

THIRTY YEARS OF TRIAL:
THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS OF
GREECE, 1970-2000

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| | |
|--|----|
| <i>Introduction</i> | 3 |
| 1. <i>A Failed Attempt at Union</i> | 4 |
| 2. <i>Callistite Coup and Auxentiite Counter-Coup (1979)</i> | 11 |
| 3. <i>The Union of 1985 and the Tsakos Affair</i> | 21 |
| 4. <i>A New Florinite Archbishop</i> | 26 |
| 5. <i>The Ecclesiology of Metropolitan Cyprian</i> | 29 |
| 6. <i>Boston Separates</i> | 37 |
| 7. <i>The Florinites Divide Again</i> | 45 |
| 8. <i>The Schism Develops</i> | 51 |
| 9. <i>The Greeks in Russia</i> | 56 |
| <i>Conclusion</i> | 59 |

Introduction

On December 18/31, 1969 the Holy Synod of the Russian Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) under the presidency of Metropolitan Philaret of New York officially recognised the consecrations of Greek Old Calendarist bishops carried out by members of her own Synod in the 1960s, and entered into official communion with this new Greek Synod under the presidency of Archbishop Auxentius (Pastras) of Athens. Until then, and since the repose of Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina in 1955, the majority of the Greek Old Calendarists had languished without any Episcopal supervision. It was now hoped that on this secure canonical foundation, the process of rebuilding could begin.

This article is a brief history of what happened thereafter until the end of the 20th century. It attempts to unravel the causes of the various schisms that unfortunately rocked the Church in this period, especially those of 1979, 1983, 1985 and 1995. Although the writer's attention has been focussed primarily on the largest jurisdiction of the True Orthodox Christians, that of the "centrist" "Florinites" (after Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina), developments in the "right-wing" "Matthewites" (after Bishop Matthew of Bresthena) and "left-wing" "Cyprianites" (after Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili and Oropo) are discussed, as well as the relations of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece with the Russian Church.

East House, Beech Hill, Mayford, Woking, Surrey. United Kingdom.

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Holy Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon.

1. A Failed Attempt at Union

By 1970, the Autocephalous Churches were more or less united in their drive for union with the Catholics and Protestants. By 1971, the True Orthodox of Greece and Cyprus and the ROCOR were also united – temporarily. But tragically this union, which could have been of such benefit to the struggle of the True Orthodox Christians, fell through.

On December 18/31, 1969, Metropolitan Philaret, the new First-Hierarch of the ROCOR, together with his Synod officially recognized the Florinite hierarchy led by Archbishop Auxentius, writing to Archbishop Auxentius: “The many trials which the Orthodox Church has endured from the beginning of its history are especially great in our evil times, and consequently, this especially requires unity among those who are truly devoted to the Faith of the Fathers. With these sentiments we wish to inform you that the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad recognizes the validity of the episcopal consecrations of your predecessor of blessed memory, the reposed Archbishop Acacius, and the consequent ordinations of your Holy Church. Hence, taking into account also various other circumstances, our hierarchical Synod esteems your hierarchy as brothers in Christ in full communion with us.”¹

The members of the Florinite Synod now were: **Archbishop Auxentius and Metropolitans Gerontius of Piraeus and Salamis, Acacius of Diauleia and Attica, and Chrysostom (Naslimis) of Magnesia.** In July, 1971 Archbishop Auxentius and Metropolitan Gerontius consecrated further bishops: **Metropolitans Paisius (Euthymiadis) of Euripus and Euboea, Chrysostom (Kiouisis) of Thessalonica, Callinicus (Khaniotis) of Thaumakou and Acacius (Douskos) of Canada.** In 1973 there took place the consecrations of **Metropolitans Anthony (Thanasis) of Megara and Gabriel (Kalamisakis) of the Cyclades.**

The Matthewites continued to denounce the Florinites as schismatics, but for the rest of the Orthodox world this act by the ROCOR’s Synod dispelled any lingering doubts about their canonicity. So on September 1/14, 1971, the Matthewites sent an exarchate, consisting of Metropolitans Callistus of Corinth and Epiphanius of Kition (Cyprus) and the Chancellor, Protopriest Eugene Tombros, to the Synod of the ROCOR in New York.² They went, as the Matthewites wrote to the Russians some years later, “in order to come into contact with your Synod and regularize spiritual communion with you for the

¹ *Syntomos Istoriki Perigraphe*, pp. 37-39 (in Greek). Cf. Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, 1998, pp. 82-83.

² Metropolitans Callistus and Epiphanius had already visited the ROCOR in America in 1969, as guests of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston.

strengthening of the Holy Struggle of Orthodoxy".³ Or, as Metropolitan Epiphanius put it in a letter to Metropolitan Philaret, "I went to carry out with you a common duty 48 years late. I went with the conviction that, through human weakness, we carried out in 1971 what we should have done in 1924... I believed that in entering into sacramental communion with you I became with you the same Body and Blood of Jesus Christ."⁴

But the Matthewites, according to their own account, did not immediately seek communion in prayer with the Russians. First they asked what the Russians' attitude to the new calendarists was. The Russians replied that the introduction of the new calendar was a mistake, and promised, in the person of Archbishop Philotheus of Hamburg, that they would not henceforth concelebrate with the new calendarists. However, they did not say whether they regarded the new calendarists as having valid sacraments. Perhaps not coincidentally, the Russians also resolved at this time that all Catholics and Protestants seeking to become Orthodox should first be baptized with full threefold immersion. Apparently satisfied with this reply, the Matthewites asked for the Russians to pass judgement on their own canonical situation.

Having examined the Matthewite case, on September 15/28, the Russians presented, in writing, a dogmatic-canonical examination of the case of consecrations by one bishop only. The Matthewites claimed that this report vindicated Matthew's actions, but this is a misrepresentation of the text.

In fact, although the language they used was conciliatory, the Russians concluded that the Matthewites had sinned, "not against the dogmas of Orthodoxy, but since, in their zeal to preserve it they transgressed against the hierarchical order when Bishop Matthew consecrated a bishop on his own. A simple recognition of their consecrations could become a cause of scandal as being in disregard of fixed canons: the First of the Apostles, the Fourth of the First Ecumenical Council, and the Third of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. At the same time it is clear from other canons and examples that economy can be applied on the basis of the Eighth of the First Ecumenical Council and the Sixty-Sixth of the Council of Carthage..." So it was resolved: (i) to acknowledge the possibility of fulfilling the petition of Metropolitans Callistus and Epiphanius. To that end, two bishops must perform the laying-on of hands over them. They, in turn, must subsequently perform the same over their brethren, and all bishops [must perform the same rite] over the priests; (ii) to oblige Metropolitans Callistus and Epiphanius, as well as their brethren, to take all possible steps to unite their hierarchy, clergy, and people with those who are headed by his Beatitude, Archbishop Auxentius; (iii) to inform his Beatitude, Archbishop Auxentius, concerning the aforesaid [decision]; (iv) to delegate the Most Reverend Archbishop Philotheus and

³ Letter of February 20, 1976 from the Matthewite Synod to the Russian Synod, *Kyrix Gnision Orthodoxon*, February, 1976, pp. 5-12 (G).

⁴ Letter of Pascha, 1979 from Metropolitan Epiphanius to Metropolitan Philaret.

Bishop Constantine to fulfil the provision of paragraph one of this Resolution at Transfiguration Monastery in Boston.”⁵

The laying on of hands duly took place; but there was much controversy over its precise meaning. Some claimed that these were real ordinations (kheirotoniai), adducing the following facts: (a) that the Russians in their text of September 15/28 explicitly stated that they were not simply going to recognize the Matthewite orders, (b) that the Russians in the same text explained that in the history of the Church the clergy of certain graceless schismatics, such as the Catharoi, were received into the clergy of the Orthodox by kheirothesia, simple laying-on of hands, and not by reordination, which was an exercise of economy but by no means a recognition of the schismatics’ ordinations, and (c) that, as Bishop Laurus, the secretary of the Russian Synod pointed out on a trip to Greece, the kheirothesias on Metropolitans Callistos and Epiphanius were carried out, not on the same, but on successive days, which clearly implied that they were equivalent to consecrations.⁶

Against this view, however, are the following facts: (a) the words of the Act, in which the word kheirothesia and its Russian equivalent and not kheirotonia and its Russian equivalent are used,⁷ (b) the English text of a letter sent by Metropolitan Philaret to Metropolitan Epiphanius, in which the sacrament was described as no more than “a prayer of absolution”⁸ – presumably the removal of the stain attaching to the Matthewite orders because of their derivation from one bishop only, (c) the text of an Encyclical of the Florinites, which said that the Florinites had been informed that “the Synod of the all-sacred Philaret has decided to recognize as canonical the pseudo-bishops of the reposed Mr. Matthew”⁹, and (d) the text of a letter by Metropolitan Philaret, and signed also by Bishop Laurus, to Archbishop Andreas: “We make it known to all that, after the laying-on of hands, which has been fulfilled as a blessing to your Beatitude’s Sacred Hierarchy, our Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia enters into full ecclesiastical and sacramental communion with the Orthodox Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece, of which your Beatitude is a bishop. I cordially pray that our Lord will bless and guide the hierarchy, clergy and laity of your Beatitude’s God-protected Church forever”.¹⁰ Also in

⁵ *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95, 97.

⁶ Irénée Doens, "Les Palaioimérologites: Alerte pour leurs Monastères", *Irénikon*, 1973, p. 48 (in French).

⁷ "Anegnoristhi i kanonikotis ton kheirotonion tis paratakseos imon", *Kyrix Gnision Orthodoxon*, № 17, November, 1971, pp. 3-14 (G). The Russian text of the official Act reproduced in the same Matthewite organ declares that the Russians "read prayers with the laying on of hands [Russian: prochitali molitvy s vozlozhenie ruk]" on the two hierarchs.

⁸ Protocol № 146, Holy Diocese of Kition, G.O.C. (F).

⁹ Encyclical № 534, dated 18 September, 1971. See Eleutherios Goutzides, in *Kirix Gnision Orthodoxon*, 42, № 237, October, 1997, pp. 262-263 (G).

¹⁰ M. Philaret, letter to Archbishop Andreas, October 21, 1972.

favour of this interpretation (e) is the statement of George Lardas: "This was a simple cheirothesia and not the full rite of consecration"¹¹, and (f) a letter of Protopriest George Grabbe, secretary of the ROCOR Synod: "Bishops Kallistos and Epiphanius were not ordained by our Synod. They were accepted into communion as bishops with only the laying of hands on them, already in bishops' vestments, according to the 8th canon of the First Ecumenical Council. That was to rectify the irregularity caused by the founding of their hierarchy through the consecration originally performed by one bishop".¹²

"Unfortunately," writes Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, "the conditions laid down by the Russian Church Abroad and agreed to by the Matthewites representatives were only partially implemented in Greece. The Matthewite Synod agreed to the first condition (that the rite of kheirothesia be performed over their bishops), but refused to comply with the second (that the same rite be performed over their priests and deacons), though a number of their clergy persistently requested it. In a privately published memorandum, dated March 17, 1977, Metropolitan Epiphanius of Cyprus – and also Metropolitan Kallistos of Corinth, in private memoranda and open letters which he wrote – rebuked their fellow Matthewite bishops and clergy for showing bad faith and for bearing the burden of guilt in the breakdown of their negotiations with the Florinites and the souring of their relations with the Church Abroad."¹³

For a short period during which the two Greek Synods called each other "brothers in Christ", and in the opinion of the present writer this is what they in fact were (and are). For it makes no ecclesiological sense to claim that two Churches which derive their orders or correction of their orders from the same source, are in communion with each other through that source, and have the same confession of faith, can be of a different status ecclesologically. However, from December, 1972 the two sides were again hurling insults at each other. Moreover, in 1976 the Matthewites broke communion with the Russians, too. They claimed that the Russians had broken their promise to give them a written confession that the new calendarists were without grace, and were continuing, in the person of Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, to have communion with the new calendarists.¹⁴

Archbishop Anthony was indeed continuing to concelebrate with the new calendarists at this time, causing several priests and parishes to leave him for the Matthewites. His actions contradicted ROCOR's official view on the new

¹¹ Lardas, *op. cit.*, p. 20, referring to an "unpublished Act, 18 September, 1971 (OS), Holy Transfiguration Monastery".

¹² Grabbe, letter to Mr. Shallcross, October 25, 1973.

¹³ *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, pp. 97-98.

¹⁴ Letter of February 20, 1976 from the Matthewite Synod to the Russian Synod, *Kyrix Gnision Orthodoxon*, February, 1976, pp. 5-12 (G).

calendarists as expressed in a letter from Archbishop Vitaly of Canada to the Matthewite Archbishop Andrew.¹⁵ However, they did not contradict a later, and weaker statement by the ROCOR Synod in 1974.¹⁶

¹⁵ "Your Beatitude, ...with regard to your... epistle № 803/May 13, 1972, addressed to His Beatitude, since the President of our Holy Synod, Kyrios Kyrios Philaret has been for a long time absent abroad, I am undertaking the needed answer, so that your epistle may not remain unanswered for long. The fact that the calendar innovation innovation of 1924 brought schism to the Holy Orthodox Church could not be more obvious and no Orthodox and judicious person can ignore that sorrowful reality. So that no one may wrongly think that our Holy Russian Church - which is authoritatively represented by our Holy Synod - partakes in the most bitter taste of this damnable schism, allow me to make mention to your Beatitude of just two among many disasters which we, as Russian Orthodox, have undergone as consequences of that coup d'état, which was carried out by ... Meletios Metaxakis and Chrysostomos Papadopoulos of sorrowful memory... Our Greek brothers have informed us about similar cases on... the Holy Mountain, Cyprus, etc.... It is wrong for one to think that there was a time during which we ourselves, the Orthodox Russian people, have not lived through the drama of the calendar change. The calendar issue was settled during the time of Pope Gregory, when the Orthodox Church was called to join the mentioned change. Already from that moment the Church has expressed her opinion, the Church has condemned and anathematized it. And the ecclesial conscience has many times and in many places confirmed that condemnation by many acts, declarations and actions.... Also, during the 20th century, on the Holy Mountain, where our Synod was not represented, but the Serbian Church, which at that time sheltered us and with which we were spiritually and ecclesiologically united, was, the then Bishop of Ochrid, Nikolaj Velimirovich, did not consent to serve the Liturgy with the other innovating hierarchs in the monastery of Vatopedi.... So our Holy Synod from the very beginning has been conscious that the calendar problem is the cause of a schism... During the lately convened Great Hierarchical Council in the cathedral of St. Nicholas in Montreal, the seat of my mediocrity, the eternal condemnation of the papist calendar was repeated, when we in a conciliar manner condemned the heresy of ecumenism, the door to which heresy has been shown in detail to be precisely this issue... With the authority of that Council, ... the President of our Holy Synod wrote ... the Second sorrowful epistle... in which he profoundly dealt with the calendar issue as the forerunner of ecumenism... So our Holy Synod, having from the beginning the correct understanding with regard to that issue, never acknowledged the calendar change as an irrevocable act, but always awaited the opportunity for a Pan-Orthodox Council to be freely convened, not in order to give its opinion on the issue, because the Holy Church has already done that from the beginning, but in order to reject the infiltrated deceit, no longer administering the condemnation as a preventative measure, as was the case in the past, but concretely in the case of the coup d'état that had already taken place... If our Holy Church has until recently practised condescension in the sphere of relations with other churches, it was in the hope that a free Pan-Orthodox Council would be convened, which in our opinion cannot happen without setting free the Russian Church... Seeing, however, that the desired Pan-Orthodox Council not only cannot be free, but also that it may not condemn the innovation and bring peace back to the Church, but that it will actually adhere to the heresy, we, obeying our hierarchical conscience, are ringing the warning bells... What further proof is needed... to show that the confession of Faith of our Holy Synod concerning the calendar change, as one that is the cause of a schism, is clear and consistent?... In conclusion, we inform your Beatitude that a Greek Presbyter, Basil Sakkas, a parish priest in Geneva in canonical subordination to our Holy Synod... has presented me with a voluminous work concerning the issue, justifying the conscientious stance of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece... The English translation of the work has been blessed by our Blessed President Kyrios Kyrios Philaret in the form of a preface. In that detailed preface you will find the expression of the opinion of the whole of our Holy Synod with regard to the validity of the anathemas regarding that issue, together with the eternal Pan-Orthodox and Conciliar

Meanwhile, on June 5, 1974, in an encyclical to its clergy, the Auxentiite Synod reaffirmed that the new calendarists were schismatics with no grace of sacraments and should be received into the True Church by chrismation: "The ministration of the Holy Gifts to the new calendarists has been forbidden since the beginning of the schism of the official Church; and you must observe this line of conduct unswervingly in a spirit of discipline towards our ecclesiastical traditions. If someone joins our ranks from the new calendar, an indispensable condition of his acceptance is the confession of faith and the condemnation of every heresy and innovation, including the new calendar, by the acceptance of which the Greek Church became schismatic from 1924, as the reformer Archbishop Chrysostom Papadopoulos himself averred, and in consequence of which its sacraments are deprived of sanctifying grace. If people who have been baptised in that Church convert to the Faith, they must again be chrismated with holy chrism of canonical origin, in accordance with the First Canon of St. Basil the Great."¹⁷

In a footnote to the encyclical it was declared: "The present encyclical was ready to be issued on April 4, 1973. It has been postponed until now awaiting his Eminence, Bishop Peter of Astoria, who, though invited repeatedly to endorse the encyclical, refused to do so. On this account, in its meeting of June 5, 1974, the Holy Synod struck him from its membership and removed him from the exarchate of the True Orthodox Christians of America."¹⁸

This confession of the faith was to be welcomed in that it removed the main obstacle to union with the Matthewites – the suspicion the latter had that the Auxentiites really recognised the new calendarists.

However, it had no effect on the Matthewites, who went even further to the right by rejecting the 1971 kheirothesia, declaring: "1. We accepted spiritual communion with the Russian Synod after an oral declaration-assurance with regard to agreement and unity in the faith, i.e. the confession-ecclesiology of the True Orthodox Church. 2. We accepted the kheirothesia as an external act – and wholly formal, in order to efface the pretext of anticanonicity which the followers of the former [Bishop] of Florina, i.e. the

opinion of the Eastern Orthodox Church. I believe that the mentioned preface can be used to remove any doubt and as a theoretical Definition of faith of our Russian Orthodox Church in Exile ..." (*Kirix Gnision Orthodoxon*, August-September, 1972, translated in "Re[2]: [paradosis] Will the Real Metropolitan Vitaly Please Stand Up?" orthodox-tradition@yahogroups.com, 7 September, 2002 (the translation has been modified in places)).

¹⁶ The Synod declared: "Concerning the question of the presence or absence of grace among the new calendarists the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad does not consider herself or any other Local Church to have the right to make a conclusive decision, since a categorical evaluation in this question can be undertaken only by a properly convened, competent Ecumenical Council, with the obligatory participation of the free Church of Russia."

¹⁷ Full text in *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, Boston, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

¹⁸ *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, op. cit., p. 100. According to Lardas (op. cit., p. 21), Bishop Peter refused to sign the encyclical "on advice from the Synod of the ROCA".

Acacians, had put forward in opposition to unity, and not as something that affected the Hierarchy, which was dogmatically complete and perfect. 3. We accept that there were canonical breaches (irregularities), but what moved us was the fact that the Russians, in accordance with the declarations of the Exarchate, had confessed the True Confession. However, when the opposite started to reveal itself, after desperate attempts which lasted for approximately four years, we were compelled to break off spiritual communion, being indifferent to the issue of the kheirothesia, because neither had anything been added to us, nor subtracted from us. ... 4. Yes, as has been revealed, *the act of 1971 was a robber act*, which had been previously constructed by the enemies of the Church."¹⁹

"By 1973, the Auxentian Synod had ten bishops, 123 churches in Greece, thirty-nine monasteries and convents, several charitable organizations, numerous periodicals, and most of the traditional Orthodox faithful in Greece."²⁰

In 1975, according to a new calendarist estimate, "the followers of the late Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina have about 120 parishes, perhaps 70-80 monks and more than 600 nuns; the followers of the late Archbishop Matthew of Keratea have about 50 parishes, 150 monks and 500 nuns. But these figures may well be too low."²¹ Other sources indicated that in the later 1970s the Old Calendarists numbered about half a million Christians, with about a third of the 1200 monks on the Holy Mountain being zealots who refused to commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarch.²²

By comparison, the Romanian Old Calendarists were much more numerous at this time. "There are about 1 million Old Calendarists in Romania today. They have three bishops, Glicherie (87 years old), Evlogie (65 years old) and Silivestre (54 years old). There are 10 hieromonks in the large monastery and two in the convents. There are about 45 married priests (a few parishes have two) and 5 deacons (4 in the monastery and one married). There are also two monasteries, Slatioara, with 80 monks, and another with 25.... There are two convents with 100 and 50 nuns each, and a skete with 35 nuns, besides some 100 or so nuns who reside at the parish churches."²³

¹⁹ Kirix *Gnision Orthodoxon*, March, 1984, pp. 102-103, Epistle № 1897 of March 1; Holy Transfiguration Monastery, *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, op. cit., pp. 87-100. My italics (V.M.).

²⁰ Lardas, op. cit., p. 30.

²¹ *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. VII, № 1, Spring, 1975, p. 85.

²² *Greece: A Portrait*, Research and Publicity Center, KEDE ltd., Athens, 1979, p. 159; Bishop Callistus of Diokleia, "Wolves and monks: life on the Holy Mountain today", *Sobornost*, vol. 5, № 2, 1983, p. 62.

²³ "The Present State of the Church of the Old Calendar in Romania", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, September 25 / October 8, 1978.

2. Callistite Coup and Auxentiite Counter-Coup (1979)

In the early 1970s the Florinite Synod under Archbishop Auxentius, appeared to be in a strong position as a result of its union with the ROCOR. At this point, however, Auxentius began ordaining unworthy men and receiving priests from the new calendarists whose reputation was already besmirched.²⁴ As a result, in 1974, following the commandment: “Be not partakers of other men’s sins” (I Timothy 5.2)), Metropolitans Acacius of Diauleia, Gabriel of the Cyclades and Chrysostom (Kiouisis) of Thessalonica stopped attending meetings of the Synod. Chrysostom left because Auxentius wanted to consecrate a bishop for Germany, Marcian, who had been caught red-handed without a rasa in the “red light” district of Athens.²⁵ These three bishops were joined by Bishop Peter of Astoria.²⁶

In June, 1977, Metropolitan Callistus of Corinth, a former spiritual father of Metropolitan Chrysostom, being unhappy with the Matthewites’ break with the Russians and the Matthewites’ rejection of the kheirothesia of 1971 (he was one of the two bishops who had secured the union with the Russians in 1971), broke communion with the Matthewites and joined the Auxentiite Synod.²⁷ However, he was soon to rue his association with Auxentius.

In 1978, a Portuguese priest of the ROCOR, Joao Rocha, unhappy with Archbishop Anthony of Geneva’s refusal to create a diocese in Portugal, applied to join the True Orthodox Church of Greece. To the fury of the ROCOR, Archbishop Auxentius baptised and reordained him on the grounds that he was a convert who had never had Orthodox baptism²⁸ before consecrating him Bishop Gabriel of Lisbon. Metropolitan Callistus had been one of the bishops who had taken part in the consecration of Rocha. However, he claimed that Archbishop Auxentius had lied to him, saying that Rocha had a canonical release from Archbishop Anthony. He apologised to the ROCOR Synod, but was not admitted back into official communion with them. This event, together with the consecration of Acacius of Canada, who had once been a subdeacon of the ROCOR, led the ROCOR to break communion with

²⁴ Lardas, op. cit., p. 20.

²⁵ Bishop Photius of Marathon, personal communication, June 28, 2003. After failing to receive consecration from Auxentius, Marcian left him and joined the Synod of Maximus Valianatos.

²⁶ This act was contested by Fr. Simon of Simonopetra monastery, Mount Athos, in view of Peter’s refusal to sign the encyclical of 1974, after which, according to some sources, he was not only removed as exarch of America, but also as a member of the Synod. However, Metropolitans Chrysostom and Gabriel replied in *I Phoni tis Orthodoxias* that “our Hierarchy, meeting in the totality of its members, decided by a majority vote that the exarchate be taken from Bishop Peter of Astoria, without any decision being made that would forbid us serving with him.”

²⁷ According to Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, he acted thus “in protest over what he considered the Matthewite Synod’s lack of good faith in the effort at reconciliation with the Holy Synod of Archbishop Auxentius” (op. cit., p. 103).

²⁸ Although, according to Lardas (op. cit., p. 20), he had received chrismation in ROCOR.

the Florinites, saying that she would have no communion with either of the Greek Old Calendarist Synods until they united.²⁹

From February 7/20 to 10/23, 1979, Metropolitan Callistus, together with Metropolitan Anthony of Megara, consecrated eight archimandrites to the episcopate, who were, in order of consecration: **Cyprian (Koutsoubas) of Fili and Orope, Maximus (Tsitsbakos) of Magnesia, Callinicus (Sarantopoulos) of Achaia, Matthew (Langis) of Oinoe, Germanus (Athanasiou) of Aiolia, Calliopius (Giannakouloupoulos) of Pentapolis, Mercurius (Kaloskamis) of Knossos and Callinicus (Karaphyllakis) of the Twelve Islands.**³⁰ During the services, the name of Archbishop Auxentius was mentioned; but they had not informed him. It was only on February 14/27 that they called Auxentius and asked for his approval. The "Callistites" claimed that this was only a "temporary and curable deviation from the canonical order" whose aim was the cleansing of the Church from moral vices, especially sodomy, since "men have been raised to the priesthood who are both unworthy and incapable."³¹

On March 21, 1980 the Callistite Synod ordained Holy Chrism. This was hardly the act of a Synod that considered itself a "temporary and curable deviation from the canonical order". Moreover, it entered into communion with another Local Church. Thus in 1979 it received Bishop Silvester as emissary of the True Orthodox Church of Romania, and decided, having examined both the circumstances of the case and the historical/canonical basis, synodically to recognise the validity of the consecration performed by Galaction alone, as of those that followed.³² In April, 1980 the Callistites entered into official communion with the True Orthodox Church of Romania under the presidency of Metropolitan Glycerius.³³

²⁹ The writer has not been able to find any official decree of the whole Russian Synod, but only that of Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, № 6076 October 28 / November 10, 1979, which appears to have been accepted *de facto* by the other Russian bishops. In this connection, it is perhaps significant that Archbishop Anthony was the only Russian hierarch who did not sign the epistle of December 18/31, 1969 recognizing the orders of the Florinites. He continued to bless his priests to concelebrate with new calendarists rather than Old Calendarists when they were in Greece, which led to the defection of Archimandrite Ambrose (Frontier), head of the Paris Mission, to the (Florinite) Greek Old Calendarists in 1986.

³⁰ According to Bishop Macarius of Petra (1973-2003: *Thirty Years of Ecclesiastical Developments: Trials-Captivity-Deliverance*, an unpublished report given to a clergy conference on April 25 / May 8, 2000 (G), Metropolitan Anthony first travelled to Cyprus to ask the Matthewite Metropolitan Epiphanius to participate in the consecrations. He refused.

³¹ For two antithetical accounts of this Synod, see *Phylakes Orthodoxias*, vol. 1, March, 1979, pp. 1-2 and *Agios Kyprianos*, № 122, February, 1979, p. 240 (G), on the one hand, and "Latest developments in the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece", special supplement to *Orthodox Christian Witness*, November, 1984, vol. XVIII, № 12 (*St. Nectarios Educational Series* № 93), Priest-Monk Haralampus (Book Review in *The True Vine*, vol. 6, № 1, 1994, pp. 56-63), and Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, 1998, pp. 102-112, on the other.

³² Bishop Ambrose of Methone, personal communication, 2010.

³³ "Panigyrikon Sulleitourgon Ellinon kai Roumanon G.O.X." (Festive Concelebration of Greek and Romanians of the True Orthodox Christians), *Phylakes Orthodoxias (Guardians of*

According to another version, however, in 1981 Metropolitan Callistus, together with Metropolitan Callinicus of Achaia and Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili went to Romania and performed the act of cheirothesia on the Romanian bishops in order to regularize their position. Later, when the Callistites, Auxentiites and Gerontiites united, this act was recognized by the united Church, as it is by the True Orthodox (Chrysostomite) Synod today.³⁴

The Auxentiites reacted swiftly to the Callistite coup. At 6 p.m. on the same day, February 14/27³⁵, that he was informed of the Callistite consecrations, Archbishop Auxentius met with Metropolitans Gerontius and Callinicus “in order to formulate a position on the sedition brought about by its members, Callistus of Corinth and Anthony of Megara, who illegally severed themselves from the body [of the Holy Synod] and high-handedly undertook to consecrate bishops. Upon discussing this matter at length, on the basis of the holy canons of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ, [the Holy Synod] unanimously decreed and imposed upon the two seditious Metropolitans the punishment of deposition, as the holy canons themselves enjoin. [The Holy Synod decrees] that this decision be released and published straightway in the Athenian press. Since there was no time to convoke the assembly of the clergy, upon deliberation, because of the gravity of the event, it decided this very day to consecrate new bishops for [the Holy Synod’s] restoration and replenishment. Various points of view were exchanged and proposed by all the holy hierarchs...” Then, according to the minutes of the meeting, no less than *ten* new bishops were elected and consecrated in the following order: **Euthymius (Orphanos) of Stavropolis (later Thessalonica), Paisius (Loulourgas) of Gardikion (later of America), Theophilus (Tsirbas) of Christianoupolis (later Patras), Athanasius (Postalas) of Platamon (later Larissa), Maximus (Vallianatos) of the Seven Islands, Stephen (Tsikouras) of Kardamila (later Chios), Paisius (Phinikaliotis) of Aegina, Gerasimus (Vrakas) of Talantion (later Thebes), Athanasius (Haralambidis) of Grevena (later Acharnae) and Justin (Kouloutouros) of Marathon (later Euripus).** Strangely, according to the minutes, while 13 bishops were present at this council, only 8 signed the conciliar encyclical.³⁶ The bishops who were present but apparently did not sign were Gerontius, Callinicus, Stephen, Paisius of Gardikion and Paisius of Aegina.³⁷

Orthodoxy), № 9, November, 1979, pp. 72-74 (G); Bishop Ambrose of Methone, personal communication, December 24, 2009.

³⁴ Bishop Photius of Marathon, personal communication, March 18, 2010.

³⁵ There is some confusion about the exact dates here. In *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, it is said that this meeting took place on February 1/14, and that the Callistites informed Auxentius of the consecrations in a letter also dated February 1/14 (but received on March 3 (n.s.). However, according to other sources, the Callistite consecrations took place between February 7/20 and 10/23, and that Auxentius was informed on February 14/27.

³⁶ *I Phoni tis Orthodoxias*, № 759, March 2, 1979 (G).

³⁷ Another curious feature of the minutes of this meeting is that some of bishops had changed their titles from the list of those present to the list of those who signed the encyclical (*The Struggle against Ecumenism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-109).

But the strangest aspect of this Auxentiite “counter-coup” was the *extraordinary speed* with which it was accomplished. According to the Auxentiites’ own statements, their three senior bishops *on one and the same day*: (1) heard of the Callistite consecrations, (2) met in order to condemn them and depose the Callistites, (3) drew up a list of 10 candidates for the episcopate, (4) assembled the 10 candidates (were they all waiting in the next room?), (5) obtained the permission of the two other members of the Synod, Paisius of Euripus and Acacius of Canada (this is not mentioned in the minutes, but Bishop Macarius assures us it happened), and (6) consecrated them. Another source says that two of the new bishops (Athanasius of Larissa and Stephen of Chios) were consecrated on one and the same day in different churches by different bishops.³⁸ Even the extremely pro-Auxentiite Bishop Macarius admits, with almost British under-statement, “that Archbishop Auxentius did act in a rather hurried manner...”³⁹

Thus the size (8 bishops), unexpectedness and uncanonicity of the Callistite coup was exceeded, if that were possible, by the still greater size (10 bishops), unexpectedness, uncanonicity – and extraordinary speed – of the Auxentiite counter-coup! The only explanation Bishop Macarius can give for this extraordinary speed – “things were in such a wild and unexpected state” – is weak, to say the least. A much more likely explanation is that the Auxentiite coup was not a wild reaction to a totally unexpected event, but a carefully planned reaction to an already foreseen event: the Auxentiites knew of the Callistite coup well in advance, and were therefore able to plan their own counter-coup well in advance, and put it into effect immediately they heard about the Callistite consecrations.

In fact, there are some indications that Auxentius was not totally opposed to the Callistite coup, in that it “freed his hands”⁴⁰ to consecrate those whom *he* wanted as bishops – and of whom he knew that several of his bishops, the future Callistites, would not approve.

On the other hand, one of those newly consecrated by Callistus, Callinicus of the Twelve Islands, claimed that the whole venture was planned by one of the newly-consecrated bishops and his own spiritual father, Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili, without Auxentius’ knowledge.

Metropolitan Callinicus writes: “I was urgently summoned to Athens, knowing nothing about what was going on, and to my great surprise heard my Elder Cyprian tell me to prepare to be consecrated to the episcopate during the vigil service that would begin in a short time. To the appropriate

³⁸ Bishop Photios of Marathon, *Chronicle of the Schism of 1995* (Woking, 2005, unpublished MS) (G).

³⁹ Bishop Macarius, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Bishop Photius, *op. cit.*

question of the writer why he himself (Fr. Cyprian) or this or that hieromonk (I mentioned a few names) should not be consecrated, I learned that Fr. Cyprian as well as the other hieromonks I mentioned had already been consecrated, and that Archbishop Auxentius was aware of the consecrations!"⁴¹

However, when all the bishops were in the sanctuary taking off their vestments, Cyprian said to one of them, "Now, how are we going to explain all this to Archbishop Auxentius?" Callinicus overheard this and realised that his spiritual father had lied to him. He believed that the whole venture was planned by Cyprian, and that he had deceived Callistus and Anthony into believing that Auxentius had given his permission.⁴²

However, the Cyprianite Bishop Ambrose of Methone contradicts this story: "Having followed personally all the events in question, I can assure you that Metropolitan Cyprian had absolutely nothing to do with the planning of the consecrations; indeed, though he had very friendly relations with Metropolitan Callistus, he had up to that time never met Metropolitan Anthony. He consulted the brotherhood, and his confessor, Archimandrite Ambroise (Frontier), before accepting the proposition of the two metropolitans. He was in fact opposed to some of the candidates proposed, but was not in a position to veto them."⁴³

While it seems very unlikely that Auxentius gave his permission (here we agree with Bishop Macarius), it is equally unlikely, for the reasons given above, that Auxentius did not know what was going to happen. Probably both sides knew already, before their split, that the candidates to the episcopate of the one side would not be acceptable to the other; so *both* sides prepared coups.

From a tactical point of view, Callistus and Anthony made a serious mistake when they "jumped the gun" and carried out their consecrations first. For their admittedly uncanonical act, however good the motivation (the cleansing of the Church from the tares sown by Auxentius), was made to appear as black as night, and the storm it raised covered the still more daring and uncanonical counter-coup of the Auxentiites...

"Both parties in this dispute," writes George Lardas, "appealed to the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA seeking recognition and bringing complaints against the other group. In a decision dated 28 April / 11 May 1979 the Russian Synod resolved not to involve itself in the internal affairs of a sister

⁴¹ Metropolitan Callinicus of the Twelve Islands, in Bishop Macarius, *op. cit.* The Cyprianites continue to maintain that Archbishop Auxentius knew of and blessed the consecrations.

⁴² Bishop Gregory of Denver, Re: Re[2]: [paradosis] Kallistos Metropolitan of Korinthos, orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com, 31/07/02.

⁴³ Bishop Ambrose, personal communication, November 10, 2005.

church, in view of the fact that such a judgement is not within its competence, and to encourage both sides in the dispute to come to terms. The decision stated that peace could not come about unless all those unwisely consecrated by Auxentius and others were removed, and that these consecrations were directly responsible for harming relations with the ROCA..."⁴⁴

Metropolitans Acacius and Chrysostom disapproved of both the coup and the counter-coup, but were especially scathing about Auxentius' new consecrations. As they wrote: "The 'three hierarchs' (the archbishop and the metropolitans of Piraeus and Phthiotis) blatantly and scandalously nourished for years the ground for the creation of suitable conditions for the consecration... of people who do not have good external or internal image... You removed Synodal hierarchs for no other reason than that they sought moral and legal order in the Church administration and the cleansing of the clergy... You displayed unbelievable vengefulness against those hierarchs who rebuked your iniquities... You consecrated without any examination the uneducated, the elderly and paralysed and other who were weighed down by accusation concerning moral and other crimes of which they had been officially charge in the Holy Synod... We judge your act to be worse than the uncanonical act of Bishops Anthony and Callistus..." These words were probably aimed especially at Bishop Euthymius, as we shall see later...

Notwithstanding this fierce rebuke, the Auxentiite Synod made several approaches to Metropolitans Acacius and Chrysostom. But the latter resisted these blandishments, believing that their concerns for the cleansing of the Church had not been addressed. However, on January 28, 1980, the two metropolitans addressed a letter to Auxentius entitled "The Correct Road that will lead out of the Dead-End", in which they suggested that ROCOR be asked to act as mediators between the "Callistites" and "Auxentiites". And they put forward a second suggestion in case this first one was rejected: "that all the bishops should abdicate. We shall all live private lives from now on... Three hieromonks known for their morality, decency and faith, preferably from Mount Athos, should be consecrated as bishops to feed and administer the Church by those bishops who took no part in the coups. In this way all the divisions, personality struggles and counter-accusations will cease, and the troubled people of the True Orthodox Christians will be united... We personally, for the sake of the Church and the spiritual unity of the flock, will be the first to give our places over to the new spiritual leaders and live private lives. We pray that all the others will follow us..."⁴⁵

It is a pity that neither of these suggestions was acted upon. Instead, on September 3/16, the Auxentiite Synod removed Metropolitan Chrysostom from his see in Thessalonica and on October 23 raised Bishop Euthymius to the rank of metropolitan to take his place. However, the majority of the flock

⁴⁴ Lardas, op. cit., p. 21.

⁴⁵ Metropolitans Acacius and Chrysostom, in Bishop Macarius, op. cit.

in Northern Greece continued to remain faithful to Metropolitan Chrysostom; and on November 23 tens of priests from Katerini to Messoropi to Sidirokastron left the Auxentiites and joined Metropolitan Chrysostom.⁴⁶

In 1981 the Auxentiite Synod decided to remove the penalties it had imposed on Metropolitans Acacius and Chrysostom. Then, in the next year, it reimposed them. Then the Synod itself split, with one part remaining with Auxentius and the other following the leadership of Metropolitan Gerontius of Piraeus. Bishop Macarius, who likes to dwell in detail on all the other divisions, passed this one over very hastily: "In the meantime a division broke out, the Lord alone knows for what reason He allowed it, in the canonical [according to Macarius: Auxentiite] Holy Synod. I don't think it is necessary to spend any more time on this short division..."⁴⁷

However, this "short division" related to an issue that was to become increasingly important – that of the *legal corporations*. Bishop Photius writes: "In the beginning, there existed the corporation 'The General Fund of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece', which had control of about 25 churches. It was under the control of the Auxentiite-Gerontians, who in the period 1971-1976 had removed from the board the four hierarchs – Acacius, Auxentius, Peter and Gabriel – who disagreed with them. In 1979, with the coup, the Auxentiite-Gerontians removed from the 'General Fund' all those who had taken part in the coup. Thus **Callistus of Corinth, Anthony of Megara, Cyprian of Orope, Maximus of Magnesia, Callinicus of Achaia, Matthew of Oinoe, Germanus of Aiolia, Calliopius of Pentapolis, Mercurius of Knossus and Callinicus of the Twelve Islands** were removed from the board of the 'General Fund' and founded the corporation 'the Greek Church of the True Orthodox Christians'. More accurately: they were inscribed into an already existing corporation having the same name, which had been founded by Calliopius many years before."⁴⁸

"In June, 1983, the hierarchs Maximus of Magnesia (from now on 'of Demetrias') and Callinicus of the Twelve Islands left the Antonio-Callistites and joined the Auxentiites. They were received through cheirothesia (whose content must have been a simple prayer of forgiveness).⁴⁹ The same happened later with Germanus of Aiolia. These three were removed from the corporation 'The Greek Church of the True Orthodox Christians'. The Auxentiite-Gerontians did not inscribe them into the 'General Fund'.

⁴⁶ Bishop Macarius, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Bishop Macarius, op. cit.

⁴⁸ In 1961, according to Bishop Macarius, op. cit. (V.M.)

⁴⁹ This I heard from the two hierarchs Maximus and Callinicus themselves (Bishop Photius).

“In the same year a struggle broke out between the Auxentiites and Gerontius for the control of the ‘General Fund’. Gerontius emerged as the winner from the struggle...”⁵⁰

The Callistites also began to split up, over the old question whether the new calendarists had valid sacraments or not. As we have seen, in 1983 three metropolitans – Maximus, Germanus and Callinicus of the Twelve Islands – joined Auxentius. In 1984 four other metropolitans – Anthony, Callinicus of Achaia, Matthew and Calliopius – joined the Gerontians. Meanwhile, Metropolitan Cyprian was giving communion to new calendarists on the grounds that the new calendarist church was “not yet condemned”⁵¹ and therefore still the “Mother Church” of the Old Calendarists. This disillusioned Metropolitan Callistus, who had always maintained the official view of the True Orthodox Church of Greece since 1935 that the new calendarists had no sacraments. So he retired to his monastery, where he died in isolation in 1986...⁵²

In June, 1984, Auxentius consecrated a second Portuguese bishop, James, without the knowledge of part of his Synod. “Auxentius had promised his clergy that he would call them and listen to their opinions before any episcopal consecration. Therefore, in order to bring about this consecration, he summoned a few of them (those whom he wanted) and decided, in spite of the reasonable objections of two or three clerics, that Hieromonk James should be elected as assistant bishop to Bishop Gabriel of Lisbon.”⁵³

Not content with this uncanonicity, Auxentius proceeded to another. “Both Auxentius and Gabriel had promised before God, the hierarchs and the priests present at that time that James would remain as Gabriel’s assistant, so that he would not be able to take part in the consecration of another bishop with Gabriel. However, in October, 1984, we were informed to our astonishment that the two Portuguese ‘bishops’ had consecrated yet another Portuguese bishop and two Italians, with the blessings and prayers of

⁵⁰ Bishop Photius, *op. cit.*

⁵¹ The evidence is in *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-112. In recent years, the practice of the Cyprianites appears to have become somewhat stricter.

⁵² However, the Cyprianite Bishop Ambrose of Methone writes: “The retirement of Metropolitan Callistus had nothing to do with our position on the admission of new calendarists to the Mysteries (in much less liberal than that of many others, e.g. Metropolitan Anthony). It was in fact occasioned by (a) the behaviour of Metropolitan Callinicus of Achaia, who refused to leave the convent in Athikia and go to his own diocese, despite repeated promises, and finally more or less expelled Metropolitan Callistus from the Convent he had himself founded, and (b) the unanimous outrage of all the members of the Synod over a pamphlet expressing the most extreme ‘Matthaist’ positions, which Callistus published and distributed without their knowledge. Having been expelled from his own home, he was taken in by his brother, Archimandrite Nicodemus, and live the rest of his days as a guest at the convent of Agia Marini, Sofikon” (personal communication, November 10, 2005).

⁵³ *Orthodoxos Khristianikos Agon*, № 3, November, 1985, p. 4 (G).

Auxentius,"⁵⁴ and the participation of Metropolitans Gerasimus, Maximus, Germanus and Athanasius of Larissa. One of the new bishops, the Italian Gabriel of Aquileia, turned out to be a fervent supporter, if not worshipper, of the fascist dictator Mussolini!⁵⁵ Moreover, Auxentius – acting *completely on his own* this time, now gave this new group a "Tome of Autonomy"⁵⁶

In 1987 this newly "autonomous" Church split up, with Metropolitan Eulogius of Milan being received into the Polish Orthodox Church.⁵⁷

In 1990 Metropolitan Gabriel followed, claiming that he had not known that Auxentius confessed that the new calendarists had no grace, which, he said, was a "heretical opinion".⁵⁸ He took with him two bishops, 60 parishes

⁵⁴ *Orthodoxos Khristianikos Agon*, № 3, November, 1985, p. 4 (G).

⁵⁵ "A few months ago, moreover, a Greek student from Rome sent us a letter... containing eight pages from the distinguished Italian periodical *Oggi* of January 9, 1985, which refers to one of the two Italian bishops, Gregory [Baccolini] of Aquileia, who was consecrated by the oath-breaking 'Bishop' Gabriel of Lisbon. It is worthy of note that Auxentius did not forget to weave an encomium for the Portuguese and Italian bishops so as to pacify his devoted clerics, who had themselves been troubled by the startling 'consecrations' of the European 'bishops' of the True Orthodox Christians.

"In the interview which Gregory gave to the Italian periodical he says that at the age of 14 he left Catholicism so as to become a member of the Methodist Church in Bologna.

"He became a Protestant after having converted his parents, and then a little later he returned to the Papists.

"In 1933 he joined the monastic order of Galucco and then became a Benedictine monk in Valombrosa in Florence. In 1940 he became a 'priest' of the Papists and in 1944 joined the Fascists. He met Mussolini and became one of his closest co-workers. A terrible impression was created by Gregory's confession that he worships Mussolini as God and that Mussolini is now his spiritual leader!!

"After the death of Mussolini Gregory joined the Russian Church and on September 22, 1984, was 'consecrated' 'Bishop' of Aquileia by Gabriel." (*Orthodoxos Khristianikos Agon*, No. 3, November, 1985, p. 4 (G)).

The Cyprianite Bishop Ambrose of Methone (personal communication) has defended Bishop Gregory, saying that he never "worshipped Mussolini as God", but was devoted to the memory of the Duce.

⁵⁶ *Orthodoxos Khristianikos Agon*, № 3, November, 1985, p. 3; February, 1987, p. 8 (G). It appears that the "Tome of autonomy" was signed by Auxentius alone, who wrote: "I, Auxentius I, by God's grace Archbishop of Athens and all Greece, acting within the boundaries of our territory of Western Europe (which I created on June 7, 1978) have decided to give permission to the Metropolis of Portugal, Spain and Western Europe to govern itself, having as their principal headquarters the God-protected metropolitan city of Lisbon... This metropolis will be under the direction of the GOC of Greece... P.S. The above Metropolitan with his vicar bishops is obliged to present himself to the Hierarchical Synod each October."

⁵⁷ Eulogius is considered to be a Freemason by Stavros Markou ([paradosis] Milan Freemasons", orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com, 05/09/01; <http://www.geocities.com/Paris/8919/html/ortho/parasyn.htm>.) However, Bishop Ambrose of Methone writes that he always denied this (personal communication, November 10, 2005).

⁵⁸ See his autobiography, *Funcacao Apostolica da Igreja Ortodoxa em Portugal*, Lisbon, 1998 (in Portuguese). Parts translated by Ivan Moody orthodox-tradition@egroups.com, 28 July, 2000.

and about 80,000 laity. Soon this Portuguese church was practising a particularly strange form of ecumenism.⁵⁹

After Gabriel's death, Bishop Joao was elected metropolitan and confirmed by the Polish Synod. Subsequently, the Polish Church, alarmed by the eccentric practices of the Portuguese diocese, excised it from their communion.⁶⁰

In 1993 the "Synod of Milan" joined the "Patriarchate of Kiev" led by the KGB agent Philaret Denisenko, and was given yet another "Tome of Autonomy" by them...⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ivan Moody ("Scandal for Orthodoxy in Portugal", ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU (Orthodox Christianity) (01.02.2000)) tells us to what depths this new Portuguese Church has fallen: "Tomorrow, Wednesday 2nd January 2000, there will be inaugurated a new basilica in Torres Novas, north of Lisbon. In attendance will be, according the information we have received, bishops from the Churches of Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and from OCA.... The true leader of this sect is a lady known as "A Santa da Ladeira", who was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church many years ago and subjected in the early 1970s to psychological examination which found her to be profoundly schizophrenic. Charges of fraud were also to be brought against her but this did not happen with the chaos of the 1974 Revolution. She was subsequently adopted by Joao Gabriel and later elevated to be an "abbess", though she is married, with results that may be seen in a series of photographs I have in my possession and which have been forwarded to various competent authorities. They show: 1. This lady seated on a special throne in the church; 2. An "Orthodox" bishop holding up a RC host in a monstrance, this being adored by the "Santa" and the other clergy; 3. The "Santa", in the regalia of an abbess, with her husband and an "Orthodox" bishop in the church; 4. An earlier photograph showing her as the "reincarnation" of the Mother of God; 5. The "Santa" kissing a RC host, behind which appears a strange stain on the photograph, apparently not present on the film, which is claimed to be the bread of the Orthodox Eucharist and therefore to represent the union of the Roman and Orthodox Churches, of which the new basilica is symbolic; 6. Earlier photographs of her with stigmata - this was the time at which she was held for fraud and psychological examination. On the front of the basilica is an engraved colour picture of the "Santa" and her husband. There can be no doubt as to the link between these "Orthodox" and this offensive phenomenon. All this will be widely covered in the newspapers and on the television. Whatever political or other factors have prevented the hierarchies of the various churches from realizing the gravity of this situation, it seems to us, the Greek Orthodox here, that we have been abandoned. My priest, having spent the whole of yesterday telephoning to the Embassies of the various countries, is exhausted and depressed. Is this, he is asking, the Orthodoxy I have spent my life here trying to protect and promote?"

⁶⁰ Bishop Ambrose of Methone (personal communication, November 10, 2005).

⁶¹ See *Kirix Gnision Orthodoxon*, 42, № 236, September, 1997, p. 228 (G).

3. The Union of 1985 and the Tsakos Affair

By this time the Church was disintegrating so fast, and with such evidently terrible consequences for all the faithful, that the Auxentiite and Gerontian Synods (which now included most of the defunct Callistite Synod) decided to cast aside their differences and unite. And so on January 4/17, 1985, they came together and agreed: (1) to recognise the consecrations of 1979 on both sides, (2) to remove the penalties they had placed on each other, and (3) to remove the accusations they had cast against each other.

The reunited Synod of 17 bishops comprised: **Archbishop Auxentius and Metropolitans Gerontius of Piraeus, Callinicus of Phthiotis, Anthony of Megara, Maximus of Demetrias, Callinicus of Corinth, Matthew of Oinoe, Germanus of Aitolia, Calliopius of Pentapolis, Callinicus of the Dodecanese, Euthymius of Thessalonica, Athanasius of Larissa, Stephen of Chios, Maximus of Cephalonia, Athanasius of Acharnae, Gerasimus of Thebes and Justin of Euripus.**⁶²

It should be noted that the original “rebels” against the Auxentiite Synod, Metropolitans Acacius, Chrysostom, Gabriel and Peter, still refrained from joining this union, fearing that it simply covered up crimes, and would soon disintegrate. They were soon to be proved right...

More surprising, even Bishop Macarius criticises the union, saying: “Immeasurable grief takes hold of my heart”. Why? Because the recognition of the consecrations on both sides meant that the small group of formerly Callistite bishops whom he blames for subsequent events – especially Callinicus of Achaia and Calliopius of Pentapolis – and who had not, unlike the other penitent Callistite bishops, received cheirothesia from Auxentius, were not forced to repent of having been schismatics and receive cheirothesia.

But Bishop Macarius fails to see that if, as he believes, Auxentius was essentially blameless and all those who broke communion from him thereby became schismatics, then the group of Gerontian bishops to which he belonged (and belongs) – Callinicus of Phthiotis and Euthymius of Thessalonica – *also became schismatics* when they broke away from Auxentius in 1983, *and should also have received cheirothesia*. In fact, it could be argued that insofar as the Gerontians broke away from Auxentius over the question of who controlled certain church buildings – in other words, over “filthy lucre” (I Peter 5.2), their motivation was worse than that of the Callistites, and they deserved a more severe penalty.

So, as the English proverb goes: “Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones...”

⁶² “Enkyklios”, *Ekklesiastiki Paradosis*, January-February, 1985, № 20, pp. 262-263 (G).

In the opinion of the present writer, however, *all* sides - Callistites, Auxentiites and Gerontians - were guilty in different ways and to different degrees, and so union between them was possible without hypocrisy only on the basis of mutual forgiveness of sins, recognition of orders and removal of all bans. Or if, as Bishop Macarius asserts, this was impossible on canonical grounds, then, as the four metropolitans suggested, the only solution was for all 17 bishops to retire...

In any case, the union collapsed when it emerged that Auxentius had secretly consecrated Dorotheus Tsakos, a former new calendarist priest who had been defrocked by the new calendarists in 1968 for homosexuality. Tsakos had then twice been consecrated "metropolitan" by Old Calendarist episcopi vagantes. In July, 1985 he began to show priests an ordination certificate purporting to prove that he had been consecrated "Metropolitan of Sparta and all the Peloponnese". The priests were troubled to see that the signatures of Archbishop Auxentius and Metropolitan Gerasimus of Thebes were on this document. Tsakos claimed that he had been consecrated by Metropolitans Gerasimus of Thebes and Maximus of Cephalonia on the orders of Archbishop Auxentius; but he refused to reveal (by covering the relevant part of the ordination certificate with his hand) on what date the consecration had taken place.

On July 6/19, 1985, the Holy Synod met to discuss the matter. The three metropolitans involved denied that the consecration had taken place. Auxentius admitted that his signature might be genuine because he did sometimes sign blank ordination certificates to be filled in later (a revealing confession in itself!). But he denied - and always continued to deny - that he knew anything at all about the consecration of Tsakos. However, immediately after this meeting of the Synod, Gerasimus of Thebes confessed that the consecration had taken place as Tsakos had stated, and signed a written affidavit to that effect in the presence of eight other bishops.

Fr. Basil of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, has tried to minimise the significance of this confession by pointing out that Gerasimus twice confessed that he had participated in the consecration and twice denied it. (In his last deposition before a Greek court of justice, in January, 1986, he confirmed under oath that the consecration had taken place on July 5, 1985.) Moreover, Gerasimus and the other witnesses were inconsistent in the date they ascribe to the event. Therefore, writes Fr. Basil, "what is the value of such depositions, made by false witnesses who contradict and refute themselves?... Which one of all these written depositions says the truth? When did the consecration take place? In 1983? In 1984? In 1985? We admit that we see no

possibility of finding any clue. In any case, it seems that the investigative committee 'probably' had the same difficulty."⁶³

Holy Transfiguration Monastery asks: "What is the validity of such depositions, made by witnesses who contradict and refute themselves?"⁶⁴ But is it not usual for a criminal caught red-handed in a criminal act to lie and then to change his testimony when his lie is exposed? In any case, why should Gerasimus have admitted to the crime even once if he was innocent? Moreover, there were other eyewitness testimonies confirming Gerasimus' guilt. One of these was the Reader Pericles Tsakiris, whom the translator of Fr. Basil's letter rather furtively and obliquely seeks to blacken in a footnote.

As a result of their inquiries the committee came to the following conclusions, which any unprejudiced observer must agree with: (a) the consecration of Dorotheus Tsakos did take place, at the hands of Metropolitans Maximus and Gerasimus, and on the orders of Archbishop Auxentius; (b) the date was probably after Pascha, 1985 (which conclusion was confirmed by Gerasimus' last written deposition); and (c) the participants in the event, having been sworn to secrecy by Auxentius, lied to the Holy Synod and for fairly obvious reasons tried to obscure the date of the event.

Fr. Basil goes on to claim that before the investigative committee could complete its work, the seventeen bishops who eventually defrocked Auxentius had created a schism. Therefore, he says, even if the consecration did take place, it is not Auxentius but his accusers who are the guilty ones!

This is *the exact opposite of the truth!* The fact of the matter is that in September, while the investigating committee was still carrying out its work and interrogating witnesses (as far as they could, for Auxentius and Maximus refused to cooperate in any way), a group of Auxentiite bishops decided to declare the affair of Dorotheus Tsakos "closed", regarding "every attempt to revive it as anticanonical and an attack on the Church". They also declared that the invitation to the metropolitans to give evidence to the investigating committee the next day was "anticanonical", "parasynagogical" and "counter to the will of the Holy Synod" - although the Holy Synod had appointed the investigating committee only two months before!

It is interesting to note which bishops signed this astonishing attempt to silence the work of the investigating committee: the oath-breaking and Mussolini-loving Portuguese and Italians Gabriel, James, Eulogius, Theodore and Gregory, *who were not even members of the Holy Synod*; Auxentius, Athanasius, Maximus and Germanus, *who had participated in the uncanonical*

⁶³ "Excerpts from a Response by Fr. Basil of Holy Transfiguration Monastery to a Bishop of the Kiouisis group, Kallinikos of the Dodecanese, concerning the 'consecration' of Dorotheos Tsakos" (MS), pp. 1, 2.

⁶⁴ *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, *op. cit.*, p. 121, footnote.

consecrations of the Portuguese and Italians and (in the case of Auxentius and Maximus) Tsakos; and the Americans Paisius and Vincent, who had been closely associated with Auxentius in the early 1980s (for example, in the Auxentiite union with the Free Serbs in 1982) and later joined the new calendarists.

In other words, these bishops who were now trying to stop the work of the investigating committee were in essence the same group of bishops who had been associates of Auxentius before the union of January, 1985, and had caused such damage to the Church before that date.

In spite of this provocation, the investigating bishops patiently continued their work. They invited Auxentius to appear before the Synod three times, but he refused. Then Auxentius, anticipating the announcement of his deposition, formed an "anti-Synod" and called on the president of the Synodical Court, Metropolitan Gerontius, to appear before a five-member pseudo-Synod to answer a false charge of having married two persons of the same sex in 1981! Gerontius convincingly refuted this charge (which has never, to our knowledge, been brought up again). Finally, on October 22, Auxentius, Maximus, Gerasimus, Athanasius and Germanus were deposed for "consecrating" Tsakos, for lying to the Synod and for creating a schism.⁶⁵

Even Bishop Macarius admits that Auxentius' actions in this period were indefensible, but characteristically chooses not to go into detail on a matter that clearly embarrasses him, writing that Auxentius and the bishops that still remained loyal to him "undertook a series of hurried and uncanonical defrockings of many of our hierarchs."⁶⁶

The reason he is so reticent is that one of the hierarchs defrocked by Auxentius was Macarius' fellow-worker, Metropolitan Euthymius of Thessalonica, whom Auxentius accused of initiating his trial and deposition in order to avoid investigation of moral charges against himself: "while an order was given that a judicial examination should be put into operation in order to elucidate the accusations against the moral situation of Metropolitan Euthymius Orphanos, they turned round and incompetently initiated an examination against us to see whether we had indeed proceeded to nominate and consecrate Archimandrite Dorotheus Tsakos as Metropolitan of Patras..." Auxentius defrocked Euthymius on October 31, 1985 (№ 2137/18) for "factionalism, conspiracy and rebellion". Also defrocked was his elder, Iakovos Papadelis, "on the basis of accusations of moral falls against him by Athonites".⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Ekklesiastiki Paradosis*, 20, January-February, 1985, pp. 261-263; "Eis tas Epalxeis!", *I Phoni tis Orthodoxias*, №№ 802-803, November-December, 1985, pp. 1-33; *Orthodoxos Khristianikos Agon*, November, 1985, p. 3, February, 1987, p. 8 (G).

⁶⁶ Bishop Macarius, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷ *I Phoni tis Orthodoxias*, № 921, March-April, 2003, p. 15 (G).

And yet in spite of this Bishop Macarius vehemently rejects the validity of Auxentius' defrocking by - among others - his own party of Gerontius, Callinicus and Euthymius!

And some years later, in 1997, his Synod (headed at that time by Callinicus of Phthiotis and now, in 2005, by Macarius himself) declared that "the altercations during the year 1985 between the blessedly reposed hierarchs Auxentius and Gerontius arose from the plots of third parties and... the verdicts of both are uncanonical and invalid... It is understood that we recognize and also bless all the priestly services and other sacred ecclesiastical actions of the aforementioned Archbishop and Metropolitans, except the ordinations which they performed after 1985 to the present, which we reserve the right to examine upon the petition of the ordinands."⁶⁸

However, this makes no sense. If, as Bishop Macarius asserts time and time again, Auxentius was the last true archbishop of the True Orthodox Christians (before himself), and he remained true throughout the stormy period 1979-1985, and his defrocking in 1985 was uncanonical, then he (Macarius) condemns himself and his own party on at least three counts: (1) for breaking with Auxentius over the issue of the legal corporation in 1983, (2) for unjustly defrocking Auxentius for the consecration of Tsakos, and (3) for remaining in communion with Euthymius after Auxentius defrocked him and his elder. But Macarius wishes to exonerate *both* Auxentius (although he admits that his actions in 1985 were wrong) *and* himself and his party - while laying all the blame on mysterious "plots of third parties".

Returning now to Fr. Basil's defence of Auxentius, he seeks to demonstrate, from the writings of the Holy Fathers and the history of the Church, that Orthodox Christians are not allowed to break communion with their lawful ecclesiastical authority unless that authority has proclaimed heresy, and even if that authority has committed flagrant crimes. This is true - so long as the possibility of bringing the sinning archbishop to trial exists. But Fr. Basil appears to reject the possibility that metropolitans can bring their archbishop to trial for any other charge than heresy. In this opinion he is mistaken. There have been many occasions in Church history when archbishops have been defrocked by their fellow bishops in accordance with the Holy Canons for transgressions other than heresy. If such were not the case, then as long as the archbishop did not proclaim heresy he could commit murder and adultery and remain first-hierarchy of the Church - which is halfway to Papism.

⁶⁸ Protocol № 73, decision of April 1/14, 1997, in *Orthodoxon Paterikon Salpisma*, March-April, 1997 (G).

4. A New Florinite Archbishop

In November, 1985, Metropolitan Gerontius approached Metropolitan Chrysostom and invited him to join the Synod that had been purged of Auxentius and his supporters. Chrysostom replied in a conciliatory manner, thanked Gerontius “for your recognition of the righteousness our (four bishops’) break of relations with the Synod”, but insisted on the fulfilment of two conditions before he could join: “the removal of Bishop Euthymius from my diocese” and the seeking of the written opinion of theologians on the degree to which “economy” (condescension) could be employed with regard to the earlier canonical questions that had not yet been resolved. This was necessary “in view of the extremely detailed deadlock into which our Holy Struggle has come...”

The opinions of six theologians (three priests and three laymen) were sought. They said that the four bishops – Acacius, Chrysostom, Gabriel and Peter – could join the Synod led by Gerontius only if certain conditions were fulfilled. One of these was that the new president of the Synod should not be any bishop who had been involved in the Callistite coup or Auxentiite counter-coup of 1979. This was an eminently reasonable condition, since all of the participants in the coup and counter-coup of 1979, not to mention the Gerontian schism of 1983, had besmirched their reputations, and would not have had the authority to unite the Church for long. The new archbishop could only come from one of the four bishops – Acacius, Chrysostom, Gabriel and Peter – who had taken no part in these events, but who had pointed out the need for a cleansing of the Church from the tares sown by Auxentius – a need that was now, belatedly, recognised by all.

Of these four bishops, Metropolitan Peter, as living in America and as having rejected the encyclical of 1974, was clearly not a candidate. And he joined the Synod first. Thereby, it must be admitted, he created another problem for the new archbishop, whoever he might be, in that he would have to see that Metropolitan Peter conformed to the 1974 encyclical...⁶⁹

Finally, in January, 1986, Metropolitan Chrysostom joined, and was elected archbishop by ten votes to six. The election was hailed by all the bishops, clergy and people.⁷⁰ It will be remembered that Chrysostom had been elected as second candidate for the episcopate (after Acacius Pappas) as far back as the pan-clerical congress in April, 1957⁷¹, so there was a certain historical justice in his being elected archbishop now, some thirty years later.

⁶⁹ In the spring of 1985, in his monastery in Paiania, Metropolitan Acacius told the present writer that he was deeply unhappy that Metropolitan Peter gave communion to new calendarists in his Astoria diocese.

⁷⁰ “Kliros kai laos me ieran sigkinisin kai pneumatikin agalliasin khairtizoun tin eklogin tou neou arkhiepiskopou”, *Orthodoxos Khristianikos Agon*, 4, January, 1986, p. 4 (G).

⁷¹ *Khristianiki Poreia*, March, 1992, p. 8 (G).

However, Bishop Macarius writes: "My conscience forces me to condemn the election of Chrysostom as archbishop as totally uncanonical because, first and foremost, it was made as a result of the uncanonical defrocking of the canonical Archbishop Auxentius, whose throne Chrysostom seized while the archbishop still alive, making him an adulterous free-rider..."

Macarius here fails to mention the rather important fact that Chrysostom took no part in the defrocking of Auxentius. That was done by Gerontius and his faction - that is, Bishop Macarius' own faction! As for "seizing" the throne, what kind of "seizure" are we talking about when Chrysostom in no way imposed himself, but was first invited by Gerontius to join the Synod, and was then elected in a perfectly canonical election?! So if Chrysostom was an "adulterous free-rider", the Gerontian bishops were those who prepared the bedchamber and even invited the lovers into it!

"Secondly," continues Bishop Macarius, "during the proceedings of the election, there were present two Metropolitans of Thessalonica, Chrysostom and Euthymius, and both of them voted as such, something that is totally contrary to the Holy Canons."⁷²

This is a more just accusation. Nevertheless, it may well be asked: whose fault was it that there were two metropolitans of Thessalonica? Chrysostom had been made metropolitan of the city much earlier than Euthymius, and the Gerontians, as Chrysostom noted, had recognised the justice of his struggle against corruption in the Church. Clearly, therefore, if one of the two metropolitans was an adulterer bishop, it was Euthymius!

The issue was the more serious in that the flock in Thessalonica was divided, with one part refusing to accept Euthymius because of his reputation - throughout Greece - as a homosexual. It was agreed that the dissident parishes in Thessalonica should be allowed to commemorate Chrysostom for one year while they got used to the idea that they were now in communion with Euthymius. However, when the year was over, they had still not got used to it, and refused to commemorate Euthymius. Clearly, the only solution to the problem was a canonical ecclesiastical trial of Euthymius....

Almost immediately the problem of the legal corporations raised its head again. 8 hierarchs - **Gerontius of Piraeus, Callinicus of Phthiotis, Euthymius of Thessalonica, Stephen of Chios, Athanasius of Acharnae, Justin of Euripus, Paisius of America and Vincent of Aulona** (the last two joined a little later) - belonged to the board of the corporation "General Fund of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece". 4 hierarchs - **Anthony of Megara, Callinicus of Achaia, Matthew of Oinoe and Calliopius of Pentapolis** - belonged to the board of the corporation "Greek Church of the

⁷² Bishop Macarius, *op. cit.*

True Orthodox Christians". The remaining 4 hierarchs - **Archbishop Chrysostom, Peter of Astoria, Maximus of Magnesia and Callinicus of the Twelve Islands** - belonged to the board of no corporation.

Overtures towards a union of the two corporations were made by the board of the "Greek Church of the True Orthodox Christians" to the board of the "General Fund" - but these overtures were rejected.⁷³

The outlines of the schism of 1995 can already be discerned in these figures. Clearly, the faction headed by Metropolitan Gerontius, and including the notorious Euthymius, could control the Synod if it wanted, for it had half the votes in the Synod and control of many more churches than the others through the "General Fund".

Much would depend on how Metropolitan Gerontius used his power. And much would depend on how the other members of his faction would act when he died and they ceased to have the majority in the Synod. Metropolitan Gerontius died in 1994, on the eve of the schism...

⁷³ Bishop Photius, *op. cit.*

5. The Ecclesiology of Metropolitan Cyprian

As we have seen, in 1984 Metropolitan Cyprian, the last heir of the Callistite coup d'état, and the only one who did not in one way or another repent of it, formed a new "Synod of Resistors" with Metropolitan Giovanni of Sardinia, who had been consecrated by the Callistites in 1982.⁷⁴

Cyprian's position was based on a new ecclesiology which is worth examining. "The Orthodox Church as a whole is unerring and invincible," he writes. "It is possible, however, for Christians and for local Churches to fall in faith; that is to say, it is possible for them to suffer spiritually and for one to see a certain 'siege of illness within the body of the Church', as St. John Chrysostom says. It is possible for Christians to separate and for 'divisions' to appear within the Church, as the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians. It is possible for local Churches into fall into heresy, as occurred in the ancient Orthodox Church of the West, which fell into the heresies of Papism and Protestantism and finally into the pan-heresy of ecumenism.

"Spiritual maladies within the Church are cured either by repentance or by judgement. Until the judgement or expulsion of a heretic, schismatic, or sinner - either by the Church or, in a more direct manner, by the Lord -, the opinion of a believer cannot be a substitute for the sentence of the Church and of her Lord, Jesus Christ, even if the resolution of a situation be prolonged until the Second Coming. As is well known, in the Scriptures, the Church is likened to a field replete with 'wheat' and 'tares', in accordance with Divine and ecclesiastical economy. Sinners and those who err in correctly understanding the Faith, yet who have not been sentenced by ecclesiastical action, are simply considered ailing members of the Church. The Mysteries [sacraments] of these unsentenced members are valid as such, according to the Seventh Ecumenical Council, as, for example, the President of the Synod, St. Tarasios, remarks: '[their] Ordination' 'is from God'. By contrast, should expositors of heresy punish the Orthodox opposed to them, these punishments are ecclesiastically invalid and groundless 'from the time their preaching began' (i.e., from the moment they began preaching heresy), as St. Celestine of Rome wrote and as the Third Ecumenical Synod agreed."⁷⁵

⁷⁴ It is sometimes asserted that the Italian parishes under Giovanni voluntarily left the Moscow Patriarchate and joined the Nestorians before returning to the Old Calendarists. The present writer has heard a different story from the Italians' bishop when they were in the MP, Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh, who said that he had been forced to expel the Italians following a phone call from Metropolitan Juvenal of Tula. Juvenal said that the MP was having negotiations with the Vatican over the uniate question in the Ukraine, and the Pope had laid it down as a condition for the success of the negotiations that there should be no MP parishes in Italy. So the Italians were *expelled*

⁷⁵ Metropolitan Cyprian, "Ai Ekklesiologikai Theseis Mas", *Agios Kyprianos*, November, 1984, 191 (G). Quotations from the translation in Patrick G. Barker, *A Study of the Ecclesiology of Resistance*, Etna, Ca.: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1994, pp. 57-58.

When a bishop preaches heresy “publicly” “and bareheaded in the Church”, continues the metropolitan, the Orthodox Christians should immediately separate themselves from him, in accordance with the 31st Apostolic Canon and the 15th Canon of the First-and-Second Synod of Constantinople. Such action by the Orthodox does not introduce schism, but rather serves to protect the Church from schisms and divisions. “He who preaches heresy or he who brings innovation into the Church divides her and abrogates her oneness or unity. He who opposes the preaching of heresy, or who separates himself from it, is eager to save the oneness or unity of the Church. The aim of opposition and separation is the combatting of heresy, the defense of the Orthodox Faith, and the preservation of the unity of the Orthodox Church, indeed of Orthodoxy itself.”⁷⁶

So far so good. However, at this point, as he turns to apply these principles to the heresy of ecumenism and its forerunner, the innovation of the new calendar, the metropolitan makes some distinctly controversial statements. “With regard to the innovation in the festal calendar, Orthodox are divided into two parts: into those who are ailing in Faith and those who are healthy, into innovators and opposers – into followers of innovation, whether in knowledge or in ignorance, and those opposed, who have separated themselves from heresy, in favor of Orthodoxy. The latter are strugglers for oneness among the ‘divided’, as the Seventh Ecumenical Synod calls those who so separated for the Orthodox unity of the Church. The followers of the festal calendar innovation have not yet been specifically judged in a Pan-Orthodox fashion, as provided for by the Orthodox Church. As St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain writes, the violator of established precepts is considered sentenced, insofar as he is judged by ‘the second entity (which is the council or synod).’ Since 1924, the innovators have been awaiting judgement and shall be judged on the basis of the decisions of the holy Synods, both Oecumenical and local, and, to be sure, on the basis of the ecclesiastical pronouncements of the sixteenth century against what were then Papal proposals for changes in the festal calendar. In this respect, those who have walled themselves off from the innovators have actually broken communion ‘before [a] conciliar or synodal verdict,’ as is allowed in the Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Synod. That is to say, the innovators are still unsentenced. Consequently, their Mysteries are valid...”⁷⁷

“Every innovationist member of the divided Greek Church is capable of changing over to opposition against the Ecumenist innovation. This can be accomplished through repentance... A return to Orthodoxy can also take place through a formal renunciation of heresy... Therefore, the Orthodox Tradition of the Holy Oecumenical Synods and of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church prescribes that that part of the divided Greek Church that is ailing in Faith be received by one of the foregoing means of repentance and

⁷⁶ Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁷⁷ Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

returned to the ranks of Orthodoxy. For they are not condemned schismatic or heretical Christians, but members of the Church who have not yet been brought to trial."⁷⁸

That the innovators "are still unsentenced", as Metropolitan Cyprian supposes, is a historical mistake. In May, 1935, all the truly Orthodox (i.e. Old Calendar) Metropolitans of the Church of Greece came together and synodically condemned the new calendarists as schismatics without the grace of sacraments: "Those who now administer the Church of Greece have divided the unity of Orthodoxy through the calendar innovation, and have split the Greek Orthodox People into two opposing calendar parts. They have not only violated an Ecclesiastical Tradition which was consecrated by the Seven Ecumenical Councils and sanctioned by the age-old practice of the Eastern Orthodox Church, but have also touched the Dogma of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Therefore those who now administer the Greek Church have, by their unilateral, anticanonical and unthinking introduction of the Gregorian calendar, cut themselves off completely from the trunk of Orthodoxy, and have declared themselves to be in essence Schismatics in relation to the Orthodox Churches which stand on the foundation of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and the Orthodox laws and Traditions."⁷⁹

Concerning the implications of this declaration with regard to the question of grace, the metropolitans made themselves crystal clear in an encyclical issued on June 8/21, 1935: "We recommend to all those who follow the Orthodox Calendar that they have no spiritual communion with the schismatic church of the schismatic ministers, from whom the grace of the All-Holy Spirit has fled, because they have violated the decisions of the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council and the Pan-Orthodox Councils which condemned the Gregorian calendar. That the schismatic Church does not have Grace and the Holy Spirit is affirmed by St. Basil the Great, who says the following: 'Even if the schismatics have erred about things which are not Dogmas, since the head of the Church is Christ, according to the divine Apostle, from Whom all the members live and receive spiritual increase, they have torn themselves away from the harmony of the members of the Body and no longer are members [of that Body] or have the grace of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he who does not have it cannot transfer it to others.'"⁸⁰

Now some have argued that this conciliar decision was later rejected by the leader of the Greek Old Calendarists, Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina, and that it therefore represents only an "extremist", "Matthewite" position. However, the doctrine that schismatics have no grace is not a specifically

⁷⁸ Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 61, 62.

⁷⁹ Metropolitan Calliopius (Giannakoulopoulos) of Pentapolis, *Ta Patria*, volume 7, Piraeus, 1987, p. 43 (in Greek).

⁸⁰ Calliopius, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-278.

“Matthewite” position, but is based on many canons and patristic sayings, notably the First Canonical Epistle of St. Basil the Great. In fact, as Bishop Ephraim of Boston points out, the new calendarists and the Moscow Patriarchate have adopted a distinctly “Matthewite” position in relation to the True Orthodox, declaring that they have no grace of sacraments – while at the same time declaring that the Western heretics do have grace!⁸¹ In any case, it is not true that Metropolitan Chrysostom renounced the Council of 1935. From 1937 to 1950 he appeared to doubt it, introducing the notion (unknown in patristic literature, as Bishop Ephraim again correctly points out), of “potential schism”. But in 1950 he repented of these doubts and openly and unambiguously returned to the confession of 1935. Some have said that in private correspondence he claimed to have been pushed into making this confession by “extremists”, that he made it for the sake of unity and that it did not represent his true thinking. I do not believe that such a great confessor could have dissembled in his confession of faith. But in any case, even if he had private doubts, it is his public confession that we must judge him by – and that, from 1950 to the end of his life, was thoroughly Orthodox.

Now Metropolitan Cyprian mentions neither the Council of 1935, nor Metropolitan Chrysostomos’ encyclical of 1950, nor the Old Calendarist Council under the presidency of Archbishop Auxentius in 1974 (when Metropolitan Cyprian himself was under his omophorion), nor ROCOR’s anathema against ecumenism of 1983, all of which explicitly or implicitly declared that the new calendarist ecumenists had no grace of sacraments. The reason for these omissions cannot be that he does not know of their existence. The reason can only be – although he does not write this explicitly – that he rejects their validity, or at any rate the validity of their decisions in relation to the ecumenists. To understand why he does this, let us now turn to the metropolitan’s theory of the Councils and their relationship to heretics.

Of central importance in Metropolitan Cyprian’s argument is his concept of the “Unifying Synod”. A “Unifying Synod” is one that unites the heretics to Orthodoxy, such as the Seventh Ecumenical Council. By implication – although, again, he does not state this explicitly here – a Synod that simply condemns the heretics without uniting them to Orthodoxy (such as the decisions of the Greek Old Calendarist Councils of 1935 and 1974 against the new calendarists, or the 1983 anathema of the Russian Church Abroad against Ecumenism) is of less significance and is not in fact competent to expel heretics from the Church.

Indeed, it is difficult to see, according to Metropolitan Cyprian’s theory, how or when any heretic has been expelled from the Church. For if, before the convening of a Unifying Synod, the heretics or not outside the Church but simply an ailing faction *within* the Church, and if a Unifying Synod does not expel heretics from the Church but simply unites the ailing and the healthy

⁸¹ Letter of Reader Polychronios, April 29 / May 12, 1987.

parts of the same Church in a closer union, there seems to be no mechanism for the expulsion of heretics *from* the Church altogether – in other words, there are no *Separating* or *Expelling* Synods. It would not be inconsistent with his theory to suppose that those heretics who refuse to be unified by the Unifying Synod are thereby expelled from the Church altogether; but this is not stated explicitly (at any rate, in the position paper under review), so heavy is the emphasis on the supposed fact that these Synods unified rather than expelled the heretics.

Metropolitan Cyprian develops his concept of a “Unifying Council” as follows: “During the reign of the iconoclastic innovation, for example, it was impossible for an Orthodox Synod of the entire Church to be convened. For this reason, such a Synod was convened when the iconoclastic heresy was no longer in power, that is, in 787, as the Seventh Oecumenical Synod of union. The same Seventh Oecumenical Synod writes through its Fathers that the Synod took place ‘so that we might change the discord of controversy into concord, that the dividing wall of enmity might be removed and that the original rulings of the Catholic [Orthodox] Church might be validated.’ That is, it was convened so that the differing factions of the Church, divided up to the time of the Synod – the Iconoclasts disagreeing with the Orthodox belief and the Orthodox opposed to the iconoclastic heresy -, might be united by means of an agreement within Orthodoxy.”

This is inaccurate both as regards the Ecumenical Councils in general and as regards the Seventh Council in particular. First, there were some Ecumenical Councils which took place without the participation of heretics – the Second and the Fifth. According to the reasoning of Metropolitan Cyprian, these must be considered not to be “Unifying Councils” and therefore lacking in full validity! And yet there is no higher, “more valid” Council in the Orthodox understanding than the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

Moreover, after several of the Ecumenical Councils many of the heretics were not only not “united”, but remained in bitter enmity to the Orthodox Church. Thus there were many Arians after the First Council, many Nestorians after the Third and many Monophysites after the Fourth – in fact, all three heresies are very numerous to the present day. Even the Seventh Council was only temporarily “unifying”, since the iconoclastic heresy broke out again some years later. Thus according to the reasoning of Metropolitan Cyprian, we must eliminate the First, Third and Fourth Ecumenical Councils from the category of “Unifying Council”.

Secondly, even those Councils which took place with the participation of heretics did not receive them until they had renounced their heresies. They made it quite clear that the heretics were *outside* the Church until such a renunciation. However, if, as Metropolitan Cyprian asserts, heretics cannot be considered to be outside the Church until they have been condemned at a

“Unifying Council” in which they themselves participated, then not only were the Arians, Nestorians, Monophysites and others still “members of the Church weak in faith” until the Unifying Councils that condemned them, but, as Hieromonk Nectarius (Yashunsky) points out, “we shall have to recognize the Roman Catholics and Protestants as ‘as yet uncondemned members of the Church’, because since the time of their separation there has not been (and until ‘their union in Orthodoxy’ there cannot be) a Council of the united (undivided Universal Church) in common with them!”⁸²

“As far as the Seventh Council is concerned,” continues Hieromonk Nectarius, “not only did it not consider the iconoclasts to be a part of the Church, but they themselves did not pretend to be such.” In support of this statement, Fr. Nectarius quotes from the Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. “These are the words of the uniting iconoclasts. Thus Basil, bishop of Ancyra, said: ‘As far as I was able, I investigated the question of the icons and converted to the Holy Catholic Church with complete conviction.’ Theodore, bishop of Myra, said: ‘... I beseech God and your holiness to unite me, the sinful one, to the Holy Catholic Church.’” (pp. 41, 43 in the edition of the Kazan Theological Academy). And here are the witnesses of the holy Fathers of the Council: “His Holiness Patriarch Tarasius said: ‘What is now to be our relationship to this heresy that has again arisen in our time?’ John, the most beloved of God, locum tenens of the apostolic throne in the east, said: ‘Heresy divides every man from the Church.’ The Holy Council said: ‘That is evident.’ The Holy Council said: ‘Let the bishops who are standing before us read their renunciations, insofar as they are now converting to the Catholic Church.’” (p. 48).

Thirdly, the exceptional importance of Ecumenical or “Unifying” Councils should not lead us to cast doubt on *local* Councils’ authority to expel heretics from the Church. Many of the heretics of the early centuries were first cast out of the Church by local Councils. For example, Arius was cast out by a local Council presided over by St. Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria, in 321 and again in 323 (the First Ecumenical Council did not take place until 325). Again, local Councils convened at Rome condemned the Nestorians (under Pope St. Celestine), the Monothelites (under Pope St. Martin) and the Iconoclasts (under Pope Gregory III) – in each case *before* the convening of the Third, Sixth and Seventh Ecumenical Councils, which never disputed the validity of these local Councils, but rather *confirmed their decisions*.

Thus when the heretical bishop Theodosius in conversation with St. Maximus the Confessor disputed the validity of the local Council under St. Martin that condemned the Monothelites on the grounds that it was not convened by an emperor, St. Maximus replied that the validity of a Council depended on its recognising “the true and immutable dogmas”, not on who convened it or how general it was. Again, when the same saint was asked in the Emperor’s palace why he was not in communion with the Throne of

⁸² Hieromonk Nectarius Yashunsky, *Ekklesiologicheskie Antitezisy* (MS) (in Russian).

Constantinople, he replied: "... They have been deposed and deprived of the priesthood at the local council which took place recently in Rome. What Mysteries, then, can they perform? Or what spirit will descend upon those who are ordained by them?"⁸³ Again, Bishop Theophanes the Recluse points out that before the start of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, its president-to-be, St. Tarasius, bewailed the fact that "we (the iconoclastic Church of Constantinople) are being anathematized by them (the other Local Churches in Local Councils) every day".⁸⁴

If local Councils did not have the authority to expel heretics from the Church, we should have to condemn many local Councils for exceeding their competency and assuming an authority that did not belong to them. These would include many of the Councils of the Early Church, which expelled such heretics as Marcion and Sabellius; the local Councils of the Great Church of Constantinople between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries that expelled the Roman Catholics; and the Councils of the Russian Church presided over by Patriarch Tikhon that anathematized the communists and their co-workers in 1918 and the renovationist heretics in 1923. However, the Church, which has the mind of Christ, has accepted all of these acts as lawful and valid. To think otherwise is to suppose that for the last several hundred years the Church has - God forbid! - lost her God-given power to bind and to loose since the convening of the last Ecumenical or Pan-Orthodox Council!⁸⁵

In February, 1986, Archbishop Chrysostom's Synod proceeded to defrock Metropolitan Cyprian and his Synod for creating a schism, for giving communion to new calendarists ("because he without discernment gives the Holy Mysteries of our Church to modernizing, schismatic and ecumenist new calendarists") and for preaching that the new calendarists have grace of sacraments ("because he has fallen from the Orthodox faith... and embraced ecumenist false beliefs, namely, that the schismatic new-calendarists make up the unaltered One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church., which is the treasury of saving grace").⁸⁶

⁸³ Fr. Christopher Birchall, *The Life of our Holy Father Maximus the Confessor*, Boston: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1982, p. 38.

⁸⁴ Bishop Theophan, "Chto takoe 'anafema'?" quoted by Vladislav Dmitriev, *Neopravdannoe Edinstvo* (MS, 1996, p. 19) (in Russian).

⁸⁵ For the Cyprianite position, see Patrick Barker, *op. cit.* For criticism of the Cyprianite ecclesiology, see Holy Transfiguration Monastery, *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-120; V. Moss, "Can Heretics have the Grace of Sacraments?", *Tserkovnost'*, № 1, 2000 ©; I.I. Voloshin, "Vozmozhen li 'Istinno-Pravoslavniy Ekumenizm'", *Vertograd-Inform*, №№ 7-8 (64-65), July-August, 2000, pp. 45-59 ©.

⁸⁶ *I Phoni tis Orthodoxias*, № 811, January-February, 1987. See also *Orthodoxos Khristianikos Agon*, № 8, February, 1987, p. 7 (G). The judgement points out that in September, 1984, after Cyprian had prayed with the ecumenist Patriarch Nicholas he had been summoned to give an account of himself, but had not appeared. Then, on September 19, he had been banned from serving for 40 days, but had continued to serve. Finally, on April 5, 1985 Cyprian and Giovanni of Sardinia had formed their own Synod and separated from the GOC Synod.

The Cyprianites contested the decision on procedural grounds, in that they had not been given notification of the trial⁸⁷, and could not be judged by the Chrysostomites anyway since they had never formed part of their Synod. More serious was the criticism that if Cyprian was defrocked for giving communion to new calendarists, why not Peter of Astoria also, since he also gave communion to new calendarists, considering them to be Orthodox? This uncomfortable fact continued to plague the Chrysostomites for some years. The problem became especially acute when, in May, 1994, Archimandrite Paul Stratigeas, chancellor of the diocese of Astoria, admitted in an interview to the *New York National Herald*: "I provide the Mysteries to the followers of the new calendar." However, Archimandrite Paul sincerely repented, and now, as Metropolitan of Astoria in succession to Peter, has decreed that new calendarists who come to church seeking communion must first have confession, and then, during confession, be instructed that they must repent of the heresies of the new calendarists and receive chrismation.

The Cyprianites have continued to go their own way supported only by the Romanian Old Calendarists and the Bulgarian Bishop Photius of Triaditsa.⁸⁸ However, the Romanians appear to have a stricter ecclesiology than the Cyprianites (they chrismate new calendarists who wish to join them). So the question arises: why do they remain in communion with Cyprian and not with the other Greek Old Calendarists, to whom they appear to be closer in terms of ecclesiology? The answer appears to be that when the Callistite hierarchs made contact with the Romanians in the late 1970s, it was Cyprian who gave them help at a time of communist oppression. And for this they continue to be grateful.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ The Cyprianite Bishop Ambrose of Methone (personal communication, July 30 / August 12, 2005) writes: "You also mention the fact that Archbishop Chrysostomos' Synod apparently deposed our Metropolitan in 1986. As now, almost twenty years later, no such document has ever been communicated to us, we are still in the dark. All we have seen is a text printed in their periodical, but the four then members of their Synod whom we asked (Petros of Astoria, Gerontios of Piraeus, Antonios of Attika, and Euthymios of Thessaloniki) all said that no such text had ever been shown to them, nor had they signed it; they regarded the whole affair as an invention on the personal animosity of Kalliopios."

⁸⁸ *Agios Kyprianos*, № 274, March-April, 1992 (G). By 1992 the Romanians had two million believers, four bishops, eighty parishes, nine large monasteries and many smaller ones, making them by far the largest True Orthodox jurisdiction in the world. Moreover, in their leader, Metropolitan Glykerie, who died on June 15/28, 1985, they have one of the most saintly figures in twentieth-century Church history. In 1997, in response to numerous visions, his relics were uncovered and found "to be dissolved to bones, but full of fragrance". See *Orthodox Tradition*, vol. XV, № 1, 1998, p. 45. The True Orthodox Church of Romania officially glorified him in 1999.

⁸⁹ Archimandrite Cyprian, Secretary of the Romanian Synod, personal communication, August, 1994.

6. Boston Separates

Metropolitans Acacius of Diauleia and Gabriel of the Cyclades had refrained from joining the Synod under Archbishop Chrysostom, and in a publication entitled *An End to Silence* (1986) they fiercely criticised their former colleague's agreement to become archbishop. In retrospect, and in view of the collapse of the Synod again in 1995, it must be admitted that there was some justice in their criticism. The problems in the dioceses of Thessalonica and Astoria had not been resolved, and would not be resolved in the period 1985-1995. On the other hand, it could be argued that *someone* had to lead the remnants of the former Auxentiite Synod, and such a leader had to come from one of Metropolitans Acacius, Gabriel and Chrysostom. And it was now the turn of Metropolitans Acacius and Gabriel to make a mistake, when, early in 1987, they received under their omophorion 40 mainly Greek-American parishes led by the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston.

When Metropolitan Philaret, First-Hierarch of ROCOR, died on November 8/21, 1985 and was succeeded by Metropolitan Vitaly (Ustinov), the Boston monastery immediately expressed its support for him. Thus on February 10, 1986, Archimandrite Panteleimon wrote: "The Synodal Church [ROCOR] is a real standard of Orthodoxy.... Therefore, discerning where the Truth is found, we remain in unity under our bishops in the midst of many trials and temptations...because grace abides in the Synod.... We uphold our Synod primarily and foremostly as a standard of Orthodoxy. All others have betrayed the Truth. This was demonstrated of late by the election of our new Metropolitan."⁹⁰

However, the same council which elected Metropolitan Vitaly also, writes Fr. Alexey Young, "appointed a special commission of two bishops to visit the Boston monastery and begin a private investigation into charges of sexual perversion. The commission presented its report at a meeting of the Synod on May 29, 1986, receiving testimony in person from four monks who had left the Holy Transfiguration Monastery. Fr. Panteleimon was present and denied the charges, but asked to be relieved of his position as abbot. The bishops granted his request, placing the monastery temporarily under Archbishop Anthony (Sinkevich) of Los Angeles and Southern California. The monks at the monastery in Boston, however, ignored this and elected one of their own – another monk who had also been charged with immorality – as abbot.

"For the next several months, information and testimony continued to be gathered, with no predetermination of Panteleimon's guilt or innocence. Looking back, the bishops may well feel that they should have hastened the investigation, for, during this period of time, an unprecedented explosion of protest erupted from the supporters of Fr. Panteleimon. The bishops were

⁹⁰ Fr. Alexey Young, *The Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia*, San Bernardino, CA: the Borgo Press, 1993, pp. 75-76.

bombarded by hundreds of letters, petitions, phone calls, and personal visits – all of them protesting their ‘Elder’s’ innocence and the unfair, even ‘un-American’ way in which they believed his case was being handled.

“Simultaneously, Fr. Panteleimon began to make public his own list of grievances, announcing that the bishops were, practically speaking, abandoning the Anathema against Ecumenism and beginning to compromise the Faith. Secret plans and negotiations, he charged, were being worked out with the Moscow Patriarchate so that the Church Abroad could unite with the Mother Church by 1988 (the millennium of the Baptism of Russia). According to Panteleimon, this meant that the hierarchs had become, or were in the process of becoming, *heresiarchs*, and that the faithful had better look to their souls! This was a complete reversal of his published views of only months before.

“On November 25, 1986, Metropolitan Vitaly was asked by the Synod of Bishops to suspend Fr. Panteleimon and the abbot [Isaac] who had been uncanonically elected to succeed him, pending a canonical trial.⁹¹ This was done on December 3; nine days later, Vitaly received a letter announcing that the monastery in Boston had left the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and was taking refuge under an unnamed Greek Old Calendar bishop.⁹² Synod headquarters immediately declared this action to be ‘... a flagrant violation of the holy canons of the Church and... an attempt to avoid the consequences of any final decision a spiritual court might have made concerning the accusations [of immorality]... [This is an attempt] to flee from the spiritual authority of the Church’s hierarchy...’⁹³

In their defence, the Bostonites declared that they were fleeing the ecumenism of ROCOR – more precisely, the relapse of ROCOR into its former lax ways in relation to the “World Orthodox” only a year after the anathema against ecumenism. In order to examine this defence, let us go back to the time of the anathema.

The anathema against ecumenism was signed by all the bishops of ROCOR and was entered into the Synodicon to be read on the Sunday of Orthodoxy each year. This was the achievement, within the Synod, especially of Metropolitan Philaret, the righteousness of whose stand against ecumenism and the Moscow Patriarchate was revealed on November 8/21, 1998, when

⁹¹ The suspensions were in accordance with rule 159 of Peter the Great’s Regulations of the Spiritual Consistories: “A clergyman who has been accused of a crime is to be suspended from serving... The order for this to be done is entrusted to the local Bishop, who is obligated to take care that those who are accused of grave violation of good conduct according to God’s laws not approach to serve before the Altar of the Lord.” Also, a commission was appointed to investigate the charges of immorality against Fr. Isaac, and Hieromonk Justin was appointed as temporary administrator of the monastery. (V.M.)

⁹² The letter was dated November 25 / December 7. (V.M.)

⁹³ Young, op. cit., pp. 77-78.

his coffin was opened and his body was found to be completely incorrupt.⁹⁴ He was the last ROCOR leader who saw the Catacomb Church as the “Mother Church” of Russia, and rejected the MP as graceless.

However, he found very little support among his fellow-bishops, and was only rarely able to impose his will, especially on the West European diocese under Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, from which several priests and parishes fled in the 1970s. Even with the more conservative hierarchs he sometimes had problems. Thus he once ordered the sprinkling with holy water of the church in the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, Jordanville, after Archbishop Averky had permitted Copts to serve there.⁹⁵

After Metropolitan Philaret’s death, a certain weakening in the confession of ROCOR is discernible, even if the contrast between the period before and after the metropolitan’s death is not as sharp as the Bostonites make it out to be. Thus early in 1986 Archbishop Anthony of Geneva blessed the French Mission of ROCOR under Archimandrite Ambroise (Frontier) to concelebrate with the new calendarists when they were in Greece, but not with the Old Calendarists. They considered this to be contrary to the 1983 anathema and wrote to him: “In sending your clergy to concelebrate with the ecumenists or new calendarists, you place them under this anathema, which is a grave error... When you say that your clergy who desire to concelebrate with the ecumenists or new calendarists must, beforehand, ask for your blessing, you remind (us) of a father of a family, who would permit his children who would wish to throw themselves into the fire, to do so.”⁹⁶

Again, in October, 1986, a clergy conference of the Midwest Diocese of ROCOR took place, at which Bishop Alpy of Cleveland, standing next to the icon of the Mother of God of Kursk, declared that “in spite of all the difficulties occurring throughout world-wide Orthodoxy, our Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad does not judge any other jurisdiction as being without grace or in heresy.”⁹⁷

Still more seriously, at Christmas, 1986/87, Metropolitan Vitaly issued a dovish Nativity Epistle, declaring that the 1983 anathema was *not* of universal significance, but applied only to members of ROCOR who expressed ecumenist opinions. Of course, the anathema was issued by a Local Council, not an Ecumenical one. But, as we have seen, this by no means meant that, as Metropolitan Vitaly and the opponents of the anathema were trying to say, the anathema in fact had *no power* over anyone outside ROCOR – which was

⁹⁴ “Incorrupt Relics Recovered”, *Vertograd-Inform*, № 4, February, 1999, p. 8.

⁹⁵ “Metropolitan Philaret’s Two Letters to Archbishop Averky”, *Vertograd-Inform*, № 4, February, 1999, pp. 11-15.

⁹⁶ Archimandrite Ambroise, Priest Patric and Hieromonk Joseph, letter to Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, May 14/27, 1986 (F).

⁹⁷ Fr. Alexey Young, “A Tireless Pilgrim”, *Orthodox America*, vol. 7, № 4, October, 1986.

equivalent, in effect, to annulling it. The Bostonites seized on this as evidence of the fall of ROCOR.⁹⁸ But since the epistle was issued only *after* departure, it was not direct justification of that departure...

In the opinion of the present writer, on the one hand the Bostonites *did* have a prima facie case for leaving ROCOR on the grounds of betrayal of the anathema against ecumenism. Moreover, it is clear that this was the decisive issue for many of the rank-and-file clergy and laity who followed them. On the other hand, the timing of the departure, the haste with which they left, and the abundant evidence of moral transgressions, makes it likely that the issue of ecumenism was not the real reason for *the leaders' flight*, but rather a fig-leaf to cover their fear of conviction at their forthcoming trial.

This is confirmed by Fr. Anthony Gavalas: "My position when we left the Synod was that we should commemorate no one until we saw our way clearly in the confusion. I was told that while this would be possible for the monastery, it would be destructive to the Parishes. Then, within a few hours, we were told that we must all go under Archbishop Acacius immediately so that the monastery would be covered in the face of suspensions and depositions of Frs. Panteleimon and Isaac, and I, of course, cooperated."⁹⁹

Among the hierarchs, only Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) supported the Boston monks. The Synod, he believed had acted hastily in relation both to them and to the defrocking of his son, Archimandrite Anthony.¹⁰⁰ He was promptly sacked from his post of Secretary of the ROCOR Synod after over fifty years work at the centre of the Church administration.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ See "Reflections on Metropolitan Vitaly's Nativity Epistle", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, February 16 / March 1, 1987; "An Annulment of the Anathema of 1983", *Orthodox Christian Witness*, May 4/17, 1987.

⁹⁹ Gavalas, letter of June 20 / July 3, 1987 to Fr. Nektas Palassis.

¹⁰⁰ The reason, according to Bishop Gregory, was his opposition to Vitaly's plans to sell the Synod building in New York (Letter to Abbess Magdalina, May 11/24, 1986; *Church News*, June, 2003, vol. 14, № 65 (#119), pp. 10-11). Bishop Gregory's daughter and Archimandrite Anthony's sister, Mrs. Anastasia Shatilova, writes: "The necessity to dismiss by any means possible the Head of the Jerusalem Ecclesiastical Mission [Archimandrite Anthony] of 17 years - is explained rather simply. Archimandrite Anthony, shortly before the repose of Metropolitan Philaret won a court case against the state of Israel over property belonging to the Mission, confiscated by the former in 1948, and Israel was to pay back 7 million dollars. This sum is laughably small, considering the true value of the confiscated property, but the Mission's lawyer believed that the material, about to be filed against the USSR, using the precedent of the case against Israel, had all the chances of winning. The case against the USSR, over the seized Gorny Convent and Holy Trinity Church with numerous buildings, also belonged to the Mission - was to start within a couple of weeks. This is the main reason why intrigues were absolutely necessary to remove this Chief of the Mission" (*Church News*, July, 2003, vol. 14, № 66 (#120), pp. 10-11).

¹⁰¹ See his letter of April 27 / May 10, 1986 to Archbishop Seraphim of Chicago, in *Church News*, July, 2003, vol. 14, #6 (120), p. 11, and to Metropolitan Vitaly of May 17/30, 1994 (*Church News*, July, 2003, vol. 13, #6 (107), pp. 3-4. Both of the deputy-presidents of the Synod, Archbishops Anthony of Geneva and Seraphim of Chicago, disagreed with the decision.

Patrick Barrett considers that the schism could have been avoided if Bishop Gregory had still been at the helm: "Both Father Panteleimon and Father Isaac were prepared to step aside. True panic only hit the monastery and the parishes allied to it when the Synod refused to allow Father Justin to be named acting abbot. That's when people began to believe that the synod's true purpose was to seize the monastery. Then people began to think, well, they've eliminated Bishop Gregory and now they're going after Father Panteleimon, so they're obviously trying to take out everybody who opposes union with the MP. Bishop Gregory could have handled this situation easily. In fact, many of the people who ended up leaving ROCOR in 1986 were calling Bishop Gregory hoping for help or reassurance, but who was Bishop Gregory? By then, he was nobody to the Synod. Bishop Gregory had moral authority with the monastery and those parishes, with his help, the synod could even have removed Fathers Panteleimon and Isaac and still not lost the monastery and parishes."¹⁰²

Be that as it may, the Boston monks and parishes fled to the Metropolitans Acacius and Gabriel. However, in the summer of 1987, with the exception of Fr. Anthony Gavalas of Astoria, New York, all of the approximately 40 parishes left the two metropolitans *giving no canonical reason* and came under the omophorion of Auxentius.

It may be asked: why did the Bostonites not join Auxentius in the first place? The answer is clear: the crimes of Auxentius were known to Panteleimon, and more than one person who knew him well has testified that for several years before he joined Auxentius he considered him to be a traitor to Orthodoxy. That is why they joined the two independent metropolitans, who were not tainted with Auxentius' crimes.

So far, an argument can be adduced in defence of the Bostonites' actions. But then why, only six months later, did they leave the two metropolitans and join Auxentius? Again the answer is clear: because Metropolitan Gabriel, disturbed by the accusations against Panteleimon, had separated from Metropolitan Acacius. This meant that the Bostonites now had no possibility of achieving one of their principal aims – a bishop or bishops of their own for America. Auxentius' Synod, on the other hand, was notoriously willing to consecrate new bishops. So it became expedient to keep silent about Auxentius' crimes (which, according to witnesses, Fr. Panteleimon had been more than willing to condemn in previous years), and to seek refuge in this most unsafe haven.

That the Bostonites were seeking of their bishop of their own is evident from a letter of Fr. Nicetas Palassis to Fr. Anthony Gavalas: "Frankly, we were

¹⁰² Barrett, "[paradosis] ROCOR's biggest error", orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com, 21 July, 2004.

stunned and sorrowed by Metropolitan Gabriel's departure. Actually, it appeared we had been detoured and led into a dead-end street. Without a second bishop to give us support and credibility, we face the prospect of being one of the hundreds of vaganti groups which flood our nation. Without at least a second bishop we can have no hope that the clergymen who are watching us so carefully will ever join with us. Conversations with several of them have confirmed that fact. They are not attracted to us with a single bishop..."¹⁰³ Further proof is provided by the letter of their secretary, dated July 2/15, 1987 to Metropolitan Acacius, in which he writes: "It is evident to all that without a hierarch who knows both English and Greek and who has sufficient theological training, the flock in America, which is constituted of both English and Greek-speaking faithful, cannot be properly served."

However, it was obvious that their bishop's not knowing English was not a canonical reason for leaving him, so the Panteleimonites invented another reason. They claimed that in the last six months they had "formed a more precise picture of ecclesiastical matters [in Greece] which - to an especially greater extent in recent times - have become obscured under the prism of subjective judgements, or unverified information, and this because of the difficulties of communication between the New World and Greece. Thus, they have arrived at the conclusion and conviction that, today, the reasons for your position of protest and voluntary absence from the meetings of the Synod of Archbishop Auxentios have ceased."¹⁰⁴

These statements are extremely vague - we are given no idea of what new facts emerged that could so radically change their opinion of Auxentius and prove his innocence. In truth, there were no such facts. The Bostonites were thoroughly acquainted with the Church situation in Greece; it was not new knowledge that had changed the situation but the departure of Metropolitan Gabriel from their Church.

They had a further, even weaker argument. Pointing to Metropolitan Acacius' recent statement that "if you are able to find hierarchs who have Apostolic succession, you should turn to them", and his earlier statement that "the judgement, the choice and the formulation of your future course depends on you"¹⁰⁵, they interpreted this to mean that he had blessed them to join Auxentius.

But Metropolitan Acacius' extremely negative attitude towards Auxentius was well known to all. It was obvious that by a "hierarch who has Apostolic succession" he did not mean Auxentius. This was evident from the letter he

¹⁰³ Palassais, letter of June 15/28, 1987.

¹⁰⁴ Letter of Fr. Christos Constantinou, July 2/15, 1987.

¹⁰⁵ Letter of Metropolitan Acacius to Protopresbyter Panagiotes Carras and the most venerable presbyters and hieromonks with him, February 17, 1987, Protocol № 282.

wrote to his spiritual children when he heard that they were going to invite Auxentius to their conference in Worcester, Massachusetts in July, 1987:-

“While we were preserving vividly and indelibly the wonderful image of all that we had seen and heard during our recent visit to your Orthodox parishes, suddenly the information came, like a lightning bolt out of a clear sky, that a few of your spiritual leaders are thinking of going under the irrevocably fallen former Archbishop Auxentius.

“We hope that it is only some malicious rumour designed to defame your Orthodox ecclesiastical communities before all Orthodox everywhere and to render futile the struggle you have waged on behalf of the strictness of Orthodoxy. That is what we believe, for only the utmost madness and morbid recklessness would otherwise explain the subjugation of a Movement on behalf of piety and the preservation of the traditional genuineness of our Holy Orthodoxy under a leader who so tragically failed and brought the Church of the True Orthodox in Greece into contempt and disrepute.

“A multitude of uncanonical actions and illegal ordinations done with supreme disdain for the authority of our Holy Church, the ungodfearing trampling down of the Sacred Canons, and the devious manner of the ‘consecration to the episcopate’ of the piteous and miserable Dorotheus Tsakos render Auxentius guilty before Divine and human justice, as well as before the impartial and unbribable judgement of history itself.

“Can it be that you seek refuge in such a wreckage of a house? Shudder, O sun, and groan, O earth! If that be the case, you will with your own hands destroy your own work and raze your spiritual edifices to the ground. Moreover, you offer to your enemies unexpected arguments against yourselves. These are much more powerful than the arguments with which they presently seek to sully the reputation of the pious and virtuous clergymen who, at the present moment, stand at the head of your struggle!

“And, above all, such a thoughtless and frivolous action will sever the unity of your ecclesiastical communities because those among you whose souls have a more acute sense of smell will not be able to tolerate the stench of that devious failure Auxentius’ condemned and illegal actions.

“It is out of a pained heart that we write the above so that the beacon of Orthodoxy will not be so ignominiously extinguished, the beacon which is lit by the strictness of your Orthodoxy and your blameless ecclesiastical ethos.

“And besides, as long as you came freely and unconstrained by anyone and committed the episcopal supervision of your parishes to me, I condemn any discussions with Auxentius as divisive acts and I advise you to cut them off completely.

“Do not forget that ‘he who acts in secret from his bishops serves the devil’, according to St. Ignatius the Godbearer...”¹⁰⁶

However, the Bostonites concealed the letter of their archpastor from his flock and, to the great distress of many clergy and laity, removed almost all their parishes from the jurisdiction of a true bishop to that of a condemned schismatic, *giving no canonical justification whatsoever for their act.*

In December, the former French mission of the Russian Church Abroad in Paris, led by Archimandrite Ambroise Frontier, left the Chrysostomites because of dissatisfaction with a priest in the south of France and followed the Bostonites under Auxentius’ omophorion.¹⁰⁷

Before his death in 1994, Auxentius consecrated several bishops for this group, who now call themselves “The Holy Orthodox Church in North America” (HOCNA). And so Auxentius’ Church, which had almost died out in Greece, received a new lease of life. He proceeded to acquit the Bostonite leaders of homosexuality¹⁰⁸, and consecrate several bishops for them, thereby preserving his reputation for giving refuge to immoral clergy intact to the end...

¹⁰⁶ Metropolitan Acacius, letter of July 1, 1987, Protocol № 287. For other criticism of the Bostonite position, see Letter of Reader Polychronius to Monk Pachomius, October 12/25, 1989; I. Medvedev, V. Redechkin, "Bostonskij raskol, a ne stoianie v Istine", June 21 / July 4, 1994 (MS) ®; "Pis'mo Arkhiep. Antonia Los-Anzhelosskogo V. Redechkinu", *Russkoe Pravoslavie*, № 4 (8), 1997, pp. 26-28 ®. For the Bostonites’ account of these events, see *The Struggle against Ecumenism*, op. cit., pp. 125-160.

¹⁰⁷ The present writer’s parish in England was being fed by one of the French priest at this time. When he protested to Fr. Ambroise that he felt he had no good canonical reason for following Ambroise out of the Chrysostomite Synod, Fr. Ambroise said to him: “Yes, you have no good reason; you should stay.”

¹⁰⁸ But Fr. Anthony Gavalas wrote: “Given Archbishop Auxentius’ toleration, at least, of homosexuals in his own jurisdiction, of what use will be a exoneration signed by him? Will it not allow our enemies to say that the monastery is guilty and so placed itself in a jurisdiction tolerant of such violations?” (quoted by Archpriest Alexander Lebedev, “Re: [paradosis] Re: Re 1986-1987”, orthodox-tradition@yahoo.com, January 12, 2002.

7. The Florinites Divide Again

The year 1995 was truly an annus horribilis for the True Church. Apart from the major schism between the followers of Vitaly and Valentine in the Russian Church, there were no less than three schisms in the Greek Church.

In 1995 five Matthewite bishops in Greece separated from the Matthewite Archbishop Andreas on the grounds of "iconoclasm", that is, rejecting the icon of the Holy Trinity in which the Father is depicted as an old man. Soon these five bishops were reduced to two. Then these two - Gregory of Messenia and Chrysostom of Thessalonica - divided. Then Gregory consecrated four bishops on his own. The "Gregorians" do not appear to have any followers in Russia.

On January 7, 1995 following the death of the former Archbishop Auxentius in November, 1994, Metropolitan Maximus of Cephalonia (who had been defrocked in 1985 for participating in the consecration of Dorotheus Tsakos) was made archbishop of the "Auxentiite" faction of the True Orthodox Christians. He asked ROCOR for the same official documents that had been sent to Metropolitans Acacius and Gabriel in 1987 concerning the suspension of Fathers Panteleimon and Isaac of Holy Transfiguration, Monastery, Boston. As a result, becoming convinced of their guilt, he separated from them and the three bishops (Ephraim of Boston, Macarius of Toronto and Photius of Paris) whom Auxentius had consecrated for them.¹⁰⁹

A third schism - this time among the Florinites - was prepared by a series of events.¹¹⁰

First, in 1993 the two American Bishops Paisius and Vincent joined the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which in receiving them recognised their hierarchical status. Then Paisius and Vincent started to insult the Florinites... However, a "greater and most perfect Council" under the leadership of the Ecumenical Patriarch then defrocked the two hierarchs, Hesychius and Timothy, who had received Paisius and Vincent. Under pressure, Jerusalem now changed course and abandoned Paisius and Vincent. The Americans then turned back to the Florinite Synod - but not "through the front door", that is, the Archbishop, but "through the back door, the "Gerontian" fraction within the Synod.

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.hocna.info/ChronologyEvents.shtml>.

¹¹⁰ The major sources used in this account of the schism are all unpublished: Bishop Photius of Marathon, *Chronicle of the Schism of 1995*; Bishop Macarius of Petra, "1973-2003: Thrity Years of Ecclesiastical Developments: Trials-Captivity-Deliverance" (in Greek); and Hieromonk Nectarius (Yashunsky), "kratkaia istoria svyaschennoj bor'by starostil'nikov Gretsii, 1986=1995 gg." (in Russian).

Secondly, as a result of the confusion created by Paisius and Vincent, their fellow-hierarch in America, Peter of Astoria, concelebrated with the ROCOR. This was followed by an interview given by his nephew and the Chancellor of the Astoria diocese, Archimandrite Paul (Stratigeas) to a New York newspaper, *Ethniko Kentro*, in which he praised the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (he later repented publicly). This ecumenist act gave further ammunition to the Gerontian faction, since Bishop Peter and his nephew Fr. Paul belonged to the supporters of Archbishop Chrysostom.

The Gerontian fraction was further strengthened at about this time by the support of Metropolitan Anthony of Megara, who had been given assistance when in America by Paisius and Vincent... This had the important result that when, in September, 1994, a scandal broke out in the newspapers relating to homosexual behaviour by the Florinite Metropolitan Euthymius of Thessalonica, the Gerontians were able effectively to block the working of the Synodal Court appointed by Archbishop Chrysostom to try Euthymius.

At this point, however, the Gerontians suffered a major blow: their leader, Metropolitan Gerontius, died in November, 1994. Euthymius now lost his major supporter in the Synod. But in partial compensation, control of the powerful corporation 'The General Fund of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece' passed to Metropolitan Callinicus (Khaniotis) of Thaumakou, who was a supporter of Euthymius.

With the death of Gerontius, the election of a new bishop for his see of the Piraeus was required. Bishop Vincent was interested, but he had a rival in Archimandrite Niphon (Anastasopoulos) of the Monastery of the Protection in Keratea. At the beginning of 1995 the Synod appointed Vincent as the locum tenens of the diocese, but the election was put off for a time...

We come now to the last meeting of the Synod before the schism. Since the Gerontian faction had repeatedly prevented the working of the Synodal Court to try Euthymius, Archbishop Chrysostom decided that the trial would take place without fail during the coming session, with the participation of whatever bishops were present, even if there were fewer than twelve. This frightened Euthymius, who saw the sword of Damocles descending upon his head... As for the election of a new bishop for the Piraeus, this was postponed by the archbishop, although the correlation of forces at that time favoured Vincent. This displeased Paisius, who wanted Vincent, his favourite, to become Metropolitan of the Piraeus, and saw his hopes slipping away...

Having control of the General Fund, to which the offices of the Synod in Cannings 32 belonged, Euthymius and Paisius now led the Gerontian faction to "continue the cut-off session of the Holy Synod" under the presidency of Metropolitan Callinicus of Thaumakou and Phthiotis. To this end they – that is, the six bishops: Callinicus of Phthiotis, Euthymius of Thessalonica, Stephen

of Chios, Justin of Euripus, Paisius of America and Vincent of Aulon - sent a telegram to Archbishop Chrysostom, calling him the leader of "Calliopian faction" and telling him that they were removing him from the presidency of the Holy Synod! The telegram, consisting of one enormous sentence, read as follows: "After your repeated anti-synodical actions, and your refusal to allow an expert canonist and professor of inter-Orthodox renown¹¹¹ to take part in the hearing of the affair of Metropolitan Euthymius of Thessalonica in order to avoid excesses in attempts to slander honourable hierarchs and the promotion of the tactic of expelling hierarchs who are fighters [for the faith], like the blessed Bishop Callistus, and the seizure of the whole ecclesiastical administration by the three coup d'état hierarchs who are your closest collaborators and advisers [Calliopius of Pentapolis, Callinicus of Achaia and Matthew of Oinoe are meant], and to avoid the deliberate reintroduction of the matter of [Paisius' and Vincent's joining] Jerusalem, which has already been reviewed by the Synod, as well as the rehabilitation of the Bishop of Astoria, who has abandoned the confession of the synodical hierarchs¹¹², we have decided, in accordance with the divine and sacred canons (those that have been so badly violated by you and your evilly-motivated collaborators), to break off communion with you and with them, not recognizing your right to preside over the remainder of your [sic] Holy Synod which sits at Canningos 32."

It goes without saying that this telegram, as the "Callinicités" themselves later recognized, does not begin to be a canonical deposition of Archbishop Chrysostom. And it is clear, both from the text of the telegram and its timing, that its *real* motivation - its *supposed* motivation was the allegedly dictatorial behaviour of the archbishop, his convening synodal sessions and cancelling them at will, and not carrying out resolutions passed by the Synod as a whole but displeasing to the "Callistite" minority (i.e. Calliopius of Pentapolis, Callinicus of Achaia and Matthew of Oinoe) - was the desire to protect Euthymius from a canonical trial. This action is very reminiscent of that of the leaders of HOCNA in 1986, when they left ROCOR just before the proposed trial of Archimandrite Panteleimon.

(This similarity between the Callinicités and HOCNA is not coincidental. In 1999 the two Synods tried to unite. Naturally, the Callinicités overlooked the moral charges against HOCNA, while HOCNA agreed that Auxentius' depositions of Callinicus and Euthymius were "an internal matter that should

¹¹¹ Mr. Christakis, Professor of Canon Law at the University of Athens. The Callinicités, while avoiding a church trial, liked to quote the opinions of new calendarist lawyers from outside the Church who expressed themselves in support of Euthymius. Another was Mr. Nicholas Athanasopoulos. However, the latter, according to *Eleutherotypia* for May 13, 2005, has been expelled from the Areopagus for "serious sins".

¹¹² No decision had yet been made about Peter of Astoria. He had been invited to the last session of the Synod, but did not come. The Synod then decided to send to bishops to visit him and ask him why he had not come to the last session (Bishop Photius of Marathon, personal communication).

be dealt with by our Sacred Synod [which?] and need not appear on the common statement.” However, the proposed union broke down over the Callinices’ insistence that they should have the right to examine the consecrations performed by Auxentius since 1985 “upon the petition of the ordinands”. HOCNA, believing itself to be the lawful successor of Auxentius’ Synod, could not accept to place themselves in the position of petitioners...¹¹³)

The Callinices’ claim that Euthymius had been subjected to an unjust witch-hunt is not at all convincing. The present writer has seen a book composed of *seventy-five* signed testimonies against Euthymius. Even if many or even most of these testimonies were forged or “bought”, as the Callinices claimed, they surely constituted a prima facie reason for convening a trial in which their validity or otherwise could be determined, and the question of Euthymius’ guilt or innocence could be finally resolved. Besides, a Synodical trial was the only way to resolve what had become a nation-wide scandal that was harming the Church terribly.

On July 5/18 the Chrysostomite Synod, meeting in the church of St. Demetrius in Aigaleo (since its own offices had been stolen), invited the rebels to defend themselves (protocol No. 435). Having received no reply, on July 12/25 six bishops: Archbishop Chrysostom and Metropolitans Maximus of Demetriades, Callinicus of Achaia, Matthew of Oinoe, Calliopius of Pentapolis and Callinicus of the Dodecanese defrocked the six rebel bishops. Two days later, Metropolitan Peter of Astoria arrived at the Synod and signed the decisions of July 12/25. Metropolitans Athanasius of Acharnae and Anthony of Megara did not take part in the trial, considering it uncanonical. Anthony remained neutral to the end of his life, while Athanasius, after many changes, returned to the Chrysostomite Synod in 2004.

On the next day, the Holy Synod met again to pass judgement on the former Metropolitan Euthymius, excommunicating him for his moral transgressions.

On August 25, 1995 twenty-seven Athonite elders and hieromonks wrote to both sides: “... We have come to the firm conclusion that there is no difference in questions of the Faith, and all this is an administrative disagreement... It is evident that both sides are equally responsible for the division that has taken place. Therefore we support neither of the two groups, but remain neutral... and humbly suggest the following to you in order to overcome this division: Rescind all resolutions on both sides that took place after the division,... in particular on the one side the resolution to remove the archiepiscopate of the Archbishop,.. and on the other the clearly uncanonical defrockings and bans.

¹¹³ Letter of Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, Metropolitan Macarius of Toronto and Bishop Moses of Roslindale to the Callinices, December 1/14, 1999, protocol number 1704.

“After the rescinding of the above resolutions... have a general session of all the Synodal Bishops at which, after mutual repentance and forgiveness, they set about resolving the unresolved questions...

“In conclusion we should like to note that now whatever group does not offer a willing hand of unity to the other will in the final analysis bear responsibility for the strengthening of the division before God and history.”¹¹⁴

On November 12, 1995, the Callinicitis wrote to the Chrysostomites, suggesting reconciliation. Not receiving a reply, Metropolitan Callinicus wrote again in January, beginning with the words: “Your Beatitude, give that which cannot be given and forgive the unforgivable, and this for a full revelation of the truth: that we are completely responsible for the separation.” However, immediately after this confession of guilt, he began to accuse the Chrysostomites of not extending a helping hand to them, and said that if “we are to blame for the creation of the separation, the continuation of the break-up makes you infinitely more to blame, especially after our sincere public declaration of our feelings for conciliation and union.” Then he appeared to retract his confession of guilt, claiming that they, the Callinicitis, were only “said” to be the cause of the problem: “Christ and His Church - clergy and laity - ask for justice, not only for us, who are said to be the ‘creators’ of the crisis, but more so for you, who formed the basic presuppositions of the separation and completely reject your brothers’ offering to cure this evil.” Then, having previously asserted that he and his fellows were “completely” responsible for the schism, Callinicus went on to claim that it was not only they, but also the Chrysostomites, who conspired: “Your Beatitude, let’s not deceive ourselves: you conspired, and we conspired, not yesterday or the day before, but for a long time.” Finally, he ended with the threat that if Archbishop Chrysostom rejected this offer of reconciliation, the responsibility for the schism would be on his Synod.

Metropolitan Callinicus here wrote as if the schism were merely a personal quarrel that had not resulted in an ecclesiastical schism and formal defrockings, but could be resolved by a mutual agreement to overlook everything that had happened! But the Chrysostomite Synod was by no means obliged to restore the defrocked bishops, who here confessed their guilt, to their former status, if they judged them unworthy of it. The Callinicite Archimandrite Nectarius (Yashunsky) expressed moral outrage at the fact that the Chrysostomites expressed joy that the Church had been cleansed of “unworthy brethren”, allowing them “to open a new page” in the life of the Church. But the Chrysostomite Synod - and all True Orthodox Christians everywhere - had good reason to rejoice that the Church had been cleansed of a most serious moral offender, Euthymius, the cause of a major schism in the Church of Thessalonica and the reason why many had left the Church and others refrained from entering. Of course, they would have

¹¹⁴ *Phoni ex Agiou Orous*, p. 8 (in Greek).

rejoiced even more if he had repented, or submitted to a canonical trial. But long experience had shown that he was going to do neither of these. The Chrysostomite bishops could also rejoice at the departure of Paisius and Vincent, whose ecumenist sympathies had been obvious for some time, and whose relations with their fellow-bishop in America, Peter had been poor.¹¹⁵ They did not rejoice about the fall of the other bishops, who were of better reputation, and with whom they would no doubt have been happy to be reunited on the basis of “forget and forgive” (as we shall see, they were in fact reunited with all except one of them). But what they – rightly – could never agree to was to accept *all* the Callinicite bishops en masse, which is what the Callinicite bishops insisted on. A general reunion of “Chrysostomites” and “Callinicites” without preconditions or the attaching of any blame to anyone would have been as short-lived and hypocritical as the “Auxentiite-Gerontian-Kallistite” union of 1985. One further misdemeanour of Euthymius would have destroyed it just as surely as one further misdemeanour of Auxentius (in relation to Tsakos) destroyed the union of 1995. Better a division, regrettable as it may be, than an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable.

This was essentially the reason by Acacius and Gabriel did not follow Chrysostom into the new Synod he led from 1986. They saw that the conditions for genuine synodal government of the Church simply did not exist while certain powerful but evil bishops remained within it. Gabriel died in isolation in 1998, but Acacius joined the Chrysostomites in 2003...

¹¹⁵ In 1995, in his monastery in Anthousa, Petros turned to Euthymius and said about Paisius and Vincent: “I know so many things about them! You, Euthymius, are a saint by comparison with them!” Euthymius, trying to hide his embarrassment with a joke, said: “Then you will have to make an icon of me.” It goes without saying that Peter was in no way praising Euthymius, but only saying that Paisius and Vincent were even worse than he (Bishop Photius, *Chronicle*).

8. The Schism Develops

In any case, the “Callinicitēs” began to divide almost immediately. In the Piraeus Stephen, Paisius and Vincent formed one group, and in Thessalonica Callinicus, Euthymius, Athanasius and Justin formed another. On December 28, 1995 the latter group passed judgement on the ecumenist activities of Paisius and Vincent and declared them “fallen from the faith”, without, however, defrocking them. But then, at the beginning of 1996, Athanasius and Justin left Callinicus and Euthymius and joined Stephen, Anthony, Paisius and Vincent to form yet another Synod.

In April, 1996 Callinicus and Euthymius bought the fourth floor of Canningos 32, and consecrated new bishops: Macarius (Kavvakides), who was later elected archbishop of their new synod, Anthimus (Karamitros) and Christopher (Angelopoulos), who had been defrocked for immorality by the Patriarch of Jerusalem before being received into the Church by Auxentius. Meanwhile, the other bishops under the presidency of Athanasius occupied the third floor of the same building and in October consecrated two new bishops for America – the Russian Archimandrite Anthony (Grabbe), who had been defrocked for immorality by Metropolitan Vitaly, and Plotinus (Argitelis). This group proceeded to defrock Callinicus and Euthymius, but revoked their sentence the following day.

In January, 1997 Metropolitan Peter of Astoria died; and in February - Anthony of Megara. The latter was buried by Vincent, but the 40-day pannikhida was performed by the Holy Synod under Archbishop Chrysostom.

In the same month, Archimandrite Niphon, who was the spiritual father of some people in the Chrysostomite parishes in the Lamia region and appeared to be a fervent supporter of Archbishop Chrysostom¹¹⁶, approached Metropolitan Callinicus of the Twelve Islands in Athens and asked him to join with Athanasius of Acharnae (who was not then a member of the Synod) to consecrate him to the episcopate. Callinicus refused. But Niphon would obtain his ambition later...

In May, Vincent, “weeping and groaning”, handed over the seal of the Metropolia of Piraeus and Salamis to Archbishop Chrysostom and returned to America. Then Paisius, Vincent, Nectarius (formerly Plotinus) and Anthony separated from Athanasius, Stephen and Justin and formed their own synod.

¹¹⁶ In the Lamia region he used to preach faithfulness to the Chrysostomite Synod because “the sin of Callinicus Khaniotes and Euthymius Orphanos cannot be washed out even by the blood of martyrdom”, and “if his Beatitude [Archbishop Chrysostom] were to receive Euthymius and Callinicus back, I would cease to commemorate the Archbishop and would commemorate every Orthodox episcopate” (Bishop Photius, *Chronicle*).

In September Stephen and Justin returned to the Holy Synod under Archbishop Chrysostom...

In January, 1998 Athanasios of Acharnae returned to the Chrysostomite Synod. In the same month Calliopius of Pentapolis died. In this period many priests were returning to the Holy Synod.

In February, 1998 Archimandrite Paul (Stratigeas), former Chancellor of the Astoria diocese, was elected and consecrated as the new Metropolitan of America. This elicited some protests and unease because of his ecumenist tendencies in the past - of which, however, he had repented publicly. In April Paisius and Vincent gave an interview in America eulogizing the Ecumenical Patriarch. When Callinicus and Euthymius, as was only to be expected, reacted negatively to this, Paisius and Vincent apostasised to Constantinople (where they were promptly rebaptised!!) They were not joined by Nectarius and Anthony, who went their own separate ways.

In June, 1998 the "General Fund" returned into the hands of the Chrysostomite Synod, together with the offices of the Synod on the third floor of Canningos 32. Confusion was now created by the fact that the two rivals Synods calling themselves "The Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece" occupied two floors of the same building. In the summer of 1996, the Chrysostomite Synod had obtained a decision in the Lower Court in Athens recognising the religious organization "The Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece" as a juridical person with the right to own property. And they had forbidden any other group to use that name under threat of court action. The reason for this, as Bishop Photius explains, was simply to avoid confusion. The Callinicitis "use the same name, the same building on the same street and postmen, [so] the faithful and the authorities are confused. [Archbishop Macarius, the new leader of the Callinicitis since 2003] wants that confusion. We [do] not. If he has the right to use the name, let him keep it and we shall find a similar name for the title of our Church. If we have that right, then the Macariites have to choose another name. And we believe that we *have* the right because we have [a] legal person with that title."¹¹⁷

However, the Callinicitis saw a much more sinister motive in the Chrysostomite action. Thus Archimandrite Nectarius quoted the words of the Chrysostomite Synod in 1996 that "from now on nobody else has the right to use this name. Otherwise our Church will be forced to seek to defend itself in the courts"¹¹⁸, and chose to see hidden in the last words, "seek to defend itself in the courts" "a greater meaning than may appear at first sight, for the Chrysostomites were thinking of no more and no less than entering the Greek state on equal terms with the new calendarists and becoming, so to speak, 'a

¹¹⁷ Bishop Photius, private communication, September 28, 2004.

¹¹⁸ *Ekklesia G.O.X. Ellados*, N 8, p. 56; Bishop Macarius of Petra, *To Katantima tis ipo ton Khrysostomon Kiousin proderevomenis Synodou*, Thessalonica, 1999, p. 12 (in Greek).

second state church'. With this end, [writes Bishop Macarius of Petra,] 'on June 4, 1998 a delegation of the above-mentioned Synod [consisting of Archbishop Chrysostom, Metropolitan Callinicus of Achaia and two archimandrites], inspired by a false Protestant theory of group freedom of conscience, according to which those having the same faith have the right, on uniting with each other, to express it in common services, employing the protection of the government, renounced the Orthodox world-view that the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece is a Local One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, and proclaimed that the Church of the Old Calendarists is a religious community! And they asked for the State's 'lawful protection' in liquidating all the True Orthodox Christians who do not belong to them!! (op. cit., p. 8). One involuntarily thinks of Sergius Stragorodsky and his legalization of his Synod with the consequent liquidation of those not belonging to him (however, one must give the Greeks their due - here they were not talking about physical 'liquidation')."

Both Bishop Macarius' incoherent and incomprehensible reference to a "Protestant theory of group freedom" (what theory?!) and Fr. Nectarius' reference to Sergius Stragorodsky are quite out of place here. The Greek State, though not truly Orthodox, cannot be compared to the Soviet Union; legalization with the Greek authorities is not ipso facto a sin against Orthodoxy in the way that legalization with the militant atheist Soviet authorities was because of the anathema lying on the Soviet state. Nor, as Archimandrite Nectarius (if not Bishop Macarius) graciously concedes, were the Chrysostomites aiming at the physical liquidation of the Callinicitis! The registration of a legal name with the authorities was not sinful in itself. The Chrysostomites could justly be criticised only if *either* they used the legal status they acquired with the State to persecute the Callinicitis in a real way (as opposed to simply protecting their property from them by legal means), *or* the constitution of the corporation was uncanonical....

Archimandrite Niphon declared that "the making of the True Orthodox Church of Greece into a corporation [sic!] generally overthrows the basic dogmas, abolishes the canons, violates Holy Tradition and, in a word, turns everything upside down for the sake of receiving [the status of] a juridical person"¹¹⁹? But this was surely a wild exaggeration and distortion. Moreover, to call it a "Protestant heresy" was unjust even to the Protestants since, as far as the present writer knows, the Protestants with their doctrine of "the invisible Church of all believers" do not assert the identity of the Church with any visible organization or legal corporation! The very fact that the constitution of the corporation said that the Church of Christ was founded on the Day of Pentecost by the Lord Jesus Christ, whereas the corporation itself was founded on such-and-such a day and month and year by 20 people, and could be "liquidated" by a quorum of members, shows that no identification of the Church with the legal corporation was intended. Besides, in every

¹¹⁹ Bishop Macarius, *To Katantima*, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

jurisdiction of the True Orthodox Christians almost every church and monastery has some kind of legal corporation. Why should these be “lawful, canonical and allowed by the Church”, in Bishop Macarius’ words, while the Chrysostomite legal corporation constitutes “a Protestant ecclesiological heresy that appeared after the proclamation of liberty of conscience by the United States in 1787 and especially after the French revolution of 1789...”¹²⁰!

The Callinices also saw a sinister Protestant heresy in the “Constitutional Charter” which the Chrysostomites, after prolonged consultation that produced few objections, established in September, 1998. The most important points in the Charter, a legal document registered with the civil authorities of Greece, were: (a) all property, monastic or parish, was concentrated in the hands of the Synod; (b) monasteries were denied the right to own property; (c) hieromonks were prohibited from serving in parishes without special permission from their ruling hierarchs, even when the parish was opened by the monastery; and (d) between Synodal sessions the Archbishop was given the right to make decisions on his own, although the Synod had the right to agree or disagree with his decisions at the next meeting.¹²¹ (a) went against the prevailing tradition in Greece, where parishes and monasteries are allowed to own their property independent of their bishop. However, it is not contrary to the holy canons, which decree that “the Bishop have authority over the property of the Church” (Apostolic Canon 41).

The leader in the attack on the Charter was Archimandrite Niphon, who, as we have seen, was seeking a way to join the Callinices and receive consecration there. He was supported in the background by the Callinice Bishop Macarius and the Athonite Elder Augustine, a former lawyer.

Niphon had another motive: the Synod had refused him permission to found a metochion under his control in the Chicago area. Niphon stormed against the Synod’s supposedly “tyrannical teachings” which had the result that “the ruling Holy Monastery could not found free metochia as before”. But as Archbishop Chrysostom justly wrote: “Where do you know that this is written in the Sacred Canons? On the contrary, do you not know that the Sacred Canons demand permission to be obtained for the establishment of a monastic institution? Are you in disagreement with the Sacred Canons?”¹²²

He was; and in November, 1998 Niphon left the Synod with Metropolitans Athanasius of Acharnae and Callinicus of the Twelve Islands.¹²³ In January,

¹²⁰ Bishop Macarius, *To Katantima*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹²¹ Basil Lourie, “The Split in the Genuine Orthodox Church”, *Vertograd*, March, 1999, p. 10.

¹²² *Encyclical* of Archbishop Chrysostom, December 22, 1998, Athens, 1999 (G).

¹²³ Callinicus had been propounding heretical Apollinarian views on the Incarnation. When caught out by one of his own priests, and beginning to realise his mistake, he then said that he would repent of his error if the other bishops repented of certain supposedly heretical things that they had said. But the Synod refused to accept this “deal” (Bishop Photius of Marathon, personal communication, July 9/22, 2005).

1999 the Holy Synod rescinded the “Constitutional Charter”, not because it considered it uncanonical, but in order to make it easier for Niphon to return to the Church. But he did not, and in July officially joined the Callinices (Callinicus of the Twelve Islands remained on his own). In September, he was consecrated metropolitan of the Piraeus, and **Arethas** metropolitan of Crete.

In July, 1999 Metropolitan Matthew of Oinoe died suddenly, This persuaded Archbishop Chrysostom to proceed to the consecration of new bishops in August: **Gerontius of Piraeus and Salamis, Chrysostom of Attica and Boeotia, Gregory of Christianoupolis, Photius of Marathon and Theodosius of Bresthena**. The first four bishops were young (30-34 years), which fact was used as another stick to beat the Chrysostomites with.¹²⁴

Archimandrite Nectarius was on firmer ground when he criticised the Chrysostomite Synod for seeking reconciliation with ROCOR during the late 1990s in spite of ROCOR’s continued communion with Cyprian of Fili, whom the Chrysostomites had defrocked. This was pushed especially by Metropolitan Paul of Astoria, who in 1999 criticised Fr. Nectarius, then a Chrysostomite cleric, for receiving someone from ROCOR, although he had not even been chrismated. Moreover, in 1998 there was an agreement between the two Synods not to receive clergy from each other’s jurisdiction without certificates of release. In earlier years, Metropolitan Peter had justified his occasional communion with the Russians on the grounds that he had been consecrated by them, so could not refuse. Clearly, a certain degree of inter-communion was taking place.

However, in 2001, an unofficial Chrysostomite delegation visited Jordanville and raised the issue of Cyprian and Cyprianism. Archbishop Laurus promised that the matter would be discussed at the next ROCOR Council after the election of a new metropolitan. But then the schism between Laurus and Vitaly took place, and the Chrysostomite dialogue with Laurus ended...¹²⁵

¹²⁴ See Bishop Macarius, *Katastatikai Kheirotoniia, Nearoi Arkhontes, Simeion theikis egkatalapseos*, Thessalonica, 1999 (G).

¹²⁵ Bishop Photius, private communication, June 28, 2003.

9. The Greeks in Russia

Relations between the True Orthodox Christians of Greece and their brothers in the faith inside Russia began in 1990, when, on the one hand, the Matthewite Schema-Monk Epiphanius (Chernov)¹²⁶ returned to Russia from England and gathered together a number of Catacomb parishes under the omophorion of the Matthewites, and on the other, 5000 “passportless” Christians petitioned the Chrysostomite Holy Synod to make their leader, Archimandrite Gurias (Pavlov), a bishop. When the Chrysostomites did not immediately satisfy their demand, the “passportless” joined the Bostonites, who made Gurias Bishop of Kazan in 1991. He died in 1996.

Another group seeking relations with the Greeks were the “Andrewites”. A large question mark hangs over not only the canonicity, but even the very existence of this branch, so the following data, derived from only one source¹²⁷, must be considered extremely provisional and quite possibly incorrect. So called from their founding father, Archbishop Andrew of Ufa (+1937), the canonicity of the Andrewite hierarchy depends in part on the canonicity of Archbishop Andrew, considered by some to be one of the great martyrs of the Catacomb Church and by others – a schismatic who died under ban and formally an Old Ritualist.¹²⁸

After their last bishops died in the early 1980s, the Andrewites found a 96-year-old Bishop Amphilochius (Shibanov, consecrated in 1928) living in secret in the Trans-Baikal region, and in June, 1994 brought him to Moscow, where he consecrated (on his own) two bishops, and later two more, before dying shortly afterwards. In June, 1995, the Andrewites held a Council at which they defined their (rather extreme) position on various questions. The acts of this Council were signed by: Bishops Ambrose (Count von Sievers) of the Goths, Evagrius (Baron Drenteln) of Ingermannland, Paisius (Rogozhin) of Satkinsk

¹²⁶ Fr. Epiphanius is called a "schema-metropolitan" in some Russian publications. However, the present writer, who knew him well, has failed to find any evidence that he was more than a simple monk. And in the eulogy to him published by the Matthewites after his death (*Kirix Gnision Orthodoxon*, November, 1995), there is no mention of his supposed episcopate.

¹²⁷ Bishop Ambrose (von Sievers), "Ispytatel'nie Voprosy zadannie smnievaiushchim Preosviashchennomu Amvroziu Episkopu Gotfskomu" (MS, 7/20 June, 1994), personal communication, and "Episkopat Istino-Pravoslavnoj Katakombnoj Tserkvi", *Russkoe Pravoslavie*, № 4 (8), 1997, 1-20. See also I.I. Osipova, "Skvoz' Ogn' Muchenij i Vody Slyoz...", Moscow: Serebryanniye Niti, 1998.

¹²⁸ See, for one side of the argument, Archbishop Ambrose (von Sievers), "Otpal li Arkhiepiskop Andrej (Ukhtomsky) v Staroobriadcheskij Raskol?", *Russkoe Pravoslavie*, № 2 (11), 1998, and Paul Boyarshinov, "Svyashchennomuchenik Arkhiepiskop Andrei Ufimskij (v miru Kniaz' Ukhtomsky) Izsledovanie Zhiznedeiatel'nosti", Diploma thesis, Holy Trinity Theological Seminary, 1995 (MS); and for the other side, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), "Po Povodu stat'i ob Arkhiepiskope Andree (kn. Ukhtomskom)", *Vestnik Germanskoj Eparkhii Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi za Granitsej*, № 3, 1993, p. 14. See also the extensive material on Archbishop Andrew published in *Vozdvizhenie*, №№ 12 (32) and 13 (33, winter and spring, 2000.

and Eustace (Amosov) of Chita. The Council confirmed an earlier decision, made at the Nikolsky Council of 1961, that sergianists were not to be raised to the priesthood except in exceptional circumstances, and only those who had been subdeacons or lower in the patriarchate. In June, 1996 the Andrewites held another Council near Moscow attended by eight bishops (Ambrose, Evagrius, Paisius, Eustathius, Pancratius, John, Babylas and Nectarius) - twenty-two clergy in all. At this Council the 29 canons of the "Nomadic" Council of 1928 (which most observers consider to be mythical) were confirmed, and measures against various sexual sins were adopted.¹²⁹

The Andrewites claim to be in communion with a "Clementite" Old Believer hierarchy, so called from their first bishop, Clement, who was consecrated by Archbishop Andrew of Ufa in 1925.¹³⁰

According to one source, the Andrewites have 11 bishops and 10,000 faithful, most of whom are scattered in Bashkiria, the Lower Volga region, Krasnodar region and the Urals.¹³¹

Returning now to the Matthewite Russians, Anton Ter-Grigorian writes: "In 1993, Chernov, undoubtedly a vivid and talented Church organizer, cut off all ecclesiastical relations with the Greek Matthewites. In the same year he widely distributed his 'Letter to the Catacomb Christians' in which he wrote that the Greeks understood nothing about the problems of Russia, were behaving in a provocatively high-handed manner and did not want to consecrate a Russian hierarch. Before his death, which took place a year later, he also distributed in the catacomb milieu his 'Spiritual Testament'. In the Testament he wrote that they should no longer have any relations with the Greeks and added: 'finally a true Russian hierarchy has been discovered'. What hierarchy precisely this was he did not specify. However, a part of the communities founded by Chernov declared after his death that this hierarchy had been founded in 1994 by a miraculously discovered Bishop Amphilochius and was not contained in the hierarchy of Archbishop Ambrose (Count von Sievers). The representatives of these hierarchies declared also that Church was planning to go to the Council of the miraculously discovered true Russian hierarchy, but was not able to because of illness and died a few weeks before the Council.

"In Chernov's former (Matthewite) communities chaos broke out. Some were already commemorating Archbishop Ambrose, others commemorated

¹²⁹ For more on Bishop Ambrose, see his autobiographical article, "Endurance: Reminiscences of the True Orthodox Church", *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 25, № 3, 1997, pp. 220-234; "Archiepiskop Amvrosij ('Sivers')", *Vertograd-Inform*, № 2 (59), 2000, pp. 46-49.

¹³⁰ Bishop Ambrose (von Sievers), "Klimentovskaia' Ierarkhia I.P.Ts.", *Russkoe Pravoslavie*, № 5 (9), 1997, pp. 1-11 ©. See also *Kto est' kto v Rossijskikh Katakombakh*, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-27. This latter publication also has information on several other small Catacomb groups.

¹³¹ Priest Daniel Sysoev, "Katakombnij Raskol", <http://www.antirascol.nm.ru/katraskol.htm>, p. 24.

the Greek Vladyka. However, communality of tradition (Chernov) was preserved in both parts of the 'Greco-Russian Church'. And the representatives of the communities prayed together in their peregrinations round Russia."

In 1996 the leaders of the two communities, Archbishop Ambrose and Metropolitan Cyricus, met in a flat in Moscow. Two of those accompanying Cyricus asked for Ambrose's blessing. Cyricus himself called him "Despota", bowed to him and took hold of his hand. But Ambrose removed his hand, explaining that "kissing the hands is a Turkish custom, a sign of submission". The meeting lasted for two hours, and ended cordially. The two communities were now in effect one, having Fr. Epiphanius Chernov as their common spiritual father. However, Fr. Andrew Sidniev did not like the strictly anti-sergianist stance of Archbishop Ambrose, and succeeded in getting an encyclical published in which Metropolitan Cyricus advised his spiritual children not to trust Archbishop Ambrose. Although the metropolitan denied that it was his encyclical, but ascribed it to Sidniev, he did not reject it openly either. As a result Archbishop Ambrose was forced in his own encyclical to forbid his spiritual children to have communion with the Matthewites.¹³²

In July, 2005 Metropolitan Cyricus broke off relations with the other Matthewite bishops, and his Russian flock followed him into the wilderness. It remains to be seen what will happen to the two Russian priests who were under the omophorion of Metropolitan Epiphanius of Cyprus until he died in April, 2005.

The Chrysostomites have two priests in Russia, while the "Macariites" have about sixteen. A major problem for the Macariites in Russia, apart from the dubious canonicity of their bishops, is the penetration into their midst of the ideas of the "name worshippers", a heresy concerning the name of God that arose among the Russian monks on Mount Athos at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the summer of 2005 Bishop Photius, secretary of the Chrysostomite Holy Synod, re-published the condemnations of the heresy made by the Holy Synods of the Churches of Russia and Constantinople...¹³³

¹³² Ter-Grigorian, "Mitr. Kirik Mesogejskij i Arkhiepiskop Amvrosij Gotfskij - vstrecha na Elbe », www.romanitas.ru, September, 2004.

¹³³ "The Heresy of Name-Worshipping", *I Phoni tis Orthodoxias*, 934, May-June, 2005, p. 4 (G).

Conclusion

The period surveyed can only be described as a period of confusion and chaos in the history of the Greek Church. This is tragic at a time when the Russian Church, too, has been going through unprecedented turmoil and decline, and when many fleeing from the chaos in the Russian Church have hoped to find a tranquil haven among the Greeks. Nevertheless, in spite of the many schisms and sordid episodes taking place at the level of the hierarchy, the life in Christ has continued in many Greek parishes far away from the tumult of warring bishops. Moreover, there are some tentative signs of a recovery: albeit with great difficulty, the bishops that have stained themselves with heretical and immoral practices are gradually being separated out, and a firmer, more canonical base for the life of the Church is being constructed. May God grant that the hopes this generates will not be frustrated in the twenty-first century as they were towards the end of the twentieth!