

■ There is no “inhuman schism,” but, rather, resistance against inhuman heresy

The Calendar Question or the Heresy of Ecumenism?*

PART I

“Ecumenism is something far worse than a panheresy;
ecumenism in the sacred realm of Orthodoxy
is a sickness unto death.”
(Prof. Andreas Theodorou)¹

I. Three Articles from the Holy Mountain

A year has now passed since the beginning of the commotion centering on the Athonite monastery of Esphigmenou, during which many articles saw the light of publication and a “dialogue”—at times acrimonious and, in any case, not impartial—was conducted in an effort to identify the essence of the problem and to propose solutions to it.

Among the participants in this “dialogue” was the well-known and erudite Athonite monk, Elder Theokletos of Dionysiou. We have in front of us three of his articles, on which we intend to comment briefly, since we consider them particularly symptomatic of what is, to put it charitably, an erroneous and unsuccessful way of presenting the so-called calendar question.

These three articles (hereafter, Articles I, II, and III)² by Elder Theokletos, which were obviously written without any circumspection or equanimity, are surprising for their innumerable derogatory characterizations of Old Calendarist Orthodox, and are unacceptable both in letter and in spirit, and all the more so because they come from the pen of a venerable Hesychast.

Taken as a whole, the phraseology of these texts, the positions that they advocate, the truths that they suppress, and the author’s selective memory and sophistical attitude constitute quite literally an insult and affront to, as well as a defamation and disparagement of, the intelligence of Old Calendarist Orthodox, not only in Greece, but also all who belong to the constantly expanding domain, both at home and abroad, of those who struggle knowledgeably, with fear of God, and unselfishly against the panheresy of ecumenism.

Furthermore, these articles bear witness—and we write this with heartfelt sorrow—to the guilt complex of a monastic conscience which, although it was at one time vibrant with Divine zeal and used to characterize ecumenism as anti-Patristic, subsequently proclaimed that “the crisis of ecumenism had passed, along with the unfortunate Patriarch Athenagoras” (†1972) [!], and finally, today, maintains that ecumenism consists, supposedly, in “relations and encounters of a social nature” and “certain acts of politeness and courtesy towards the heterodox” (Article I) [!]

II. “Let even our disputings be governed by standards of propriety”

Ecumenism, then, is not an issue for Elder Theokletos: the calendar innovation of 1924 was simply a “leap of thirteen days” (Articles I, II, and III), and the only “impropriety” of the reform was “the inept way in which it was carried out” (Article III); consequently, according to Father Theokletos, the Old Calendarists had no grounds for walling themselves off from the innovators, and their act of walling-off constituted and continues to constitute—or so he alleges—an actual schism.

It should be noted that Elder Theokletos studiously avoids referring to ecumenism as a heresy, while simultaneously shifting the reader’s attention to a volley of completely vulgar, ill-mannered, and unbrotherly *ad hominem* attacks on the Old Calendarist Orthodox anti-ecumenists.

It is also evident that he does this under the impulse of the aforementioned guilt complex, because he has to protect the ecclesiastical jurisdiction to which he belongs—namely, the Patriarchate of Constantinople—against the criticisms leveled at it by the anti-ecumenists, for whom Elder Theokletos does not refrain from employing, in an unbrotherly and shameful manner, all of the epithets of Athonite invective:

The common herd; illiterate, ignorant, and half-educated; simpletons and ignoramuses; credulous, dimwitted, simple-minded cretins; animated by conceit and diabolical self-confidence; obstinate, fanatical, motivated by irrational religious zeal; unscrupulous, opportunists, ungodly, charlatans, deceivers and deceived; disreputable, lunatics, schizophrenics, maniacs, demented and delirious; mentally blind and suffering from spiritual ankylosis, collective delusion and derangement; demonically intoxicated, etc.

In this way, Elder Theokletos succumbs prematurely to a deadly sin, since he attempts persistently to conceal amid a thick cloud of insults, even now, at the age of eighty-seven, the historically-established truth that the Church of Constantinople was, unfortunately, the one that laid the foundations for the syncretistic ecumenical movement in the sacred precincts of Orthodoxy in the year 1920, and that ever since then the Phanar has steadfastly and brazenly led the way in constructing the Babylon of inter-Christian and interfaith ecumenism.

• In what follows, we shall endeavor, by the Grace of God, to refute in a “seemly” way the accusations made by Elder Theokletos against the anti-ecumenists, while humbly reminding him of the Divinely-inspired exhortation of St. Gregory the Theologian:



29 June 1995: Patriarch Bartholomew and Pope John Paul II jointly bless the people in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican, during a “concelebration” on the occasion of the patronal feast of the Roman Church.

For Elder Theokletos of Dionysiou, this action constitutes “relations and encounters of a social nature with the heterodox”!

But let us understand that, just as in dress, diet, laughter, and demeanor there is a certain decorum, so there is also in speech and silence, since among the other appellations and attributes that we ascribe to God, we honor Him as the Word. Let even our disputings be governed by standards of propriety.³

III. The Connection Between the Calendar Question and Ecumenism

We have repeatedly written⁴ that it is totally irresponsible to dissociate the issue of the calendar from that of the ecumenical movement for the following very important reasons, which can be fully substantiated and which, moreover, the ecumenists themselves invoke and cite!

First, in January of 1920, as is well known, the “Synodal Encyclical of the Church of Constantinople to the Churches of Christ Everywhere”⁵ proposed, in a truly unheard-of way—as it has been very correctly observed—, something “without precedent in Church history,”⁶ that is, the establishment of a “League of Churches”⁷ for the benefit of “the whole body of the Church,”⁸ a “body” which includes Orthodox and heterodox!

With this encyclical, “the Ecumenical Patriarchate laid down the golden rule of Orthodox ecumenism (Zander), as well as the charter for the attitude that the Orthodox party in the ecumenical movement should in the future observe (Stavrides, Konidaris).”⁹

According to the ecumenists, the “Synodal Encyclical” “constitutes a definitive expression of Orthodox ecumenism, and also a milestone in the history of the ecumenical movement.”¹⁰ It received pan-Orthodox acceptance in 1961 at the “First Pan-Orthodox Consultation” in Rhodes, which recommended “the presence and participation of the Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement in the spirit of the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920.”¹¹

One of the fundamental heresies of the 1920 Encyclical is dogmatic syncretism, which truly represents a “grave blow to the ‘perfect doctrine’ of Orthodoxy,”¹² according to the ever-memorable Archimandrite Spyridon (Bilalis), because, on the basis of this encyclical, it is possible for the different “Christian Churches,” that is, “the whole body of the Church,” in spite of the dogmatic differences that exist between them, to implement “rapprochement,” “friendship,” “coöperation,” “contact,” and “fellowship,”¹³ under the guidance of a “scheme for practical implementation” “consisting of eleven points.”¹⁴

The first of these points is the acceptance of “a uniform calendar for the simultaneous celebration of the great Christian feasts by all the Churches.”¹⁵

Since Elder Theokletos is pleased to invoke that “excellent Canonist, [his] friend, the late Archimandrite Epiphanius Theodoropoulos” (Articles II and III), we would simply remind him that Father Epiphanius regarded this “phenomenon” of dogmatic syncretism, that is, inter-Christian coöperation, “with the Orthodox and the heterodox remaining in their own dogmatic realms,”¹⁶ as “unknown and inconceivable in the history of the Church,”¹⁷ since it reeks of “appalling religious syncretism,”¹⁸ aims “at the harmonious and tranquil coexistence of truth and error, of light and darkness,”¹⁹ and “can only be interpreted as a ‘sign of the times.’”²⁰

The incontrovertible fact that the uniform calendar of East and West was on the agenda of dogmatic syncretism and was implemented in order to promote, more specifically, syncretism in the celebration of Feasts, lends a clearly ecclesiological character to the calendar reform of 1924.

What Elder Theokletos characterizes as an innocuous “leap of thirteen days” has led the Orthodox ecumenists directly into the domain of dogmatic syncretism and into

a practical expression of ecumenism, and this without regard to the historical origins of the calendar question in the sixteenth century.

In confirmation of the ecclesiological nature of the 1924 reform and of its manifestly ecumenist presuppositions, we would remind Father Theokletos that the eleven proposals, or “points,”²¹ of the modernist Encyclical of 1920 were not only adopted, but were fully implemented in the course of the ecumenical movement, and, indeed, were expanded to sixteen, so that today they are characterized all together as “steps towards the firm foundation of a common Christian outlook.”²²

These steps, which, according to the ecumenists of Constantinople, “can be implemented immediately and without dogmatic or canonical impediments, or, where they have already been implemented, can be strengthened or regularized,” are as follows:

1. ‘The creation of a common calendar,’
2. ‘More regular contact through correspondence,’
3. ‘Closer relationships between representatives of the Churches,’
4. ‘Communication and “fraternization” between theological schools,’
5. ‘The promotion of ecumenical studies,’
6. ‘An ecumenical spirit in universal education,’
7. ‘Theological dialogues and conferences,’
8. ‘The ecumenical education of the faithful of all confessions,’
9. ‘The “fraternization” of dioceses of different confessions,’
10. ‘The common celebration of Patronal Feasts and Patron Saints,’
11. ‘The resolution of dogmatic problems,’
12. ‘Mutual respect for mores and customs,’
13. ‘Avoidance of the creation of new problems,’
14. ‘Provision of houses of prayer,’
15. ‘Mixed marriages,’ and
16. ‘Coöperation at the broadest level on pressing problems.’²³

This syncretistic hobnobbing of Orthodox and heterodox, which constitutes almost a *de facto* union, is due to the inherent modernizing tendencies of ecumenism, as the latter was proclaimed by Constantinople in 1920, tendencies which constantly impel one to advance from successive violations in matters of minor significance to disdain for matters of great moment.

Let us remember that St. Photios the Great, in dealing with the evils which the Latins had unleashed in the newly-illuminated Bulgaria, first enumerates those points that were regarded as minor (questions involving fasting), but which widened the road for more serious matters and led to the ultimate Trinitarian heresy of the *Filioque*.

“Even a small violation in matters of Tradition is wont to lead to complete disregard for dogma.”²⁴

Elder Theokletos talks sarcastically about a simple “leap of thirteen days,” by virtue of which “one day” was called “the twenty-third instead of the tenth” (Article II); in reality, however, the syncretistic heresy of ecumenism, one of the fundamental aims of which was the calendar reform, brought about a “transmutation of all things into ungodliness,”²⁵ to quote St. Theodore the Studite.

- This topic is vast and needs further dissection, because there has not been, since 1924, an “inhuman schism,” as Elder Theokletos puts it (Article II), but, rather, Orthodox resistance against the inhuman and misanthropic heresy of syncretistic ecumenism.

For “I reckon it misanthropy,” writes St. Maximos the Confessor, “and a departure from Divine love to lend support to error, to the greater corruption of those previously seized by it.”²⁶

(to be continued)

* Source: Άγιος Κωνσταντίνος, No 317 (November-December 2003), pp. 292-295.

Notes

1. Andreas Theodorou, *Ἡ Ὁρθοδοξία χθές καὶ σήμερον* [Orthodoxy Yesterday and Today] (Athens: “Orthodoxos Typos” Publications, 1973), p. 21.
2. Article I: *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 1494 (28 February 2003), p. 3; Article II: *Χριστιανική*, No. 658 (971) (15 May 2003), p. 8, and No. 659 (972) (29 May 2003), p. 10; Article III: *Χριστιανική*, No. 663 (976) (24 July 2003), pp. 9-10.
3. St. Gregory the Theologian, Oration 27 (“First Theological Oration”), §5, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XXXVI, col. 17C.
4. See, for example Volumes II, III, and VII in the series “Contributions to a Theology of Anti-Ecumenism.”
5. Basil T. Stavrides and Evangelia A. Barellas, *Ἱστορία τῆς Οἰκουμενικῆς Κινήσεως* [History of the Ecumenical Movement] (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies, 1996), 3rd ed., pp. 332-336.
6. George Tsetsis, “The Meaning of the Orthodox Presence in the Ecumenical Movement,” in *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, ed. Gennadios Limouris (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), p. 172. This statement was made by the first General Secretary of the WCC, Dr. W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft.
7. See note 5.
8. See note 5.
9. Great Protopresbyter George Tsetsis, *Οἰκουμενικὸς Θρόνος καὶ Οἰκουμένη—Ἐπίσημα Πατριαρχικὰ Κείμενα* [The Ecumenical Throne and the Oikoumene: Official Patriarchal Texts] (Katerine: Tertios Publications, 1989), pp. 56, 57.
10. See note 9.
11. John Karmiris, *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας* [The Dogmatic and Credal Monuments of the Orthodox Catholic Church] (Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck u. Verlagsanstalt, 1968), Vol. II, pp. 984-985 [1082-1083].
12. Archimandrite Spyridon Bilalis, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Παπισμός* [Orthodoxy and Papism] (Athens: “Orthodoxos Typos” Publications, 1969), Vol. II, p. 492.
13. See note 5.
14. Stavrides and Barellas, *Ἱστορία τῆς Οἰκουμενικῆς Κινήσεως*, p. 55.
15. See note 5.
16. Archimandrite Epiphanius Theodoropoulos, “Ὁ συνεορτασμός τοῦ Πάσχα” [“The Joint Celebration of Pascha”], *Ἐνορία*, No. 549 (10 May 1974), p. 112.
17. See note 16.
18. See note 16.
19. See note 16.
20. See note 16.
21. See note 14
22. Gregory 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.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 352-365, where there is an analysis of the “Steps” in question.
24. St. Photios the Great, Epistle 13, “Encyclical to the Archbishopal Thrones of the East,” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. CII, col. 724D.
25. St. Theodore the Studite, Epistle II.13, “To the Patriarch of Jerusalem,” *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1164B.

26. St. Maximos the Confessor, Epistle 12, “To John the Chamberlain,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XCI, col. 465CD.