or who felt that it was premature, have found great solace

in the fact that much good has come from it and that a spirit of brotherhood, mutual respect, and understanding prevails among all who came into joyful concord. Indeed, the cooperation, fraternal sentiments and connections, and Christian love between our united clergy and faithful have been overwhelming and beyond all expectations. And, to be sure, the camaraderie and spiritual love between the Hierarchs in our American Eparchial Synod are especially exemplary and extraordinary.

The union brought together, in Greece, the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece, under Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens, and the Holy Synod in Resistance, under Metropolitan Cyprian the Younger of Oropos and Phyle, along with the three Sister Churches of the Synod in Resistance: the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Romania (the largest Old Calendar body), under Metropolitan Vlasie; the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, under Bishop Photiy; and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, under Metropolitan Agafangel. The Synod in Resistance and its Sister Churches in Romania and Bulgaria had been in communion with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, under Metropolitan Laurus, since 1994, but broke communion with that Church when it joined with the Moscow Patriarchate (in 2007), at which time Metropolitan Agafangel also ceased his affiliation with it and, with the help of the Synod in Resistance, ordained new Bishops to continue, under his guidance, the former witness of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad against the ecumenical compromises and Sergianist legacy of Moscow.

The union in Greece brought together, in this country, the American Exarchate of the Holy Synod in Resistance and the American Eparchy of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece. The American Eparchy had earlier—i.e., before the union with the Synod in Resistance—incorporated into its Episcopacy three former Hierarchs of the Holy Orthodox Church of North America, who had separated themselves from that jurisdiction for sober reasons. The two Bishops of the American Exarchate of the Synod in Resistance initially remained under a provisional Metropolitanate, until its Archbishop (retitled “Metropolitan”) in this country retired (last January), and his assistant—myself—became a member of the Eparchial Synod in America and ruling Bishop of the newly established Diocese of Etna and Portland. The some dozen parishes and three monastic communities of the former American Exarchate of the Synod in Resistance were incorporated into the Eparchy, though some provisionally under my special administrative guidance, as a concession to the personal closeness of these communities, for several decades, to our former Metropolitan and me.

But just as all good men and women, including Saints, have those who love them and, as well, those who, inspired by the Evil One and the enmity that he creates through ego, prideful self-reliance, and, at times, malice, hate them, so our much-blessed union, as I observed earlier, has its critics and its enemies. Some of these antagonists have been working with frantic assiduity to sabotage our union in various ways: in particular, through contentiousness and spreading false rumors and false histories or portrayals of it. These efforts have, of late, intensified and caused increased confusion among our faithful. Given the actions of such forlorn individuals, I, “having my ministry” and being called to “manifest the truth,” must speak up for the sake of our weaker faithful. Just as, on the far left, the ecumenical proponents of *false union* make us Old Calendarists the objects of their vulgar ridicule and resentment, trumpeting forth hackneyed accusations that we are uneducated, fanatic opponents of true and canonical Christian unity, so similar demonic resentment has arisen among those on the far right, who in their delusions of piety decry and misrepresent *true union*, since it flies in the face of their years of fomenting the divisions and fruitless contentions that have kept traditionalist Orthodox circles tragically divided.

I want briefly, passively, objectively, albeit bluntly and of course truthfully, to address these latest rumors, so as to put them to rest, dismiss them as the nonsense that they are, and thus “sear” with the “hot iron” of truth the consciences of those who have succumbed to the machinations of evil, hoping to bring these naysayers to the truth and to allow the truth to free yet others, too, who have been innocently infected by exposure to the bacteria of slander and gossip. Let me then bring face to face the rumors in question and the truth which exposes them (the phrases in quotation marks are phrases from various written accusations from multiple persons):

• *The Synod in Resistance, “admitting that it was in schism, joined the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece,” disavowing its “Cyprianite heresy” and its “heresiarchical leader, ‘Metropolitan’ Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle,” whose “consecration as a ‘bishop’ was doubtful” at best.*

In fact, the Synod in Resistance spent almost two years in dialogue with the Bishops of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece, finally agreeing that, on the basis of an ecclesiological paper largely written by Bishop Photiy, Chief Hierarch of the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, a former professor and an erudite theologian who was consecrated by Metropolitan Cyprian the Elder, of blessed memory, and the Synod in Resistance, they could reconcile their eccle-

biological differences. **The matter was not that of one side submitting to the other**, and it was only at the conclusion of dialogues that the Synod in Resistance agreed—several of its Bishops, including Metropolitan Chrysostomos and me, reluctantly at first—to merge and reconcile, instead of simply opening communion, with the Synod of Archbishop Kallinikos, since all canonical Greek Old Calendarists, deriving their Episcopacy from the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, were originally united as the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece. **This move was eventually embraced by all, in a “spirit of unity” and in the “bond of peace.”**

As for the Consecration of Metropolitan Cyprian the Elder of Oropos and Phyle, there has never been any question about its validity. One point alone rather clearly underscores this fact: **He was one of the co-Consecrators of His Beatitude, Archbishop Kallinikos, now the First Hierarchy of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece.**

Regarding the “heresy of Cyprianism,” **the ecclesiology of the Synod in Resistance was not an invention of Metropolitan Cyprian**, but was based on the Synod’s interpretation of the Conciliar, Patristic, and historical precepts of the Orthodox Church—an interpretation, in fact, expressed in many of the writings of the “Father” of the Old Calendar movement, Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Phlorina—which it never declared to be an infallible and indisputable ecclesiological stand. **Nor did it, in the face of clear differences, characterize the ecclesiologies of other Old Calendarists as heretical.** In the course of debate, many hyperbolic terms were used by both sides, and certain actions were taken, before the union, that were, in the case of words, regretted and, in the case of actions, lifted. Anyone looking for submission, humiliation, or triumphalism on either side will be disappointed. **The union was one of separated brothers seeking unity in a common cause: the preservation of the Orthodox identity of the Church and a common fight against the ecclesiological relativism and heresy of ecumenism.** And no Bishop of the Synod in Resistance was ever party to, or would be party to, an admission of heresy in putting forth its ecclesiological principles.

It should be noted, too, that the use of the appellation “Cyprianites,” which one still hears, is insulting, nescient, and hardly a compliment to the Christian comportment of those who use it as a negative epithet.

• *The official history of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece, which “is presented on the Synod’s official website” (it can be found there as a .pdf file and has since appeared in book form) states that the Synod in Resistance, in 1984, “sinfully went ahead with ordinations of bishops, and some of them people they didn’t know at all and shady characters, mostly outside of Greece in missionary societies in Europe, America, and Africa and during the time they stayed in communion with the True Orthodox Romanians. Since the only ones that they had in America were the so-called ‘Bishops’ Chrysostom and Auxentios, they obviously now admit that these characters were unworthy of the priesthood and didn’t even know where they were from or whether they were ever real priests. Who does? At least they got rid of one of them.”*

A more literate and truthful translation of the passage quoted from the history in question describes the Synod in Resistance as having “...proceeded with the consecrations of bishops, indeed certain of them wholly unknown and dubious persons, primarily outside of Greece, for missionary communities in Europe, America, and Africa (...προέβησαν σὲ χειροτονίες ἐπισκόπων, κάποιων μάλιστα ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐντελῶς ἀγνώστων καὶ ἀμφιβόλων προσώπων, κυρίως γιὰ τὸ ἐξωτερικό, σὲ Ἱεραποστολικὲς Κοινότητες στὴν Εὐρώπη, Ἀμερικὴ καὶ Ἀφρική).” Not a single one of its former Bishops would deny that the Synod in Resistance, like the other Greek Old Calendarist jurisdictions, when the movement factionalized in 1975, 1979, 1984, and 1995 into numerous groups, made errors in judgment. But this was done in the name of missionary zeal and in good conscience, and not for any nefarious reasons. **Evidence of such errors in every faction in the movement, in fact, is contained in the history in question.** In any event, the integrity of Bishops is measured not by their errors but by their eventual correction of them. The former Synod in Resistance cannot be faulted on the basis of that criterion.

As for the references to Bishops in America in the recently published history of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece, the primary author of this book, Bishop Klemes (Clement) of Gardikion, Secretary of our united Synod, and Bishop Photios of Marathon, First Secretary of the Holy Synod, have both assured us that they will **verify, to anyone who asks, that these were *not* references to me or to His Eminence, Metropolitan Chrysostomos (who was the principal Consecrator, after all, of Bishop Klemes) or to the European Bishops who were signatories to our union document last year.** Since the Synod in Resistance never had any other Bishops in America, the reference to America was wholly erroneous. The error was discovered after the otherwise useful and well-written book went to press and, perhaps understandably, but ill-advisedly, it was unhappily not withdrawn and corrected. (We will, of course, insist that any English translation of the history and all fur-

ther Greek editions exclude this nocent error.) **The repetition of the error in deceptive translation by our detractors and the suggestion that the Holy Synod endorsed it are wholly malicious and mischievous efforts.**

I should add that Metropolitan Chrysostomos and I were tonsured, ordained to the Diaconate, and ordained Hieromonks (and His Eminence an Archimandrite and Abbot) in the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece in the mid-1970s, then united under Archbishop Auxentios of Athens. All were well aware of our ecclesiological views, as they were of those of Metropolitan Cyprian the Elder and his monastery in Phyle, when they returned to the Old Calendar from the innovating State Church of Greece in the late 1960s, with the blessing of the late Archimandrite Philotheos (Zervakos). I was also a novice, during my last year at Princeton University, under Bishop Petros of Astoria, who was at the time separated from the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece over matters of ecclesiology. **Our persons and Ordinations were unknown to no one.**

I might also add that **His Eminence and I, while the Synod in Resistance was in communion with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, before its union with Moscow, were co-Consecrators of Bishop Gabriel of Manhattan, now Archbishop of Montreal and Canada. His Eminence was also one of the Consecrators of Bishop Photiy of Triaditza and principal Consecrator of Metropolitan Cyprian the Younger of Oropos and Phyle. This is further evidence that the proper provenance of our Ordinations was not unknown or dubious.**

• ***“The ‘Cyprianite’ Bishops, depending on where they were from, were either reordained or received by a laying on of hands and a formal confession of their heresy.”***

Our former Archbishop was given the title of “Metropolitan” at the time of the union between the Holy Synod in Resistance and the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece in 2014, as I said above, and both he and I (I was at the time his assistant Bishop) were received into the united Synod when we signed the aforementioned ecclesiological document. **No prayer of any kind was ever read over either of us, nor did we submit any sort of confession for our supposed past heresy. Nor would we ever have accepted such provisions. I think that this fact speaks for itself.**

The union of the former Holy Synod in Resistance and its Sister Churches with the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece will, I hope and believe, prove to be an historical benchmark not just in the history of the traditionalist, anti-ecumenist Orthodox witness, but in the history of the entire Orthodox Church. **The union that occurred, against many odds and hurdles, was inspired and realized through the actions of the Holy Spirit, and those who set aside personal opinions, convictions, and prejudices acted with heroic and truly Christian motives and in the spirit that brought unity among the Apostles themselves, when certain differences, attested by the authority of the New Testament, were brought to an end by brotherly reconciliation.** If we all embrace and continue in that spirit, calling back those who have deviated from the Holy Traditions of the Fathers and from a firm belief that the Orthodox Church is the One, Holy, Catholic (Universal), and Apostolic Church established by Christ—built on the Rock of St. Peter’s confession of the Divinity of Christ, Whose Body It is—our union will produce fruits of confession, sanctity, and spiritual transformation, despite our unworthiness, that will recapitulate and verify the sacred glory of the Genuine Christianity of our Faith, which conquered the pagan world and that will hold forth, even as a Remnant, until the end of time.

Let us all minister with sobriety, exposing falsehood and telling the “truth hard to tell.” In the words of the great American writer John Steinbeck, bereft of exposure to Orthodoxy but obviously not of an intuitive sensitivity to its truths, it “takes great courage” to tell such truth, and there is “a punishment for it, and [it is] usually crucifixion.” **Let us accept every and all punishment, and even crucifixion, in confronting those who would spoil our union with their petty resentments and prideful inability to accept the spirit of love that brings brothers together.** Indeed, as the Psalmist says, “Behold now, what is so good or so pleasant as for brethren to dwell together in unity?” (Psalm 132:1 [*Septuaginta*]). Let all of those who “speak lies in hypocrisy” also remember the “searing” words of St. John Chrysostomos: “[I]n disrupting unity, we are to be punished the same as though we were to have torn asunder the Body of Christ. . . . Even the blood of Martyrs does not expiate such a sin.” **Not with anger or pique do I expose those who are circulating the falsehoods that I have outlined above, but with concern for their souls and with the hope that they, too, will “be reconciled” as “brothers” to us, that we might together “present our offering” before God (St. Matthew 5:23-24).**

Δόξα τῷ Θεῷ πάντων ἕνεκεν!
Glory be to God for all things!