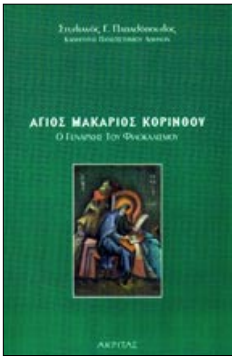


Issues of Vital Importance for Orthodox Ecclesiology*

*An absurd extrapolation from a critique of one of our book reviews:
With the ecumenists or with the Saints?*

Some time ago, we published in our periodical, *Άγιος Κυπριανός*,¹ as a token of our devotion to St. Makarios, Bishop of Corinth (1731-1805), who was responsible for the “Rebirth of the *Philokalia*,” a brief review of a very edifying monograph of the same name by Professor Stylianos Papadopoulos (1st ed., Athens: Akritas, 2000, pp. 176).



About a year later, on the occasion of the publication of this truly important book by Professor Papadopoulos, there was a complimentary reference to our review in the well-known Athonite periodical *Πρωτότυπον*,² by Father Symeon, a monk of the Holy Monastery of the *Panagia Chrysopodaritissa*, in Patras, who stated: “we endorse this review ‘with both hands.’”

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I. Strangely enough, however, Father Symeon proceeds to make an irrelevant extrapolation, entering into issues to which our review made no reference and on which this book about St. Makarios certainly has no bearing, unless such is “wrenched” from it, as it ultimately was.

1. To be precise, Father Symeon mentions the “liturgical tradition of memorial services,” for the sake of which St. Makarios struggled, but on which “he did not uphold an extreme, fanatical, or obstinate position,” and did not disrupt the unity of the Church.

2. “*Mutatis mutandis*,” Father Symeon continues, “the same holds good also for the issue of the calendar,” the “alteration” of which he characterizes with due severity as “truly unacceptable,” given that “no respect was accorded to Tradition, the entire process was uncanonical, and there was certainly no spirit of love and reconciliation on the part of the innovators.”

3. Now, what is it that “holds good”? Just as St. Makarios, Father Symeon avers, “humbly accepted the economy (οἰκονομία) shown by the Church regarding memorial services, since the tradition in question is not to

be equated with “Divine truth,” so also those who oppose the calendar change should not wall themselves off from the innovators or “justify themselves” by adducing “the issue of *ecumenism*, *this veritable panheresy*,” because “in cutting themselves off they are begging the question.”

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II. In the first place, it behooves us to justify our use of the word “strangely”: Father Symeon commits a blatant methodological blunder; for, had he wished to describe the ecclesiological identity of those in opposition to the *calendar change* and *ecumenism*—that is, to issues of vital importance for Orthodox ecclesiology—, he ought to have done so in connection with, and with reference to, other specific texts of ours, and not to have ascribed to us opinions and a mentality *completely unknown* to us.

1. Furthermore, Father Symeon gets himself into an indefensible *conceptual muddle* and makes an *inopportune comparison or correlation*, since memorial services are a tradition “which allows for economy, with some degree of leniency and with certain preconditions,” as he writes, and the local Church of Constantinople made a synodal decision to apply economy in order to deal with an internal problem on the Holy Mountain.

2. However, the *calendar innovation* of 1924, as Father Symeon admits, was not an act of calculated economy for the purpose of edification, but the first-fruits of “*steps towards the firm foundation of a common Christian mentality*”;³ that is, an enforcement of the “party line” of the veritable panheresy of *ecumenism*, as this was officially proclaimed both in 1920 (“Synodal Encyclical of the Church of Constantinople to the Churches of Christ Everywhere”) and in 1923 (Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople, 10 May-8 June 1923).

3. Father Symeon’s other reference, to the issue of the “Rebaptism of Heterodox” and the dispute over this subject in the eighteenth century, is also, to say the least, unfortunate, because the theological controversy in this case, too, was an internal matter for the Church and had to do with the canonical issue of the manner of receiving those coming to Orthodoxy from the indisputable heresy of Papism—by exactitude (ἀκρίβεια) or by economy—, when there was no question of any heresy having been preached by the Orthodox and consequently no question of a walling-off.

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III. In any case, in the context of our brief treatment of an “absurd projection,” it is not possible for us to prolong our remarks any further; but we do urge Father Symeon to reconsider the *soteriological repercussions* not only of heresy in general—and specifically of the panheresy of *ecumenism*, which

certainly includes the *calendar question*—, but also of communion with the carriers of heresy.

1. The Fathers of the Holy Mountain have categorically declared that “*ecumenist ‘theology’ constitutes a heterodox teaching, an error, [and] a heretical way of thinking, which ought to be combatted and condemned*”;⁴ the Fathers of Meteora talk about the “*panheresy of syncretistic ecumenism*”⁵ and have stated that “*ecumenism leads to worship of the Antichrist*”;⁶ while Metropolitan Hierotheos of Navpaktos assures us that, in our day, “*inter-Christian and interfaith syncretism are pervasive*.”⁷

2. Father Symeon ought to become acquainted with those who “rebel” against the heresy of ecumenism; he also ought to realize that *ecumenists* do not confine themselves only to “*expressions of love, concessions, flatteries, presentations of gifts, and smiles*,”⁸ as Elder Moses [of the Holy Mountain] writes, but also engage in “*syncretism, compromises, and distortions*”; and consequently, he ought to be writing, not against the *anti-ecumenists*, but against the *ecumenists*.

3. And to be sure, if he wants to be consistent in theory and practice, he ought to wall himself off from the ecumenists, so as not to be reckoned among those of like mind with him, “who knowingly commune with those who revile”⁹ “matters of faith and truth.”¹⁰

4. Let Father Symeon study anew the final injunctions of St. Anthony the Great: “Have no communion with schismatics, nor any dealings at all with heretics”; “be the more earnest always to unite yourselves first to God, and then to the Saints, so that after death they also may receive you as friends and disciples into the eternal habitations.”¹¹

5. And finally, after he has abandoned the tactic of absurd “skirmishes,” let Elder Symeon decide conclusively with whom he wishes to have communion: with the ecumenists, or with the Saints?

*Source: *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 313 (March-April 2003), pp. 220-222.

Notes

1. *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 301 (March-April 2001), pp. 30-31.

2. *Πρωτάτων*, No. 85 (January-March 2002), pp. 191ff.

3. Gregorios Larentzakis, “Βασικαὶ ἀρχαὶ τηρήσεως καὶ ἀποκαταστάσεως τῆς Χριστιανικῆς ἐνότητος—Ὁρθόδοξοι ἀπόψεις,” [“Basic Principles for the Preservation and Restoration of Christian Unity—Orthodox Viewpoints”], in *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Παρουσία Ἐστίας Θεολόγων Χάλκης [A Professional Meeting at the Halki Center for Theology]* (Athens: 1987), Vol. I, p. 351 (ch. III).

4. Monk Basil Gregoriates, “Ὅταν οἱ φύλακες ἀγρυπνοῦν” [“When the Sentries Are Vigilant”], *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 1420 (13 July 2001), p. 1.

5. Archimandrite Athanasios (Athanasiou), Abbot of the Holy Monastery of the Great Meteora, *Χειραγωγία στὴ Μετάνοια* [*Guide to Repentance*] (Hagia Meteora: 2001), 2nd ed., p. 137.
6. *Idem*, *Ἐν Συνειδήσει* (August 1997), p. 18.
7. *Θεοδρομία* (October-December 2001), p. 174.
8. Monk Moses Hagiorites, “Μοναχισμὸς καὶ αἵρεση” [“Monasticism and Heresy”], *Πρωτᾶτον*, No. 84 (October-December 2001), p. 114.
9. Cf. Seventh Œcumenical Synod, Mansi Vol. XIII, cols. 128E, 201D, and the *Synodikon* of Orthodoxy.
10. Cf. St. Gregory the Theologian, Oration 6, §20 *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXV, col. 748B.
11. St. Athanasios the Great, *Life of St. Anthony*, §91, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXVI, cols. 969C-972A.