



The Prophet of Suffering Roman Hellenism

In Memory of Photios Kontoglou

The Sunday of Orthodoxy and the Current State of Affairs

by Photios Kontoglou

[Translated from the Greek by Novice Patrick]

The Sunday of Orthodoxy was established in order for the Church to celebrate the restoration of the Icons and the victory of true religion over the Iconoclasts. The Iconoclasts were the modernists of that time, who began with the abolition of iconography, so that they might proceed gradually, as all such people are wont to do, to other destructive reforms, the end result being to leave nothing in Orthodoxy intact. The Icon was the symbol of Orthodoxy, and Byzantium was in turmoil over the Icons, in civil war, for 116 years. In 787 A.D., the Seventh Œcumenical Synod took place in Nicæa. This Synod proclaimed the restoration of the Icons, and put an end to the Iconoclasm which had started in 726, in the reign of Leo the Isaurian. But even after the Seventh Œcumenical Synod, Iconoclasm was revived, and so another Synod took place in Constantinople in 842, and this Synod confirmed the Seventh Œcumenical Synod. Thus did that madness of Iconoclasm cease.

Unbelief and rationalism are the causes from which every heresy and modernism in religion proceed. This is why the Iconoclasts were men of cold hearts, unbelievers, braggarts, vainglorious, deprived of spiritual depth, and impelled in whatever they did

from political and other similar non-spiritual purposes. The leaders of this movement, emperors and courtiers, attracted to their side the vainglorious and the self-seekers, who counted on the political and social power that these leaders of the Iconoclasts had.

From the other side, the pious clergy, from Patriarch to monk, struggled for their Faith, as did the simple souls who had deep faith in Orthodoxy and its Tradition, the humble and the “poor in spirit,” those blessed by Christ, “the foolish and base of the world” (I Corinthians 1:27-28). Assuredly, among them is the “superstitious rabble,” as the modernists and the reformists call them. But this rabble appears many times to see more clearly and further than the luminaries of cold rationalism, as happened in Constantinople shortly before the Turks seized it, when the people obstructed the union of our Church with the Papists and rescued our nation from annihilation, as the wise Adamantios Koraës says, writing these words: “...[The Latins] mock us in particular because of this superstition and attribute to this the stubbornness of the common people (whom the ‘clever’ call rabble) against uniting with the Papists, and their steadfast resistance to the emperors who wanted so to unite them. We Greeks of today, however, owe our existence to this superstition (if ever superstition gave rise to anything good). Without this most felicitous stubbornness of our forebears, superstition would have increased, and the multitudinous ranks of Western monks would have befouled the soil of poor Greece....”

These words were not written by some spiritually backward reactionary, nor by some “Old Calendarist,” but by Koraës, whose statue the Greeks erected in front of the University of Athens, and who for years was very liberal and an enthusiastic follower of the French Revolution. What reply is there to this from the profound rationalists and modernists, who are confident that they hold the key of wisdom and knowledge, and jeer at us, the “fools and fanatics”?

As we said at the beginning, the cause of every innovation in the Tradition of our Church is lack of fear towards God, impiety and unbelief. Never among the modernists and the reformers has there been found a Christian who believes truly, not falsely. The unbeliever cannot have a humble attitude, but is arrogant and conceited in every way. St. Ephraim the Syrian puts this succinctly: “Arrogance,

unable to endure what is ancient, compels people to devise innovations.” Do you see what he is saying? Arrogance compels, that is, pride and vainglory force him who has it within him to want and to bring about innovations, since he is a slave of this pride! And then he says, “unable to endure what is ancient,” that is to say, because he has no liking for “what is ancient,” namely, Tradition. In other words, he is too burdened by vainglory to accept what his ancestors, “those who came before us,” have handed down to him, as Koraës said. If one is to accept Tradition, he must have humility in himself and must not want to insist on his own will. There is no modernist in the Church who wishes not to demolish what we have received from those who guarded our religion with their piety and their unshakable faith, and who endured every kind of suffering, even death itself; and there is no such thing as a modernist who is not unbelieving. Let him put on a disguise, let him present himself as pious, let him feign humble-mindedness, let him perhaps embrace his enemies with a word; let him give the external impression of a meek and soft-spoken Saint. In truth he is a hypocrite.

St. Ignatios the God-Bearer, that most holy Saint, one of the most ancient Hierarchs of the Church, a disciple of the Apostle John the Theologian, he who fought with wild beasts for the name of Christ in the Colosseum of Rome, an old man of ninety years, felt such faith rooted in his heart that he told his disciples, when they were working to rescue him from martyrdom: “Do not hinder me, my children, from going to my beloved Lord. I am the wheat of God and I shall be ground (by the teeth of the wild beasts), so that I may be presented to Him as ‘fragrant and pure bread.’” Since there were many times that the lions did not want to tear apart certain martyrs, Ignatios, this iron-hearted centenarian and warrior, told his own disciples: “If the beasts do not want to eat me, I will force them.”

Oh, the incredible height which the Faith of Christ attains! It makes an Achilles of a guileless old man, the meek Bishop of Antioch, who stepped aside to avoid treading on an ant!

But why did I depart from the subject I was speaking about? I did so in order to mention what the Saint said about the modernizers of religion. He said: “Everyone who speaks contrary to what has been prescribed, even if he fasts, even if he is a virgin, even if he

prophesies, even if he works miracles, you should see him as a wolf in sheep's clothing, who is contriving the destruction of the sheep."

Hear these things, then, you who read, and impress them on your mind lest you be deluded by flatteries, smooth talk, and the saccharin of "love," which such transgressors and apostates use, with the intention of deceiving you. They cover all their infernal plans with the all-holy name of Christ, Who said eight times "Woe!" and eight times "Alas!" about the hypocrites.

He said "Alas!" also about those who cause scandals, as do these modernists: "Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh!" (St. Matthew 18:7).

Yes! Today, in our days, certain other apostates have appeared, not only Iconoclasts, but also "fighters against Orthodoxy" in general, who pass themselves off as champions of Orthodoxy, just as the Pharisees passed themselves off as champions of the Law, whereas they annulled it.

Forerunners of the modernists that appear in our evil days were certain Hierarchs and Patriarchs who took "progressive" and modernist ideas from "abroad," and wanted to "reform" the Church, in order to accommodate her to "the demands of our age." They perceive this need for "adaptations," since they see that the world is being alienated from religion, and they try, supposedly with the quackery of innovations and "adaptations," to attract the irreligious. But their zeal is "foolish zeal," because it shows that they want to support religion with certain innovations that abolish it, and for this reason they achieve nothing, since they are unbelievers. One "grain of faith" would have fallen where the modernists achieve nothing, with all their consultations, world councils, organizations, and "foolish questions, genealogies, and strivings about the law" (Titus 3:9). And that all these things—the innovations in worship and the attempts at "adaptation"—are of no effect is proved by the fact that in the countries where these things are done by the religious leaders, in the countries of Europe and America, the "adaptations" are in vain, since there is no yeast, that is, faith, for the bread to be kneaded with, and because true religious feeling is quenched and lost, while day by day unbelief triumphs. These conceited clergymen of ours who lived abroad and remained astonished at the material power of

the West have a hysterical admiration for everything that happens in the West, which renders them blind and totally incapable of appreciating the spiritual depth of Orthodoxy, and makes them ape the Papists, the Anglicans, and the Protestants.

One line of such Europeanized clergymen, like the clergy of the Œcumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, and the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, prepared the way for today's pope-worshippers and modernists of every kind, who are going to abolish the Faith of our Fathers. A leading modernist was Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis, an unscrupulous, impious, and atheistic man. May God forgive him.

And yet, how many such destroyers of Orthodoxy will celebrate the Sunday of Orthodoxy!

Source: *Orthodox Tradition* Vol. XII, Number 3 (1995), pp. 71-74.