



On the fiftieth anniversary of the
repose of The Confessor-Hierarch
Chrysostomos (Kavourides), former
Metropolitan of Florina
(†1955)

Part V

A Pastoral Encyclical *

(June 1, 1944)

*[Concerning the breakaway bishops,
Matthew of Vresthene, and Germanos of the Cyclades]*

To the most reverend Priests, the most honored Trustees,
and the entire pious Orthodox Christian flock of our
Churches, Grace to you and peace from God,
and paternal prayers and blessings from us:

[A]

*“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over
the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed
the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own
blood.”¹*

AT ALL TIMES, and above all during these troublesome and critical times, in which falsehood and the debauchery engendered by the passions are running riot, the shepherd who is aware of his pastoral duties ought to be attentive both to himself and to his whole flock,

keeping watch and guard over his reason-endowed flock, lest grievous wolves,² in the guise of sheep, invade it and, smiting the shepherd, scatter and tear apart his sheep.³

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,” advises the Divine Apostle, *“redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”*⁴

In the unstable and difficult circumstances in which we live, beloved children in Christ, we need great prudence and wisdom in both our conversations and our actions, so that we may protect and keep our lives secure from the sundry temptations, both inward and outward, into which we are led by the good-hating and man-slaying demon, who stalks the arrays of the Faithful like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may snatch and devour.⁵ The perils that surround us attack us from every direction, threatening to destroy not only our bodily, but also our spiritual, health, when they find us asleep and indolent about watching and guarding our bodies and souls, these two good gifts which constitute the sacred legacy, of which the All-good God and Creator appointed us to be unsleeping sentinels and vigilant guardians.

The watching and guarding of this precious treasure, that is, our bodily and spiritual health, should not be an incidental occupation and a fortuitous acquirement for us, but our primary concern and the most important benefaction that we gained when we were buried with Christ through Holy Baptism and reborn into a new physical and spiritual life by renouncing Satan and joining ourselves to Christ. His Resurrection from the dead and the translation of His immaculate Body from corruption to incorruption, and from mortality to immortality, serve as a pledge of our incorruption and immortality, according to the Divine Apostle to the Nations:

*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection, knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*⁶

We should treat this new spiritual life in which we are renewed through Holy Baptism as the apple of our eye, being obligated, accord-

ing to the promise that we made, to mortify our passions which are upon the earth,⁷ so that, as “joint-heirs with Christ,”⁸ we may enjoy eternal life in Heaven. For in every circumstance of our life, the most wily and all-wicked Devil plots against us, setting various traps before our feet, and he contrives and uses everything to ensnare us and cast us down into the trenches and the abyss of sin and of his demonic tyranny.

Hence, the Divine Augustine has this to say about the Devil:

*O Lord, he is the Great Scarlet Dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called Satan and the Devil.... Lo, he has spread countless snares before our feet and filled all our paths with deception, so as to deceive our souls; and who shall escape his snares? He has hidden them in wealth and poverty, he has poured forth traps in luxury, in drink, in pleasure, in sleep, in vigilance, in word, in deed, in every path of ours, and again, do Thou deliver us from our daily adversary, who, whether we are asleep or awake, whether we are eating or drinking, or doing anything else, lies in wait for us in every way, both night and day, with his deceitful tricks, and shoots poisonous arrows at us, now openly, now in secret, in order to slay our souls.*⁹

With such a dreadful and wily enemy plotting against our lives and the salvation of our souls, let us keep unsleeping vigil as sentinels on the battlements of the indestructible tower of the Church and of the Faith and piety of our Fathers, which alone is capable of casting down the crooked Dragon, the foe with his many wiles, and of protecting us as we pass through the midst of snares from the innumerable traps set before our feet and the infernal tricks of the Devil, concerning which the Divine Apostle thunders:

*“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God Which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.”*¹⁰

*“Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber with thine eyelids, that thou mayest be saved like a gazelle out of the toils and as a bird out of a snare.”*¹¹

Or in another place:

“Recognize that thou passest through the midst of snares, and that thou walkest upon the battlements of the city.”¹²

If, in normal circumstances and peaceful periods, our Christian life and the salvation of our souls are difficult, how much more do these prove to be troublesome and precarious in the unstable and hostile circumstances that we are going through today, by the judgments which the Lord alone knows, in which the odious demon of the foul and base passions is running out of control, and a suffocating and malodorous stench, which fills the whole atmosphere, is defiling and ravaging all classes of our Christian society and country. Yes, indeed, to whatever stratum of society one directs his gaze, he sees nothing but lies, insolence, arrogance, sarcasm, irony, envy, hypocrisy, betrayal, and every kind of immorality and wantonness, *“because of [which] the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.”¹³*

Let us stand aright, beloved children in Christ, and let us lift up our hearts,¹⁴ and *“let us be vigilant, for we know not on what day or at what hour the Son of man cometh.”¹⁵*

[B]

AND AS IF these various trials were not enough, or the perils that surround us, which threaten to corrupt and poison our morals and our Christian life and nation, trials of another kind have, unfortunately, arisen from among those who, departing from the very heart of the Church, endeavor to corrupt your healthy Orthodox outlook and to scandalize the souls and consciences of the Faithful with empty words and foolish arguments. These men pretend to be experts in the Canons and “teachers of the law,”¹⁶ and yet, through their lack of canonical formation and theological education, they “understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.”¹⁷

And despite all of this, they contrive to foist their mistaken opinions and their erroneous beliefs not only on the laity, who are devoid of religious education, but also on the clergy of our Orthodox faction, and even on the leader and president of this faction, who is schooled in the Canons and received his theological education at a superb school

of theology, and who gives clear proof, not only in words, but also in deeds, of his Orthodox mind-set and of his adherence to the Traditions of the Church.

And do not be surprised at this, beloved children in Christ, because such pseudo-Apostles and false teachers¹⁸ appeared even in the Apostolic era, as the confessions of the Apostles bear witness.

“Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”¹⁹

These false teachers

“went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us,” as the Evangelist says.²⁰

We made them Bishops by the Grace of the All-holy and consecrating Spirit, so that with us they might serve the sacred struggle for the Orthodox Festal Calendar.

But when these men became Bishops, not only did they not comprehend or value their Episcopal office, and the serious and sacred character of the calendar struggle, but they also fell into a whole host of uncanonical deviations, not flinching or shrinking—the wretched ones—, bereft of ecclesiological or canonical reasons, from breaking their spiritual ties and ecclesiastical communion with us; setting up their own altars and thereby rending the seamless garment of Christ for reasons of personal vainglory and ambition, they created an actual schism in the bosom of our Orthodox faction.²¹ When we saw that all of the peaceful means that we had employed to enlighten them and turn them aside from their indefensible schism came to nothing, we were compelled, with grief, to accept their secession and to deprive them and their followers of our blessing. Since that time, separated from our spiritual jurisdiction and care, these men have perpetrated acts that are so uncanonical and criminal from an ecclesiastical standpoint, that they were brought to trial before the Criminal Court of Chalcis, which dismissed the case, not because they were innocent of the accusation, but because they were unfit to stand trial due to mental debility and advanced age. These conventicler Bishops, Matthew (Karpathakis) of Vresthene and Germanos (Varykopoulos) of the Cyclades,

from the moment they split off from us, who bestowed Episcopal rank on them, remained Bishops, owing to the indelibility of the Priesthood, but as simple individuals and not as representatives of a Church from which they could draw the Grace and the authority validly to perform any ecclesiastical function and to celebrate her Mysteries.

[C]

ACCORDING to the Orthodox Faith and understanding, it is the whole Church, as the *Treasurer of Grace*, that establishes the Churches and endows them with the Mysteries and the Grace of the All-holy Spirit, and not a certain number of individual laity and clergy who, owing to a disagreement on some ecclesiastical issue that is capable of being resolved, have broken away from a recognized Orthodox Church, one that has not been stripped of its ecclesiastical validity or of the Grace of the All-holy Spirit following a trial and sentence pronounced by the entire Church.

The idea that individuals, be they clergy or laity, are justified in establishing their own Church without the permission and recognition of the entire Church reeks of Protestantism, which does not regard the judgment and the mind of the whole Church as the precise rule and yardstick of Divine truth, but the judgment and the opinion of individuals who, according to the Protestant interpretation of the issue, represent the Grace and power of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, a whole host of heresies has sprung up in the bosom of the Protestant Church, corresponding in number to the plethora of individual judgments and opinions, which are not guided or illumined by the Church. The entire Church not only legitimates a particular Church as Orthodox, and recognizes it through the Grace of the All-holy Spirit, Whose Divine power, sanctifying nature, and will are expressed and manifested, according to the Orthodox Faith and understanding, through an Ecumenical Synod or a major local Synod, but also imparts an Orthodox character and canonical validity to the leaders of local Churches and ratifies this character and validity. This is why, as soon as the leader of a local Church is elected, he is obligated to communicate his election and appointment to the other Orthodox Churches, exchanging what are called letters of commendation with them, through which

the new leader of the Church receives the anointing of canonicity and authority to head his Church. This is the order that prevails in the Orthodox Church and this is her age-old practice in matters of Orthodox character and the validity of Churches and their leaders.

This being the case, we ask the conventicler Bishops and the clergy and laity who follow them from where and from what Church they derive the canonical validity of their ecclesiastical acts, since they have broken away from us without ecclesiastical reasons and, without fear of God, have lashed out at those who Ordained them and Consecrated them Bishops by invoking the Grace of the All-holy Spirit? Perhaps they will object that they have not broken away from us without ecclesiastical reasons, citing the fact that, as a particular Church and one independent of the Autocephalous Church of Greece, we refused to proclaim the innovating Hierarchs who accepted the Papal Calendar schismatics. But we ask them: Is it justifiable, according to Canon Law, the Divine and Sacred Canons, and the age-old practice of the Orthodox Church, for a faction of clergy and laity to proclaim Hierarchs schismatics, when they disagree with the latter over an ecclesiastical issue that is capable of being resolved, as Saint Basil the Great, the revealer of heavenly things, puts it, given that this right was bestowed by the Seven Holy Œcumenical Synods, these unerring tablets of Divine truth and the precise yardstick of Orthodoxy, on the whole Church, when she assembles at an Œcumenical or a major local Synod, which, after it has exhausted all peaceful means of enlightening those in error and, pointing out the spiritual ruin and the fearful abyss to which these erroneous religious ideas are driving them, proceeds with sorrow to excise them from the Divinely-established and age-old body of Orthodoxy, depriving them of their right, as Hierarchs, validly to celebrate the Mysteries or to discharge any ecclesiastical function?

We have a recent example of this prerogative being exercised in the major local Synod that convened in Constantinople in 1872, at which all of the Eastern Patriarchates were represented, on account of the accursed heresy of phyletism, which the Hierarchs of Bulgarian nationality wanted to introduce into the Œcumenical Patriarchate.²² This Synod summoned the apostate Bulgarian Hierarchs to trial, and when they were unwilling to come to their senses, after a lengthy clarification, it deposed them and declared them schismatics. In issu-

ing the decree concerning their deposition and excision, it ordered that this decree be read in Churches, so as to protect the Bulgarian people from the corruption of schism.

Never have any of the ancient or modern heretics and heresiarchs been declared schismatics and deposed by Hierarchs who disagreed with them acting in isolation, without a trial and a defense, but by Synods and canonically established ecclesiastical tribunals, before which such people are summoned to defend themselves, and are only deprived of their rights as Hierarchs and of their authority to govern a Church and to celebrate the Mysteries of the Church validly, when, after the issues have been sufficiently clarified by the Synodal tribunal, they refuse to renounce their error, persisting unyieldingly and obstinately in their heretical ideas and erroneous beliefs.

According to the spirit of the relevant Canons, when the Primate or the majority of the Hierarchs of a recognized Orthodox Church introduce into the Church an innovation that is contrary to the Canons and to Orthodox Divine worship, the right-believing Hierarchs of this Church are justified in breaking ecclesiastical communion with the innovators, even before a Synodal judgment, lest they, too, be responsible before the whole Church for the innovation that has been evilly and uncanonically introduced; but they cannot declare the innovating Hierarchs schismatics or subject them to deposition, for that is the exclusive prerogative of the entire Church when it comes together in a Synod, states its opinions with the aid of the Holy Spirit, and issues its verdict, after a thorough clarification and a detailed defense by the innovating Hierarchs under judgment.

When those who are right-believing sever ecclesiastical communion with a ruling Synod and cease to commemorate it, not only are they not condemned, but they are indeed extolled for *not* having created a schism, but rather having saved the Church from schism, in accordance with the Fifteenth Canon of the First-Second Œcumenical Synod, which declares the following:

For those who, on account of some heresy condemned by the Holy Synods or Fathers, have separated themselves from communion with the Primate..., such ones are not liable to canonical censure before a Synodal verdict, since they have

walled themselves off from communion with the so-called Bishop; but they shall even be deemed worthy of the honor befitting those of right belief.... They have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions.

See also the Third Canon of the Third Œcumenical Synod, which enjoins the following:

“And in general, we forbid all the clergy who adhere to the Orthodox and Œcumenical Synod in any way to submit to the Bishops who have already apostatized or shall hereafter apostatize.”

These Canons, as any fair and sincere inquirer can understand, afford right-believing clergy, who reject an innovation on the part of the presiding Church authorities, the right solely to break ecclesiastical communion with the governing body and not to obey or submit to it in any way, the right to pronounce it heretical and to cut it off from the universal body of Orthodoxy being reserved for a canonical Synod.

[D]

HOWEVER, the conventicler Bishops, Matthew (Karpathakis) of Vresthene and Germanos (Varykopoulos) of the Cyclades, despite their knowledge of these Canons, and not being content to break ecclesiastical communion with the innovating Hierarchy of Greece, declared not only the innovating Hierarchs—without any trial or defense—, but also the entire Church of Greece, to be in schism, arrogating to themselves, the wretches, nothing less than a right that belongs to an Œcumenical or a local Synod. In our refusal to follow them on this slippery and hazardous downward slope, which overturns age-old and fundamental canonical norms, and in our vain attempts to turn them aside from this abysmal and soul-destroying precipice, they proceeded to declare us schismatics, without first coming to any understanding with us, rejecting every invitation of ours to clarify matters. And as evidence of their incredible perversity, we cite verbatim their reply to our invitation for a colloquy:

THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF GREECE

Athens, January 27, 1942

To His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Florina.

Your Eminence:

Several days ago, when we received your invitation for us to come on January 15/28, 1942, to discuss certain serious questions concerning our sacred struggle in your offices at No. 7, Chalcondyle, we sent you a letter by way of Mr. Stavrianos, in which we made it known to you that in order for us to come into contact with you and the Metropolitan of Demetrias, it would first be necessary to remove the spiritual reasons for our disagreement, which compelled us to denounce you. Since, as we are informed, you desire union—as, at any rate, you state orally before the people—for this reason, we state very clearly, through this letter of ours, that meetings and discussions will be superfluous until you accept the points of faith set out below, which provoked our disagreement, and that, from such a moment, we will then be united and can then come together and meet with each other.

- 1. That the Church of Greece, by accepting the Papal Calendar, has become schismatic.*
- 2. That her Mysteries are invalid.*
- 3. That her Chrism does not have any sanctifying Grace.*
- 4. That the children of those in the Orthodox Church who are wrong-believing should be re-Chrismated.*

When you have communicated these points to the wrong-believing Church²³ through a court notary, whose certification you show us; and when, in the same way, you also revoke the document that you sent to the Ministry of Religion; and when you proclaim all of this in the Churches—then, we say, our union will come about automatically, without meetings and disputations. We will await your written response to these questions of ours for a period of eight days from today.

*With fraternal greetings,
† Bishop Germanos of the Cyclades † Bishop Matthew of Vresthene*

From this document, it is blatantly obvious that its authors not only incur the charge of total ignorance regarding Canon Law and the spirit of the Divine and Sacred Canons, which clearly determine and safeguard the rights of the Church, of the Hierarchs who govern her, and of the entire body of Orthodox Christians, but also blaspheme against Divine Grace itself, which is inherent in the meaning of the Divine Mysteries, whereby the Faithful are sanctified, together with the Priests serving, not as creative means of sanctifying Grace, but as a means of imparting this Grace to the Faithful.

Hence, because the Divine Grace which is imparted to the Faithful through the Holy Mysteries is not bestowed by a faction of clergy or laity, but by the Divine nature and character of the Church, it is self-evident that those individuals who deprive the Church of her Divine and inalienable right and authority, and the Mysteries of their sanctifying power and soul-saving Grace, by a shameless stroke of the pen commit blasphemy and sacrilege, not only against the Divine nature of the Church, but also against the sacredness of her Mysteries. Proof that these conventicler Bishops know “neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm”²⁴ is that they do not apply all that they teach even to themselves, not daring, the hapless ones, to repeat the Mysteries for those coming over from the Papal Calendar to the Orthodox Calendar, hereby accepting into their bosom those who are un-Baptized, unmarried, and in general, according to their opinion and understanding, unhallowed and un-Chrismated.

The perversity and insanity of such an opinion and doctrine as theirs become more plain and obvious, if one takes into account the fact that these conventiclers restrict themselves to re-Chrismating infants, who are completely innocent of the innovation of the New Calendar, making their parents exempt from such a penalty when they come over, without re-Chrismation, to their brand of Orthodoxy. And when, as we steadfastly believe and hope, after this terrible and most pernicious conflict has come to an end, the innovating Churches, having been suitably enlightened by a pan-Orthodox and legitimate

Synod, are compelled to return to the Old Calendar, the calendar of the Holy Fathers, will thousands and millions of Christians who were born in the bosom of the innovating Churches, following the opinion and dogmatic decree of the conventicler Bishops, be re-Baptized, remarried, and re-Chrismated, so that they may receive the anointing of Orthodoxy?

It is not only individual Bishops acting in isolation who are not justified in holding or stating such an opinion regarding the invalidation of Mysteries and the repetition thereof, since they have no competence or authority in this regard, but not even a local Orthodox Church has the right to annul the validity of Mysteries without the judgment of the whole Church, whose exclusive right it is to deprive clergy who fall into heresy, and neither repent nor reject it, of the right to celebrate valid and efficacious Mysteries; for, whoever does not have the ability to confer a Divine gift is, consequently, not entitled to withdraw it.

For this reason, the Canons class those who take away this sacred right with people who commit sacrilege:

“It is sacrilege to demote a Bishop to the rank of a Presbyter.”²⁵

And if the Canons regard a demotion of the Mystery of the Priesthood as sacrilege, how much more are we to consider sacrilegious those who dare, without any competence or ecclesiastical authority, to pronounce the Mysteries of a recognized Church invalid, even if that Church is liable to trial before the whole Church for its arbitrary introduction of an innovation.

This, you see, is why we refrain from making statements about the validity of Mysteries, confessing that we have no competence or right in this regard, on the basis of the Divine and Sacred Canons, and being aware of our unworthiness and sinfulness in relation to the sacredness and the sanctifying Grace and power of the Divine and sacred Mysteries. We leave this to the mind and the judgment of the entire Church, which has the exclusive and Divine right, as we have just said, to endow a Church with the mysteriological Grace that is imparted through her ministers, and to withhold this Grace when she,

for her part, cuts off the clergy of such a Church—both her Hierarchs and her Priests—for canonical reasons and after a trial and defense.

[E]

NOW, IT IS true that in our publications, in defending ourselves against the sentence of deposition passed against us by the Synodal Tribunal which the innovating Hierarchy convened, we called the innovating Hierarchs *schismatics* for having created grounds for a schism in the Orthodox Church of Greece, by introducing the innovation of the Western Calendar, and for having cut themselves off from the other Orthodox Churches, which held fast to the Orthodox Calendar in their celebration of the Feasts, and that we have imputed to them the blame and the fearful consequences entailed by the nascent schism in the peaceful and right-believing life of the Church; but we have called them *schismatics*—and we do not hesitate to this day to call them such—, however, not *actually* but only *potentially*. For the former, that is, the proclamation of an innovating clergyman or layman who departs from the enclosure of the Orthodox and Divine Canons as *actually* schismatic, is a right that belongs only to a Synod when it assembles and states its opinions with the aid of the Holy Spirit, as I have said; whereas the second, that is, calling such a clergyman or layman *potentially* schismatic, is the right of any Orthodox clergyman, who is justified not only in severing ecclesiastical communion, but also in denouncing him to a competent Synod, which is precisely what we did in denouncing the innovating Hierarchs to the Orthodox Churches.

In our view of this matter, we are in harmony with the *Πηδάλιον* of the universal Orthodox Church, which, in the first footnote on page 18,²⁶ makes a clear distinction between a *potential* and an *actual* schismatic and calls those who equate these two terms foolish and their language sacrilegious, since they do not understand 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.

For further proof of what we are saying, we cite verbatim the relevant footnote of the sacred *Πηδάλιον*, so as to silence those who think and speak to the contrary:

*We must know that the penalties which the Canons prescribe, that is, 'let him be deposed,' 'let him be anathema,' and 'let him be excommunicated,' are issued, according to grammatical usage, in the third person, there being no one present to impose them. In such a case, of necessity, the presence of a second person is required if this injunction is to be enforced. I will explain this better. The Canons enjoin a Synod of living Bishops to depose Priests or to excommunicate or anathematize laymen who transgress the Canons. But if the Synod does not actually effect the deposition of the Priests, or the excommunication or anathematization of the laymen, these Priests and laymen are neither actually deposed nor actually excommunicated nor anathematized. However, here on earth, they are liable to stand trial, with regard to deposition and excommunication or anathematization, while in the hereafter they are subject to Divine retribution.... Hence, those foolish people greatly err who say that in the present times all clergy who have been Ordained contrary to the Canons are actually deposed. Sacrilegious is the language of those who witlessly babble such words, not understanding that, unless it is actually put into effect by a second person, that is, by a Synod, the imperative force of Canons remains unexecuted and does not act of itself, either immediately or before a decision. Later on, the same Divine Apostles clearly explain themselves in their Forty-sixth Canon, since they do not say that any Bishop or Presbyter who has received Baptism from heretics is immediately and actually deposed, but 'we enjoin that he be deposed,' that is, 'we enjoin that he stand trial and that, if it be proved that he did this, then let him be stripped of the Priesthood by your own decision.'*²⁷

From this it follows that no clergyman who deviates from the boundaries of Orthodoxy is reckoned to be *actually* deposed. If he does not appear before a valid ecclesiastical tribunal, he can nonethe-

less be considered such *potentially*, and prior to a Synodal verdict and a final decision about him.

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.

We Old Calendarists, however, do not constitute a particular, independent Orthodox Church in Greece, because no Church has recognized us as such; rather, we exist within the recognized Autocephalous Greek Church as a *sentinel* that guards the institution of the Orthodox Festal Calendar, which was violated—as it should not have been—by the majority of the Hierarchy; and we, who are the resplendent and unsullied part of the Autocephalous Church of Greece, are continuing her history in the spirit of Orthodoxy.

This erroneous and uncanonical idea, that we constitute a special Church, was thrown into the ring and introduced into political life by the late Archbishop Chrysostomos (Papadopoulos) of Athens, deliberately and maliciously, in order to portray us, in the eyes of the government and Greek society, as rebels who have lifted up our heels²⁸ against the Autocephalous Church of Greece, and in this way to expose us to the ire of the government and the general disdain of society.

Indeed, in connection with this, he did not shrink, although he had expert knowledge of the Divine and Sacred Canons and was a professor of Church history, from proclaiming that the Old Calendarist Hierarchs, having broken spiritual communion with the ruling ecclesiastical authority and established their own Churches, allegedly without ecclesiastical or canonical reasons, constituted their own Church, and a schismatic one, at that, as the Synodal Tribunal, which condemned and deposed the Bishops of Megara, Diavleia, the Cyclades, and Vres-thene, was pleased to call it.²⁹

Here is the relevant excerpt from the sentence of this tribunal, which reads verbatim as follows:

For this reason, condemning the accused in absentia, [the Tribunal] declares Christopher Hatzis, Germanos Varykopoulos, Matthew Karpathakis, and Polycarp Liosis guilty of illegal and uncanonical Consecration to the Episcopacy, and of joining themselves to the schism created by the former Metropolitan Germanos of Demetrias, Chrysostomos of Florina, and Chrysostomos of Zakynthos, et al.

But this opinion is erroneous and uncanonical, given that, according to the Orthodox Faith and understanding, it is not a single faction of Christian clergy and laity, who are at variance on some ecclesiastical issue with the ruling Hierarchy and are not in ecclesiastical communion with them, that establishes and cuts off Churches, but the entire Orthodox Church, when she comes together and states her opinions with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

Along these lines, we Old Calendarists, for all that we present the appearance, in our outward expression of faith, of having our own houses of prayer and our own ministers, nevertheless, although we are not in spiritual communion with the innovating Hierarchy, since we adhere steadfastly to the Divine Canons and the Holy Traditions, do not, in terms of canonicity, constitute a Church distinct from that with which we have temporarily broken ecclesiastical communion for canonical reasons, but we are the unsleeping sentinel, as I have already said, which vigilantly keeps the beacons alight on the adamantine battlements of the one Autocephalous Greek Church, in whose name we are continuing her history in the spirit of her original and unsullied Orthodoxy.

The conventicler Bishops, who have a different opinion on this matter, fall into the heresy of Protestantism, and in celebrating the Mysteries in the name of a non-existent Church, or, to put the point better, of their personal Church, they are deprived of all Grace, of which the Treasurer is the entire recognized Orthodox Church.

Let these men tell us: to which Church do they belong, when, like Popes of the East, they have quite shamelessly appropriated the power

of a Synod and have declared the Autocephalous Church of Greece, in whose name they received from us the rank of Bishop by the visitation of the All-holy and consecrating Spirit, to be actually schismatic?

Since it is well known that none of the local Orthodox Churches that adheres to the Orthodox Calendar of the Fathers has recognized them as constituting an Autocephalous and independent Church, it is self-evident that they do not belong to a recognized Orthodox Church, but to the Church of their followers; and, consequently, they cannot have an Orthodox, but only a Protestant, character, because they derive the authority and the Grace of their ecclesiastical acts, not from the notion of the Church as the Treasurer of Grace, but from their persons and those of their followers, as the Protestants think and believe, who substitute their personal and individual character and authority for the Divine character and nature of the Church.

This, you see, is why the conventicler Bishops of Vresthene and the Cyclades cannot have the Grace of Orthodoxy or the right to impart this Grace to those who follow them on this ecclesiastical downward slope of theirs, because they do not belong to the canonical Church, the sole Treasurer of Grace in an Orthodox sense.

[F]

FOR THIS weighty reason, from an Orthodox standpoint, we, being familiar with the Divine Canons and the holy Dogmas and Traditions of the Orthodox Church, refuse to consider the Hierarchy of the Greek Church *actually* schismatic, but only *potentially*, until a valid Synod convenes in order to try the innovating Hierarchs and, if they refuse, after a sufficient clarification, to return to the Tradition of the Orthodox Festal Calendar, to depose them, cut them off, and declare them schismatics in actuality, in which case it will recognize the few right-believing Hierarchs as the sole representatives of the Orthodox Church of Greece.

However, until this happens, and they put both their persons and their affairs in order, if the conventicler Bishops behave as they have been behaving, it is obvious that, according to a precise understanding of the Canons, they are not right-believing but Protestantizers and

that, under the pretext of a supposedly pure Orthodoxy and without fear of God, they are dashing themselves and their followers down into the soul-destroying abyss of wrong belief and spiritual perdition.

Let them not say that, such being the case, it is not worth the bother for one to be an Old Calendarist, subject as he is to persecutions, mockery, and so many other difficulties, which are entailed by withdrawing from the innovating Hierarchy and joining the side of the right-believing Hierarchy, because he who knowingly follows a Hierarchy who is merely potentially liable to deposition and excision, and embraces his innovation, becomes himself liable to the curses and anathemas which the Divine and Sacred Canons unleash against those who violate written or unwritten Tradition.

“Let anyone who violates written or unwritten Tradition be anathema,”

decrees the Seventh Œcumenical Synod.³⁰

* * *

THIS BEING SO, we exhort the like-minded and faithful followers of our Orthodox faction to avoid and to pay no attention to the babblings and foolish arguments of the conventicler Bishops of Vres-thene and the Cyclades, whereby they attempt, under the pretext of a supposedly pure Orthodoxy, to ensnare them in the corruption of wrong belief and to lure them into the abyss of spiritual perdition, while we recommend those who follow them in good faith and with a clear conscience to denounce them and their unholy prattle and soul-destroying teachings, which are contrary to the pure and healthy spirit of Orthodoxy, if they desire to obtain the salvation of their souls, which is found only within the saving Ark of a canonical and recognized Church.

Wishing to protect his disciple Timothy from similar false teachers, the Apostle to the Nations offers him the following advice:

“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of sci-

ence falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the Faith”;³¹

and elsewhere:

*“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived; but continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.”*³²

Directing, out of pastoral duty, these paternal counsels and exhortations of ours to you, to the spiritual children of our right-believing faction, and to those who in good faith follow the opposing faction of the conventicler Bishops, our hope is that this advice, which flows from Orthodox faith and paternal love, will make the appropriate impression on the hearts of our followers and, above all, of those belonging to the opposing and erring faction of the conventiclors, all the more so because failure to comply with this advice excludes the conventiclors from the precincts of the Greek Church, alienates them from Divine Grace, and is fraught with the danger of their spiritual perdition.

With this good hope, we call down upon us all the power from on high and the illumination of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose Grace and infinite mercy, together with our paternal prayer and blessing, be with you all. Amen.

Athens, June 1, 1944
† *Metropolitan Chrysostomos*
(formerly) of *Florina*

*Source: *Resistance or Exclusion?: The Alternative Ecclesiological Approaches of Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina and Bishop Matthew of Vresthene* (Etna, CA: C.T.O.S., 2000), pp. 63-82.

Notes

¹ Acts 20:28.

² *Ibid.*, v. 29.

³ Cf. St. Matthew 26:31.

⁴ Ephesians 5:15-16.

⁵ Cf. 1 St. Peter 5:8.

⁶ Romans 6:5-6.

⁷ Cf. Colossians 3:5.

⁸ Romans 8:17.

⁹ A prayer of Saint Augustine in *Ἐρωτικά* xv.

¹⁰ Philippians 2:12-13.

¹¹ Proverbs 6:4-5.

¹² Ecclesiasticus 9:13.

¹³ Ephesians 5:6.

¹⁴ From the *Anaphora* of the Divine Liturgy.

¹⁵ Cf. St. Matthew 25:13.

¹⁶ 1 St. Timothy 1:7.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ 11 St. Peter 2:1.

¹⁹ Acts 20:30.

²⁰ 1 St. John 2:19.

²¹ Metropolitan Chrysostomos does not say, in so many words, that Bishops Matthew and Germanos are schismatics, and, although in the next sentence he uses the word “schism” to describe the division created by Bishop Matthew, for the most part he prefers to call them “conventiclars.”

²² In all fairness to the Bulgarians, it must be said that they had some legitimate grievances against the Patriarchate of Constantinople, to whose jurisdiction they had been returned by the Ottomans. According to Father John Meyendorff, the Greek Bishops in Bulgaria suppressed the liturgical use of Church Slavonic and attempted, in general, to Hellenize the Bulgarian Church. In view of this policy, and also under the influence of the nationalistic fervor that was sweeping the Balkans in the mid-nineteenth century, the Bulgarians wanted an autonomous national Church of their own, as well as equality with Constantinople in administering the Bulgarian ecclesiastical territories. In 1872, Œcumenical Patriarch Anthimos VI reacted to the Sultan’s grant of a *firman*, authorizing the establishment of an independent Bulgarian Church, by convening a Synod, in which the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch also took part. This Synod condemned phyletism (nationalism) as a heresy and placed the Bulgarian Church under an interdict that was only lifted in 1945. Noting that there were wrongs on both sides, Father Meyendorff admits that Constantinople was canonically in the right (*The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today*, 3rd ed. [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981], pp. 168-169).

²³ The Greek word for “wrong-believing” is *κακόδοξος*, which is the exact opposite of *ὀρθόδοξος*, *i.e.*, “right-believing.” The word “cacodox” is listed in standard dictionaries of the English language, but it is very rarely used today.

²⁴ 1 St. Timothy 1:7.

²⁵ Twenty-ninth Canon of the Fourth Œcumenical Synod.

²⁶ Concerning the Third Canon of the Holy Apostles.

²⁷ *Πηδάλιον*, pp. 4-5, n. 2.

²⁸ Cf. Psalm 40:9; St. John 13:18.

²⁹ These were the four Bishops Consecrated by the aforementioned three Metropolitans in 1935, namely Christopher (Hatzis) of Megara, Polycarp (Liosis) of Diavleia, Germanos (Varykopoulos) of the Cyclades, and Matthew (Karpathakis) of Vresthene.

³⁰ Eighth Session: Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, Vol. III, p. 416.

³¹ I St. Timothy 6:20-21.

³² II St. Timothy 3:13-14.