



## The Status of the True Orthodox Christians

To the Editor,  
Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος,  
Athens

Dear Sir:

In your newspaper Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος (*Orthodoxos Typos*, or *The Orthodox Press*), on March 27, 2009, you published a lengthy article entitled “Open Confrontation Between the Metropolitan of Piraeus and the Old Calendarists,” in which certain incorrect and injudicious opinions of Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus, of the New Calendar Church of Greece, regarding the Γνήσιοι Ὁρθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί (Γ.Ο.Χ.) (*Gnesioi Orthodoxoi Christianoi* [*G.O.Ch.*], or True Orthodox Christians [T.O.C.])—more commonly known as παλαιοημερολογῖται (*palαιοemerologitai*, or “Old Calendarists”)—are set forth. Since it is possible that the article in question might give rise to erroneous impressions among the less-heeled of your readers, who cannot be expected to know exactly what is at issue, I submit that it would be useful for the following points to be presented in the columns of your newspaper—though this should, in fact, be unnecessary, since they are all patently obvious, not to mention self-evident by definition.

### I

The True Orthodox Christians constitute, in legal terms, a particular religious community of Orthodox Christians who are “neither schismatics nor heretics” (as explicitly acknowledged by the plenary session of the Council of State, among other bodies, in its decision cited by number below), and, furthermore, a religious community protected and recognized *funditus* and in every respect by the Greek Constitution and by international conventions for the protection of human rights. The True Orthodox Christians enjoy legal recognition and protection—indeed, without qualification—of equal honor and weight to that of the religious community of the New Calendar Church of Greece, which exists and functions parallel to them (independently of them and [from a legal perspective] bearing no relation to them either ecclesiastically or administratively). This self-

evident and objectively incontrovertible fact is substantiated by a plethora of judicial rulings (from civil, criminal, and administrative courts at every procedural level), which have firmly and unanimously found, in this regard, in favor of the True Orthodox Christians, and also through an entire series of briefs from public prosecutors, ministerial decisions, and resolutions of the European Court for Human Rights, etc. This intrinsically indisputable fact of the full and complete protection of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians was legally corroborated—and at the highest level of our judiciary, at that—by virtue of Decision No. 1444/1991 of the plenary session of the Council of State (pertaining specifically to the unimpeded construction of Churches by the True Orthodox Christians) and by virtue of Ruling No. 2/2005 of the Counsel General of the Supreme Court (relating specifically to the obligation of registrars to enter the Holy Mysteries of the True Orthodox Christians in their records without any restrictions).

## II

In consequence of what has been set forth above, all that Metropolitan Seraphim of Piraeus states to the contrary—expressed, in many instances, with unacceptably poor taste—is devoid of any legal significance. Furthermore, overlooking all of the aforementioned facts, he inappositely invokes Decision No. 379/1980 of the plenary session of the Council of State, which was issued almost thirty years ago and which has not only been completely annulled, in accordance with the foregoing, but has, in addition, altogether been expunged by virtue of the decision of the European Court for Human Rights regarding the appeal of Serif against Greece (pertaining to the usurpation of the function of a minister of religion).\*

## III

As for the remainder of the comments made by Metropolitan Seraphim (about which there will surely be responses from others with greater competence in these matters), aside from the legal status and protection of the True Orthodox Christians, I will observe only that it is an inherent

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\* The author, attorney and legal advisor to the Holy Synod in Resistance and a distinguished Greek jurist, is referring, here, to the case of Ibrahim Serif, a member of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace, who was sentenced in 1990 to eight months' imprisonment by a Greek court on the ground that he had, allegedly, been unlawfully using the title of "Mufti" of Rodopi, thereby "usurping the function of a minister of religion." Having no other means of legal redress, Mr. Serif lodged an appeal in 1997 with the European Court for Human Rights. In 1999, a chamber of the European Court for Human Rights unanimously ruled that Greece had violated Article 9 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which enshrines the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. (*Trans.*)

feature of the right to freedom of religion that there may exist more than one Holy Synod of True Orthodox Christians and that any potential differences between such Synods certainly do not fall within the purview of Metropolitan Seraphim. Likewise, it does not fall within his purview—since it lies outside the parameters of his own jurisdiction—to concern himself with what have been judged irrevocably, and without exception whatsoever, to be spurious and false depositions of various clergy of the True Orthodox Christians for nonexistent transgressions that have been groundlessly ascribed to them.

With due respect, and with the expectation that you will publish this letter in the columns of your newspaper, I remain,

Theodoros S. Theodoropoulos  
Advocate before the Supreme Court  
Plateia Homonoias 12, Athens

Athens, April 6, 2009

