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# **Journey to the “Holy and Great Synod”**

**An Unceasing Estrangement  
from Genuine Patristic Orthodoxy**



Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians of Greece  
Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle

2015



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for vouchsafing me to bring to a conclusion  
this humble work of mine.



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and her Synodia



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*February 6, 2015 (Old Style)  
Commemoration of St. Photios the Great,  
Patriarch of Constantinople, Enlightener of  
Moravia through the Holy Equals-to-the-  
Apostles Methodios and Cyril*



## *The Orthodox Informer*

*“For it is a commandment of the Lord not to be silent at a time when the Faith is in jeopardy. Speak, Scripture says, and hold not thy peace.... For this reason, I, the wretched one, fearing the Tribunal, also speak.”*

(St. Theodore the Studite, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. XCIX, col. 1321)

# Journey to the “Holy and Great Synod”

## An Unceasing Estrangement from Genuine Patristic Orthodoxy

### I. Introduction

From March 6-9, 2014 (New Style), a gathering of the Primates of the official local Churches was held in Constantinople. During this meeting, the assembled Prelates decided to convoke a “Holy and Great Synod” of innovationist Orthodox ecumenists on Pentecost of 2016.<sup>1</sup>

In his homily on the Feast of the Holy Three New Hierarchs (Sunday, November 3, 2014 [Old Style]), His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle stated that this Synod can already “be characterized in advance as a false synod,” which, if it does finally take place, “will render the chasm between the Genuine Orthodox and the ecumenists henceforth unbridgeable.”<sup>2</sup>

Now, are there any objective grounds to support such an eval-

<sup>1</sup> Metropolitan Jeremias of Switzerland, “Η Ἁγία καὶ Μεγάλη Σύνοδος τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας” (The Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church), *Ἐπίσκεψις*, No. 761 (April 30, 2014), pp. 17-19.

<sup>2</sup> Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, “Η Γνησία Ὁρθοδοξία ἐν ὄψει τῆς προκλήσεως τοῦ 2016” (Genuine Orthodoxy in View of the Challenge of 2016), <http://hsir.org/p/vz>.

uation?

A careful study of the history of the “Holy and Great Synod” and of its convocation, as we shall discover in what follows, fully vindicates Metropolitan Cyprian’s position.

Since this is an issue of great importance in the current ecclesiastical climate, which demands from Genuine Orthodoxy a responsible, sober, and well-documented critique, we shall present, in the ensuing pages, an outline of the principal stages in the long-drawn-out history of the “Holy and Great Synod” that is being planned by the ecumenists of the Phanar and those of like mind with them. Such an outline will provide us with basic data with which to approach this complex and many-sided issue from a pastoral and missionary perspective.

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The idea that there was a need for a meeting of Orthodox Churches at a pan-Orthodox level first arose at the beginning of the twentieth century.

As is widely accepted, the advent of the twentieth century brought to the forefront of history some profoundly revolutionary and radical changes which affected all levels of social life

Experts have shown that the impact of these transformations far exceeded even the changes which the European world experienced in its transition from the Middle Ages to modern times.

It is evident that this turbulent period, during which the new framework of modernity emerged, could not fail to influence also the life of the Orthodox Church.

Thus, a process of profound alteration and transformation commenced within Orthodoxy, impinging on its very nature.

Of decisive importance in this process were the initiatives of the Ecumenical Throne, the Church of Constantinople.

## II. Patriarch Joachim III

In 1901, Joachim III was again elected Patriarch of Constantinople, and he inaugurated an innovative new course, a new orientation, for the Œcumenical Throne in the twentieth century.

Already in his enthronement homily he mentioned two issues to which he was to give especial emphasis:

- The first issue was the resolution of problems in relations between the Orthodox Churches. It was fitting that the Œcumenical Throne should play a leading rôle in this endeavor, in conformity with its canonical status, from which its responsibility for the maintenance of inter-Orthodox unity derived.
- The second issue concerned the unity of the Christian world, that is, the relationship between Orthodoxy and the heterodox Confessions.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

In the following year, 1902, Joachim III published a “Patriarchal and Synodal Encyclical,” which was addressed to all of the Primate of the local Orthodox Churches.

This Encyclical initiated the well-known dialogue, at a pan-Orthodox level, between Joachim III and the representatives of the official local Churches.

Three topics are proposed for discussion:

- the deepening and consolidation of inter-Orthodox unity;
- the relationship of the Orthodox Church to Western Christianity. The Patriarch speaks of a pious and heartfelt longing for “the union of them [Western Christians] and of all who believe in Christ with us in the Orthodox Faith”; he considers how it is possible “to smoothen the [at present] uneven path that leads to such a goal,” and “to find points of encounter and contact, or even points that might legitimately, by mutual agreement, be overlooked”; for only then will “Christ’s saying about one flock and one shepherd” be fulfilled; and

<sup>3</sup> Evangelia Barella, *Διορθόδοξοι και οίκομμενικαί σχέσεις τοῦ Πατριαρχείου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως κατὰ τὸν Κ' Αἰῶνα* (Inter-Orthodox and ecumenical relations of the Patriarchate of Constantinople during the twentieth century) (Thessalonike: Patriarchikon Hidryma Paterikon Meleton, 1994), p. 63.

he says that this dialogue will become “the first-fruit of the hoped-for and longed-for unity of all Christians throughout the world”;

- the reform of the Julian Calendar or the acceptance of the Gregorian Calendar and the possibility of altering the *Paschalion*.<sup>4</sup>

If we compare this Encyclical of Joachim III, through which he made “profoundly revolutionary and pioneering overtures to the Christian world of the West,”<sup>5</sup> with the Encyclicals that were issued by the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the nineteenth century (1836, 1838, 1848, and 1895) and which deal with the relationship of the Orthodox Church to Western Christianity, we can see very clearly that with Patriarch Joachim III there emerges a new and altered self-understanding of the Orthodox Church.

\* \* \*

For the purpose of promoting his vision, aside from corresponding with representatives of the local Orthodox Churches, Joachim III endeavored to convoke a local Synod in Constantinople in which representatives of other Patriarchates would take part.

The Patriarch also drew up a list of twelve topics, which he sent to the other Patriarchs for consideration.

In the end, the meeting did not take place.

This idea, however, was the firstfruits of the future initiatives of the Œcumenical Throne for the convocation of the “Holy and Great Synod.”<sup>6</sup>

### III. Patriarch Meletios IV and the Pan-Orthodox Congress of 1923

The next step on the path towards the convocation of the “Holy and Great Synod” was taken by Patriarch Meletios (Metaxakes), who

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<sup>4</sup> Gennadios Limouris (ed.), *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism: Statements, Messages and Reports on the Ecumenical Movement, 1902-1992* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), pp. 3-4 [emended translation ours—TRANS.].

<sup>5</sup> *Ιστορία τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας* (History of Orthodoxy), Vol. VIII (Athens: 2009), p. 78.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

in 1922 occupied the See of Constantinople in a manner contrary to the Canons of the Church.

From a letter which the then cabinet minister Andreas Michalakopoulos sent to Eleutherios Venizelos in 1916, we learn of the expectations of the political leaders who propelled the tragic figure of Meletios to the Patriarchal Throne.

Mr. President, I told you a long time ago in the Council of Ministers that, after we had brought to a successful conclusion the national struggle..., it would be necessary, for the good of the country, for you to take care of another equally important struggle, that of modernizing our religious affairs.... To head this truly revolutionary reform, you will need a broad-minded clergyman, one almost like you in politics. You have one:... he is Meletios Metaxakes, the Bishop of Kition in Cyprus.

Michalakopoulos goes on to propose to the Prime Minister a blueprint for such a revolutionary reform, and reassures him not to fear lest the people “rise up against the new Iconoclasts,” as long as the reform is based on his (Venizelos’) prestige.<sup>7</sup>

\* \* \*

And indeed, the hapless Patriarch Meletios proved to be a suitable person for the realization of a reform of this kind.

To be precise, three aspects of his character prepared him for this destructive task, a fruit of which was the very dissolution of the unity of the Orthodox Church in the twentieth century.

- First, he was an unprincipled and fanatical reformer. Shortly before his death, the periodical *Zωή* wrote:

Frustrated by conservatism, he manifested liberal tendencies, which oftentimes proved uncontrollable, . . . regarding even the institutions of the Church as easily adaptable to expediency and the demands of the age. . . . Ambitious, restless, and untiring, he was also a meddlesome author of initiatives and a deviser and instigator of unre-

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<sup>7</sup> Demetrios Gatopoulos, *Ἀνδρέας Μιχαλακόπουλος (1875-1938)* (Andreas Michalakopoulos [1875-1938]) (Athens: 1947), pp. 90-93.

alizable schemes. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Metropolitan Irenaios of Kassandreia, in his famous “Memorandum” to the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, severely criticized Meletios:

The spirit of innovationism and rebellion. . . was incarnate in the person of the pernicious Patriarch Meletios Metaxakes. . . . Satisfying the sinful wishes and self-serving desires of heterodox churches and secret societies, to which, blinded by vainglory and sacrificing everything for the enhancement of his own ego, he owed his successive accession to the highest positions in the local Orthodox Churches. . . he opened wide the gates to every innovation.<sup>9</sup>

• Secondly, Patriarch Meletios was an ecumenist out of deep conviction.

As far back as his sojourn in America, before he arrived in Constantinople, he had established very close relations with representatives of Anglicanism.

In 1922, immediately after his accession to the Throne of Constantinople, “unilaterally and without the prior agreement of all the autocephalous Orthodox Churches”<sup>10</sup> he recognized the validity of Anglican ordinations.

Only after the fact did he communicate his decision in a letter “To the Presidents of the holy Orthodox Churches,” in which he explains that his decision would “facilitate the longed-for union” and urges them to express their opinion, so that “a pan-Orthodox understanding of this serious question might be made known.”<sup>11</sup>

• A third factor which enabled him to bring to fruition his tragic

<sup>8</sup> Ζωή, No. 1195 (August 10, 1935), p. 248.

<sup>9</sup> Metropolitan Irenaios of Kassandreia, “Υπόμνημα εις τὴν Ἱερὰν Σύνοδον τῆς Ἑλλάδος συγκληθεῖσαν 14ῆ Ἰουνίου 1929” (Memorandum to the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece convened on June 14, 1929) (Athens: Typois “Auges,” 1929), pp. 18-20.

<sup>10</sup> Ioannes Karmires (ed.), *Τὰ Δογματικά καὶ Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας* (The Dogmatic and Credal Monuments of the Orthodox Catholic Church) (Athens: 1953), Vol. II, p. 1026.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1030.

historical mission was his affiliation with Freemasonry, the ideological bases of which are completely incompatible with the Orthodox Faith.

In 1967, in the *Τεκτονικὸν Δελτίον* (The Masonic Bulletin), Alexandros J. Zerboudakes published an encomium of Meletios, in which “he sketched the life of yet another brilliant star, which shone upon and illumined the firmament of the Greek Orthodox Church.” The author, who had known Meletios personally, concludes his article, many pages in length, with the following words:

With the spiritual virtues with which Meletios was endowed, with his sound grasp of logic, and with his independent mind, free from pettiness, it is not surprising that he was ready to receive the light of Freemasonry.... Few are those who, like Brother Meletios, accept Freemasonry and make it the experience of their life. It was a genuine loss for us that he was so quickly called from the Grand Harmony Masonic Lodge into eternal repose, before completing the tasks with which he crowned his passing from our world.<sup>12</sup>

And indeed, after his ascent to the Œcumenical Throne, Patriarch Meletios did not hesitate to apply these gifts of his and, “avid to gain a reputation for reforming and overturning the order and Tradition of the Orthodox Church, for the sake of satisfying worldly, political, social, and pro-heretical goals..., convoked the so-called ‘Pan-Orthodox Congress’ in Constantinople from May 10 through June 8, 1923.”<sup>13</sup>

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Meletios’ congress, wrongly called “Pan-Orthodox,” continued and carried yet further the overtures of Joachim III toward the her-

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<sup>12</sup> Alexandros J. Zerboudakes, “Διάσημοι Τεκτ , Μελέτιος Μεταξάκης” (Famous Freemasons: Meletios Metaxakes), *Τεκτονικὸν Δέλτιον: Ὅργανον τῆς Μεγάλης Στοάς τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, Vol. XVII, No. 71 (January-February 1967), pp. 48-50.

<sup>13</sup> Bishop Klemes of Gardikion, “2013, Διπλὴ Ἐπέτειος Θριάμβου (843) καὶ Προσβολῆς (1923) τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας μας. Ἱστορία καὶ Εὐθύνη” (2013—A Double Anniversary, of the Triumph of Orthodoxy (843) and of the Assault Against Orthodoxy (1923): History and Culpability,” <http://hsir.org/p/svx>.

esies of Western Christianity.

It should be noted that these overtures had in the meantime undergone further theological development and been synodally endorsed by the cacodox 1920 Encyclical of the Patriarchate of Constantinople “Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere,” which has rightly been characterized as the “founding charter”<sup>14</sup> of Orthodox ecumenism.

At this congress, aside from other measures (acceptance of the New Calendar, readiness to establish a fixed date for Pascha, reforms regarding impediments to clerical marriage, changes in the fasting rules, and the celebration on weekends of Saints’ Days falling on workdays), a decision was made concerning the convocation of a Pan-Orthodox Synod in 1925, in celebration of the sixteen-hundredth anniversary of the First Œcumenical Synod in Nicæa.

At this Synod the decisions of the 1923 Congress were to be ratified at a truly pan-Orthodox level, since it was only representatives of the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Serbia, and Romania that took part in the 1923 Congress, the Churches of Greece and Cyprus having authorized those already in attendance to represent them.

It should be noted that the 1923 Congress began its proceedings as a “Commission of Orthodox Churches”; only subsequently, at its third session on May 18, 1923, did it proclaim itself to be a “Pan-Orthodox Congress.”<sup>15</sup>

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The opinion of the ever-memorable dogmatician Father [St.] Justin (Popović) of Ćelije is worth bearing in mind:

The question of the preparation and constitution of a new ‘Œcumen-

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<sup>14</sup> Basileios Stavrides, *Ίστορία τῆς Οἰκουμενικῆς Κινήσεως* (History of the ecumenical movement) (Thessalonike: Patriarchikon Hidryma Paterikon Meleton, 1985), p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> Dionysios M. Batistatos (ed.), *Πρακτικὰ καὶ Ἀποφάσεις τοῦ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Πανορθοδόξου Συνεδρίου (10 Μαΐου-8 Ἰουνίου 1923)* (Proceedings and decisions of the Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople [May 10-June 8, 1923]) (Athens: 1982), pp. 48-50.

ical Synod’ of the Orthodox Church...was already raised during the lifetime of Patriarch Meletios Metaxakes of Constantinople—no-torious as an arrogant modernist, reformer, and author of schisms within Orthodoxy—at the so-called ‘Pan-Orthodox Congress’ that he convened in Constantinople in 1923.<sup>16</sup>

#### IV. Patriarch Basil III

After Meletios, his like-minded successor, Patriarch Basil III, who embodied in his own person the same indispensable gifts, namely those of a reformer, ecumenist, and Freemason, continued the journey toward the convocation of a Pan-Orthodox Synod.

- As far back as 1920, he had published in the periodical *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Κήρυξ* a study entitled “Περὶ ἐκκλησιαστικῶν μεταρρυθμίσεων” (Concerning ecclesiastical reforms), in which he sets forth without hesitation what, according to his presumptuous outlook, needed to be accomplished in order to ensure “an amelioration of our common Church life.”<sup>17</sup>

The reform envisioned by Basil III is distinguished by an intensely anti-monastic spirit and a longing for a wholesale modernization and adaptation of the Church to the realities of an era changing by leaps and bounds.<sup>18</sup>

- At the Pan-Orthodox Congress of 1923, he strongly advocated a new voyage of Orthodoxy to the West and proposed that we should not simply consider “tightening the relations of our Church with the Anglican and Old Catholic Churches,” but should proceed even further and deliberate “about the union of the Churches, including

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<sup>16</sup> Archimandrite Justin Πορονιός, *Περὶ τὴν Μελετωμένην “Μεγάλην Σύνοδον” τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας. Ὑπόμνημα πρὸς τὴν Σύνοδον τῆς Ἱεραρχίας τῆς Σερβικῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας (Ἀπρίλιος 1977)* (Concerning the proposed ‘Great Synod’ of the Orthodox Church: Memorandum to the Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church ([April 1977]) (Athens: 1977), p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Κήρυξ*, No. 254 (April 29, 1920).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

the Church of Rome.”<sup>19</sup>

- Finally, he was a stranger to Orthodoxy, since he was a faithful adherent and affiliate of Freemasonry.

In 1964, the *Τεκτονικὸν Δελτίον* published a brief special issue dedicated to the figure of Basil III, which circulated also as a separate volume: “Βασίλειος Γ΄ Οικουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης ὁ ἀπὸ Νικαίας, διαπρεπὴς Ἑλλήν Ἐλευθεροτέκτων.”

In this text, Patriarch Basil is lauded as a

great Christian Hierarch and an eminent Greek Mason.... As a Hierarch, he was an intrepid reformer, ever pursuing salutary and contemporary reforms in all cases...and especially in the very serious matter of the fraternal coexistence of the Christian churches.<sup>20</sup>

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The convocation of a Pan-Orthodox Synod in 1925 having proved impossible, Patriarch Basil III decided to postpone convening it until the following year, 1926, on the Holy Mountain.

At the end of 1925, Basil III published a revealing document, “Διάγραμμα Λειτουργίας τῆς ἐπικειμένης Ἁγίας Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου” (Outline of the functioning of the upcoming Holy Œcumenical Synod),<sup>21</sup> which demonstrates how deeply the ideology of the Œcumenical Patriarchs in the first decades of the twentieth century was embedded in the bases of the Pan-Orthodox Synod, incompatible as that ideology was with the experience of the Fathers.

The “Outline” discloses two fundamental goals of the impending Synod:

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<sup>19</sup> Batistatos, *Πρακτικὰ καὶ Ἀποφάσεις*, p. 29. To be precise, it was Metropolitan Kallinikos of Cyzikos who spoke about “tightening the relations” between the Orthodox Church and “the Anglican and Old Catholic Churches”—TRANS.

<sup>20</sup> P.K. Phalbos, *Βασίλειος Γ΄. Οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης, ὁ ἀπὸ Νικαίας διαπρεπὴς Ἑλλήν Ἐλευθεροτέκτων* (Basil III: Œcumenical Patriarch and distinguished Greek Freemason from Nicæa) (Athens: 1964), pp. 3-11.

<sup>21</sup> Archimandrite Theokletos Strangas, *Ἐκκλησίας Ἑλλάδος Ἱστορία ἐκ πηγῶν ἀψευδῶν (1817-1967)* (History of the Church of Greece from reliable sources [1817-1967]), Vol. II (Athens: 1970), p. 1404.

- “a revision of ecclesiastical legislation in its entirety and the adaptation thereof to the present state of the Church,” and
- “an endeavor in every way to communicate and unite in the love of Christ with all of the Christian Churches.”<sup>22</sup>

Patriarch Basil next enumerates, one by one, the subjects of a very broad program of reforms, even surpassing those envisaged by the 1923 Congress.

The internal relationship between these two goals is very clear: We are reforming the ascetical Orthodoxy of the Gospel of the God-Man and adapting it to the level of the bourgeois and secularized humanistic Christianity of the Western variety. Only in this way can we smoothen the path for a henceforth unimpeded union of Orthodoxy “with the sister churches in the East and the venerable Christian Churches in the West and everywhere in the world.”<sup>23</sup>

## V. Initial Objections and Disapproval

The Patriarchal “Outline” provoked intense disapproval, and especially—as one might expect—from the monastic world, ever distinguished throughout history for its Grace-filled sensitivity when it comes to safeguarding the authenticity and Catholicity of the Faith once and for all delivered and revealed.

a. In the vanguard of the struggle for the defense of Orthodoxy against the proposed innovations was an outstanding figure in the Athonite monasticism of that period, Elder Daniel of Katounakia (1846-1929), founder of the renowned Brotherhood of the Danielaiou and spiritual companion of St. Nectarios.

In May of 1925, he wrote a short treatise entitled *Φωνή ἐξ Ἁγίου Ὁρους διὰ τὴν ἐπερχομένην Οἰκουμενικὴν Σύνοδον*, in which he critiques the program previously announced in the light of the Patristic and Synodal Tradition of the Orthodox Church.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> “Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 1920: ‘Unto the Churches of Christ Everywhere,’” in Limouris, *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, p. 9.

Elder Daniel demonstrates that the proposed Œcumenical Synod does not in any way meet the preconditions for Synods, as evident from the proceedings of the Holy Œcumenical Synods themselves. A study of these sources teaches us that the Synods were convoked in order to censure the misbeliefs of heretics, who were poisoning the Christian flock.

This Synod, however, on the contrary “would take” the Œcumenical Synods “to task” in order to condemn them “through a revision [of Orthodoxy],” leading to the creation of a “broad and spacious way for the satisfaction of foreigners.”<sup>24</sup>

Very aptly does Elder Daniel observe that the Patriarchal reform intends to transform Orthodoxy “into something more European... [with the adoption of] the customs and outward forms of foreign heretics.”

The ulterior purpose of this entire endeavor is to attain “the longed-for union of all the churches through our capitulation.”<sup>25</sup>

b. Another voice of opposition and vehement disapprobation of the Patriarchal “Outline” was heard from Elder Philotheos (Zervakos) by way of his epistle “Περὶ Οἰκουµενικῆς Συνόδου” (Concerning an Œcumenical Synod), wherein he warns Patriarch Basil and his Synod to beware of rupturing and dividing the Church by their innovations.<sup>26</sup>

Desiring to safeguard the Church and having in view the perils threatening the life of the Church in that era, he proposes six topics for the upcoming Œcumenical Synod, which are, in his opinion, “necessary, beneficial, and advantageous for the Orthodox Church.”<sup>27</sup>

He proposes, *inter alia*, that “those who despise the sacred Canons and sacred Traditions be deposed and excommunicated” and

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<sup>24</sup> Elder Daniel of Katounakia, *Φωνὴ ἐξ Ἁγίου Ὄρους διὰ τὴν προσεχῆ Οἰκουµενικὴν Σύνοδον* (A voice from the Holy Mountain concerning the upcoming Œcumenical Synod) (Athens: 1926), p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> Ὁ Γέρον Φιλόθεος Ζερβάκος (Elder Philotheos Zervakos) (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxos Kypsele,” 1988), Vol. II, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

that “those who introduce innovations and modernizations be deposed and anathematized.”<sup>28</sup>

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In the end, not even in 1926 did the effort to convene an Ecumenical Synod bear fruit, and the Patriarchate of Constantinople deemed it more prudent and realistic first to convoke a smaller and less authoritative assembly, which it called a Pre-Synod.

In 1930, a consultation of the “Preparatory Commission of the Holy Orthodox Churches” was organized at the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi (on Mount Athos). At this meeting the delegates approved a list of seventeen topics for the Great Synod.<sup>29</sup>

This consultation was followed by thirty long years of silence, during which there prevailed voices which disputed the need for convening a Great Synod.

This occurred at the First Theological Congress in Athens, in 1936, and also at the Congress of leaders and representatives of the Orthodox Churches in Moscow, in 1948, at which the ecumenist overtures of Orthodoxy to the West were repudiated, since the Churches represented refused to take part in the establishment of the World Council of Churches.<sup>30</sup>

## VI. Patriarch Athenagoras

The Church of Constantinople made a fresh attempt to revive the idea of a Great Synod that was lying in abeyance.

This mission was undertaken by Athenagoras, who, as a “proph-

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>29</sup> Barella, *Διορθόδοξοι και οικουμενικαί σχέσεις*, pp. 107-109. See also *Πρακτικά τῆς Προκαταρκτικῆς Ἐπιτροπῆς τῶν Ἁγίων Ὀρθοδόξων Ἐκκλησιῶν τῆς συνελθούσης ἐν τῇ ἐν Ἁγίῳ Ὁρειᾷ Ἱερᾷ Μεγίστῃ Μονῇ τοῦ Βατοπεδίου (8-23 Ἰουνίου 1930)* (Proceedings of the Preparatory Commission of the Holy Orthodox Churches, which convened at the Holy and Great Monastery of Vatopedi [June 8-23, 1930]) (Constantinople: Typois “Phazilet” Tassou Bakalopoulou, 1930), pp. 143-146 (Session 14).

<sup>30</sup> Karmires, *Δογματικά και Συμβολικά Μνημεῖα*, Vol. II, pp. 1046-1048.

et” of the new Orthodoxy of the innovating Orthodox ecumenists, and also as a Freemason,<sup>31</sup> had the audacity to move the “boundaries which our Fathers set.”

He ascended the Patriarchal Throne in 1948, and under his guidance the Great Church, which in bygone days shone forth the light and hope of Orthodoxy to the entire world, “stirred up the stagnant waters and boldly proceeded to implement cautious policies and radically innovative proposals.”<sup>32</sup>

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Two events especially contributed to a general change of atmosphere during the post-war period, which saw a strong new impetus towards the process of rapprochement between Orthodoxy and Western Christianity, with a view to ecclesiastical union:

a. the founding of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, in 1948, with the participation of certain local Orthodox Churches—a factor of decisive importance—and

b. the convocation of the Second Vatican Council, from 1962-1965, which, through its radical *aggiornamento*,<sup>33</sup> completely overturned the thitherto entrenched and closed attitude of the Papacy towards those outside it.

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<sup>31</sup> It was written in 1964: “In Paris, a book entitled *The Sons of Light* was published, in which it is stated that Patriarch Athenagoras is a Freemason. On page 313, the Patriarch is called a Freemason. Since the Patriarch has not come forward to deny this, the scandal persists in the consciences of Christians who have read such frightful news in the daily Athenian press and in publications coming from America—scandal not so much because of what the journalists report, but because the Patriarch himself, who seems indifferent about the matter or does not wish, for reasons best known to himself, to come forward and deny this report” (see “Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople: His Statements, Messages, and Activities,” *Orthodox Tradition*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1 [2001], p. 16).

<sup>32</sup> Barella, *Διορθόδοξοι και οικουμενικαί σχέσεις*, p. 113.

<sup>33</sup> One of the keywords during the Second Vatican Council, it was used to signify a spirit of change and breadth, of revisionism and modernization, and adaption to the demands of the contemporary world, without any change in the content of ecclesiastical tradition.

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Athenagoras' tenure of the Œcumenical Throne (1948-1972) brought about a catastrophe of prodigious proportions.

No one else contributed as much to the gradual erosion of the Orthodox Confession and of the ecclesiological self-understanding of the official local Churches as Athenagoras, who reached the ultimate hubris of speaking about the *refounding* of the One, Holy, and Apostolic Church through the union of Orthodoxy with polyheretical Papism:

In the movement for union, it is not a question of one Church moving towards the other; no, let us all together refound the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, coexisting in the East and the West, as we lived up until 1054, in spite of the theological differences that existed then.<sup>34</sup>

According to the Patristic Tradition, it is not a Synod that bestows authority on the Fathers of a Synod; rather, it is the Fathers who prepare for and participate in a Synod who, by the Orthodoxy of their Confession and of their lives, endow a Synod with authority and validity.

In the case of the “Holy and Great Synod,” it is patently obvious that the “Orthodoxy” and the “Orthopraxy” of Basil III, Meletios Metaxakes, Athenagoras, and their successors determine its nature and authority.

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In a Patriarchal Encyclical in 1952, Athenagoras asked the official local Churches for their opinion on the question: “What deletions, amendments, and additions should be made to the list of topics drawn up by the Inter-Orthodox Commission that convened on the Holy Mountain in 1930?”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> From Patriarch Athenagoras' 1967 Christmas message (see “Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople,” p. 13).

<sup>35</sup> Karmires, *Δογματικά και Συμβολικά Μνημεία*, Vol. II, p. 981. It should be noted that this Encyclical is to be distinguished from the more famous Encyclical

He was also intensely preoccupied by the issue of a strategy that had hitherto proved unsuccessful, and he considered how it might be possible to devise a more dynamic preparatory process.

Athenagoras finally established a new institution, the famous Pan-Orthodox Consultations, the purpose of which was to reanimate inter-Orthodox relations—a necessary precondition for the convocation of the Great Synod.

## VII. The First Pan-Orthodox Consultation of 1961

This consultation, which—according to the ecumenists—“constitutes a milestone for the Orthodox Catholic Church,”<sup>36</sup> convened in 1961 on Rhodes.

There, the representatives of the official local Churches worked on the agenda from the 1930 consultation at Vatopedi and approved a very broad list of more than a hundred topics pertaining to various aspects of the life of the Orthodox Church, which are summarized in eight sections.

The most important changes are found primarily in the fifth section: “Relations Between the Orthodox Church and the Rest of the Christian World.”

As one would expect, these changes reflect the unprecedented development of the ecumenical movement, which was still in its infancy in 1930.

Not only is the First Pan-Orthodox Consultation an important stage in the entire history of the preparation for the Great Synod, but it also contributed decisively to the gradual degradation of the official local Churches and their embroilment in the syncretistic heresy of ecumenism, since by virtue of the agenda drawn up and approved they all committed themselves to “studying means for the

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issued by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the same year “in view of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order” which was to be held in Lund, Sweden (Limouris, *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, p. 20, n.).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 979.

rapprochement and unity of the Churches from a pan-Orthodox perspective.”<sup>37</sup>

In addition, the cacodox 1920 Encyclical, whereby the ecclesiocidal heresy of ecumenism entered into Orthodoxy, was now invested at the 1961 Consultation with pan-Orthodox authority:

- All of the representatives of the official local Churches collectively decided upon “the presence and participation of the Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement in the spirit of the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920.”<sup>38</sup>

For these reasons, the new agendum is rightly characterized as “The first official text. . .invested with the authority of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches in their entirety,”<sup>39</sup> which the innovating Orthodox ecumenists<sup>40</sup> would use as an “indisputable official sanction for their unionist initiatives.”<sup>41</sup>

It should be noted that representatives of the heterodox communities of East and West, and also of the World Council of Churches,

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 984.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Manikas Konstantinou, “Η Ἐκκλησία τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ ὁ Διάλογος Ὁρθοδοξίας -Ρωμαιοκαθολικισμοῦ κατὰ τὶς Α΄ καὶ Β΄ Πανορθόδοξους Διασκέψεις τῆς Ρόδου” (The Church of Greece and the Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue during the First and Second Pan-Orthodox Consultations on Rhodes), *Θεολογία*, Vol. LXII (1991), p. 170.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, the following remarks by Georgios Martzelos at the Symposium “Ecumenical Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century: Realities, Challenges, and Prospects”:

- “In view of these considerations, any negative stance or reaction in the name of Orthodoxy on the part of certain pious Christians against the participation of the Orthodox Church, and specifically the Church of Greece, in the ecumenical movement, in bilateral theological dialogues, and also in multilateral dialogues in the context of the World Council of Churches, is antithetical to the conscience and will of the Orthodox Church as expressed in a pan-Orthodox and unanimous manner, and constitutes a violation of the unanimous decisions made by the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit at a pan-Orthodox level” (<http://panagiotisandriopoulos.blogspot.gr/2013/01/21.html>).

<sup>41</sup> Konstantinou, “Η Ἐκκλησία τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ ὁ Διάλογος Ὁρθοδοξίας -Ρωμαιοκαθολικισμοῦ,” p. 173.

were officially invited by the Œcumenical Patriarchate and attended this consultation.

### VIII. The Fourth Pan-Orthodox Consultation of 1968<sup>42</sup>

Another important step towards the “Holy and Great Synod” was accomplished at the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Consultation in Chambésy, in 1968, at which the agendum was amended yet again. Moreover, a new strategy for the whole preparatory process was introduced.

First, the idea of convoking a Pre-Synod was abandoned, since there is no support for it in Orthodox Tradition and it does not, in essence, offer any benefit.

Secondly, a new institution, that of Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultations, was established. These consultations are responsible for drawing up a definitive dossier for every topic, which is subsequently to be submitted to the “Holy and Great Synod” for approval.

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In accordance with the new process, before every Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation the following procedure is to be observed:

- Inter-Orthodox specialist commissions are formed, which study the approved topics and prepare an introductory report on each individual topic.
- Next, the Secretariat for the Preparation of the Synod takes care of dispatching these reports to the local Churches for study and for any observations or additions.
- Thereafter, the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission takes over. It processes this material and formulates a unified opinion, which is forwarded to the Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation for discussion and final endorsement.
- Once agreement is reached, the dossier is then closed and is

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<sup>42</sup> Barella, *Διορθόδοξοι και οικουμενικοί σχέσεις*, pp. 119-121.

ready to be sent to the “Holy and Great Synod” for approval.

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It should be noted that the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Consultation of 1968, in anticipation of the Fourth General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Uppsala (1968), issued the following remarkable decision: “The Inter-Orthodox Committee gathered in Geneva expresses the general conscience of the Orthodox Church, that she is an organic member of World Council of Churches.”<sup>43</sup>

Observations:

a. As is well known, according to our Patristic and Synodal Tradition, the “general conscience of the Orthodox Church” is expressed solely and definitively by way of a Major Pan-Orthodox Œcumenical Synod.

- This Synod, however, has been under preparation for some decades now, and is supposedly still in the offing!

b. When, we wonder, has the general conscience of Orthodoxy ever put forth the idea that the One and only indivisible Catholic Church is a member and part—and organic at that—of the all-embracing Protestant association of Geneva? That the whole could ever be included in some disconnected fragment?

- Truly, this decision and admission evinces a complete erosion of authentic conciliarity in the realm of so-called “official Orthodoxy.”

## IX. The First and Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultations

The first in the series of Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultations was held at the Orthodox Center of the Œcumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy, Switzerland, in 1976, where the finishing touches were put to the agenda of the “Holy and Great Synod” in the form of final amendments.

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<sup>43</sup> Limouris, *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, p. 38 [emended translation ours—TRANS.]. The remaining part of this sentence is also quite striking: “...and her firm resolve, with all the means at her disposal, theological and other, to contribute to the advancement and the success of all the WCC’s work”—TRANS.

The result of this consultation was a list comprising ten topics, which can be divided into three sections:

- a. Inter-Orthodox relations—the Diptychs, the Diaspora, autocephaly, autonomy, and a common calendar;
- b. Inter-Christian relations and ecumenism;
- c. The daily life of Orthodox Christians—fasting, impediments to marriage, etc.<sup>44</sup>

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The Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation—up to that point the most important stage in the preparation of the “Holy and Great Synod”—took place in Chambésy, in 1986.

At this meeting, in which all of official Orthodoxy participated, the representatives of the official local Churches hammered out and finally approved four official theological documents.<sup>45</sup>

- a. The importance of fasting and its observance today.
- b. Relations between the Orthodox Church and the rest of the Christian world.
- c. The Orthodox Church and the ecumenical movement.
- d. The contribution of the Orthodox Church to the maintenance of peace, justice, freedom, brotherhood, and love between peoples and to the elimination of racial and other forms of discrimination.

By virtue of these documents the dossiers of the second and third of the ten sections of the agenda are closed and, as preliminary decisions, are now ready to be referred to the Great Synod.

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From the standpoint of Orthodox dogmatic theology, and of ecclesiology in particular, the most important document is the sec-

<sup>44</sup> Barella, *Διορθόδοξοι και οικουμενικαί σχέσεις*, pp. 126-127; *Ἐπίσκεψις*, No. 158 (December 1, 1976); Metropolitan Damaskenos of Switzerland, *Πρὸς τὴν Ἁγίαν καὶ Μεγάλην Σύνοδον - Προβλήματα καὶ προοπτικαί* (Towards the Holy and Great Synod: problems and prospects) (Athens: 1990), pp. 19-32.

<sup>45</sup> See “Τελικὰ Κείμενα - Ἀποφάσεις τῆς Γ' Προσυνοδικῆς Πανορθόδοξου Διασκέψεως” (Final texts and decisions of the Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation), *Ἐπίσκεψις*, No. 369 (December 15, 1986).

ond: “Relations Between the Orthodox Church and the Rest of the Christian World.”

As we have shown in the course of our study, the “Holy and Great Synod” of the innovating ecumenists, which has been devised within a rationalistic and bureaucratic frame of reference, has two primary goals:

a. the reformation and modernization of the Orthodox Church, and

b. her union with the other Christian Churches and Confessions.

However, in order to attain to such a union, it is necessary, first, to develop a new Orthodox ecclesiology, which will provide the indispensable theological basis for the sought-after union.

The theological formulation, promotion, and consolidation of such ecclesiological modernism in the official local Churches is being realized simultaneously on two levels:

- through the active participation of official Orthodoxy in the ecumenical movement, and
- through preparation for the Great Synod.

At a pan-Orthodox synodal level, the theological basis of this new ecclesiology of the innovating ecumenists was laid in the aforementioned document, “Relations Between the Orthodox Church and the Rest of the Christian World,” as follows: “The Orthodox Church, as being the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church...recognizes the real existence of all Christian Churches and Confessions.”<sup>46</sup>

## X. The New Ecclesiology of the Innovating Ecumenists

In order to evaluate the true meaning of this unprecedented statement of the Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation, it is necessary to clarify what the innovating Orthodox ecumenists mean when they speak about recognizing the *real existence* of all Christian Churches and Confessions.

The innovating Orthodox ecumenists are certainly not aiming at

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

the recognition of the heterodox Christian communities as existent and established institutions, since it is self-evident that such heterodox communities do exist and that their existence is not in need of pan-Orthodox confirmation.

The official Orthodox Churches, for the first time at a pan-Orthodox level, are acknowledging the *fundamental and real ecclesiality* which supposedly exists outside the canonical and charismatic boundaries of the Orthodox Church (*ecclesia extra ecclesiam*).

That is to say, they endorse a heretical ecclesiology, the fruit of the long-term development and cultivation of dogmatic syncretism, namely ecclesiocidal ecumenism, at a theoretical and at a practical level.

This document from the Third Consultation gives perfect expression to the fundamental teaching of ecumenism, which the ecumenists define as follows: “The Churches are called to recognize the Church of Christ in one another. This is precisely the challenge that the ecumenical movement places before the Churches.”<sup>47</sup>

The 1920 Patriarchal Encyclical turned the rudder of the innovators in exactly this direction when it characterized the heterodox Christian communities no longer as heretical, but as “kith and kin in Christ,” as “fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, [and partakers of] the promise of God in Christ.”

It was on this theological basis that the ecumenists were to develop their “broad” ecclesiology, which thenceforth maintained an inclusive and reciprocal attitude towards the non-Orthodox.

This would have as a consequence the creation and adoption of a new ecclesiological self-understanding, which in turn would permit them to alter the theological substance of the notion of heresy and in this way smoothly to attain to the ulterior goal of the syncretistic heresy of ecumenism, that is, the legitimation of heresies as being within the boundaries of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

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<sup>47</sup> Stylianos Tsompanides, *Ἐκκλησία καὶ Ἐκκλησίες* (Church and churches) (Athens: 2013), p. 13.

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However, with their novel and self-contradictory ecclesiology of the One Divided Church, on which they essentially base themselves, the ecumenists foster and promote in divers ways the vision of the restoration of the lost unity of the Church through the union of all Christian churches and confessions, and thereby come into complete and total conflict with Orthodox ecclesiology as it has been experienced throughout the ages by the One and only Church—namely, Orthodoxy—and embodied in our Patristic and Synodal Tradition.

According to this Tradition,

- the Orthodox Church, as the pillar and ground of the truth,<sup>48</sup> is absolutely convinced that she alone constitutes the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of the Symbol of Faith and is ontologically identical therewith;
- the ecclesiological nature of those outside the canonical and charismatic boundaries of the Orthodox Church is delineated with total clarity by St. Justin of Ćelije, an authentic exponent of Patristic dogmatic theology, as follows:

At various times, heretics and schismatics have been severed and cut off from the one and only indivisible Church of Christ, and have consequently ceased to be members of the Church, that is, fellow-members of her Theanthropic Body.<sup>49</sup>

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The acknowledgment of the real ecclesiality of heretics introduces a new heresy, a panheresy, whereby the Unity of the Church, as an ontological element thereof, is in essence destroyed, since “the deepest ground of the Unity of the Church is the Unity of the Triune God Himself, the Unity of the Church reflecting the Unity of the

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<sup>48</sup> I St. Timothy 3:15.

<sup>49</sup> Archimandrite Justin Popović, *Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία καὶ Οἰκουμενισμός* (The Orthodox Church and ecumenism) (Thessalonike: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxos Kypsele,” 1974), p. 82.

Three Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity.”<sup>50</sup>

The Church, as One, Unique, and Indivisible, does not admit of any division whatsoever, but confirms and declares the severance, separation, and falling away of heretics and schismatics from her Body.

Such falling away does not in any way annul the Unity of the Church, which “is founded upon the unity of the dogmatic Faith.”<sup>51</sup>

Thus, Orthodox ecclesiology precludes the ecumenist notion of the separation and division of the One, Unique, and Indivisible Church, as an oxymoron, as a contradiction in terms.

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In truth, the recent historic declaration (November 2014) by New Calendarist anti-ecumenists is extremely important and timely. In their momentous text, “The New Ecclesiology of Œcumenical Patriarch Bartholomew,” they present a wholly Orthodox analysis of the newfangled ecclesiology—completely alien to Orthodoxy—of the ecumenists.<sup>52</sup>

The section headings of this declaration are striking:

1. Various formulations of the ‘Divided Church’ ecclesiology;
2. Historical instances where this new ecclesiology has been applied;
3. Denial of the Symbol of Faith, of belief ‘in One Church’;
4. The Church is eternally indissoluble, the unity of Christ and the faithful being unbreakable;
5. Since Christ ‘cannot be divided,’ it is self-evident that unity is a mark of the Church;
6. The excision of heretics does not harm the Church;
7. Has the Priesthood of the Bishops

<sup>50</sup> Ioannes Karmires, *Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησιολογία* (Orthodox ecclesiology) (Athens: 1973), p. 240.

<sup>51</sup> Ioannes Karmires, *Ἡ Ἐκκλησιολογία τῶν Τριῶν Ἱεραρχῶν* (The ecclesiology of the Three Hierarchs) (Athens: 1962), p. 75.

<sup>52</sup> See *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 2047 (November 28, 2014), p. 4. • To date, this declaration has been signed by six Metropolitans, many Abbots, and innumerable clergy, monastics, and laypeople (6,260 signatures by February 13, 2015 [New Style]). For an English version of the declaration, see <http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/Petition-Concerning-the-New-Ecclesiology-of-Ecumenical-Patriarch-Bartholomew.pdf>.

been abolished?; 8. Past resistance by breaking off commemoration of Patriarch Athenagoras.

## XI. The Document “*Oikonomia* in the Orthodox Church”

The approved pan-Orthodox text, “Relations Between the Orthodox Church and the Rest of the Christian World,” is based on an earlier theological study, entitled “*Oikonomia* in the Orthodox Church,” which was presented by ecumenists from our part of the world [Greece] to the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission in 1971.

In the 1971 study, there is a significant difference in relation to the 1986 document: whereas in 1986 there is a theologically ambiguous statement about “recognition of the real existence of all Christian churches and confession,” in 1971 there was a clear affirmation about acknowledgment of the “*ontological existence* of all these Christian Churches and Confessions.”<sup>53</sup>

The publication of this canonico-ecclesiological study in 1971 met with intense reaction and disapproval from the world of academic theology, a fruit of which was the “Memorandum to the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece,” submitted in 1972 by the highly reputed professors Panagiotes Bratsiotis, Panagiotes Trembelas, Konstantinos Mouratides, Andreas Theodorou, and Nikolaos Bratsiotis.

They endeavored, by virtue of their theological prestige, to awaken the Holy Synod of the New Calendar Church and to communicate to it the “grave unease” with regard to the future course of Orthodoxy that “the preparatory work for the Great Synod” provoked “in general.”

They indicate very pointedly in their “Memorandum” the primary dysfunctionality in the preparations for the Great Synod:

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<sup>53</sup> Secretariat for Preparation for the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church, *Πρὸς τὴν Μεγάλην Σύνοδον*, 1, 6. *Ἡ Οἰκονομία ἐν τῇ Ὁρθοδόξῳ Ἐκκλησίᾳ* (Towards the Great Synod, I, 6. “*Oikonomia* in the Orthodox Church”) (Chambésy: 1971), p. 63.

• the issues to be dealt with by the Synod are approached “on the basis of criteria drawn from our contemporary era, which is confused as a result of syncretistic tendencies” and not far removed from the “theories corrosive of the Orthodox outlook that have developed in the realm of the ecumenical movement.”<sup>54</sup>

The study “*Oikonomia* in the Orthodox Church,” in the judgment and estimation of the five professors, “manifestly exhibits complete confusion” regarding this fundamental principle of the Orthodox Church.

They warn the Holy Synod that, if this interpretation of ecclesiastical *oikonomia* is ultimately accepted as a tool in the effort to achieve “rapprochement with the other Christian confessions,” the principle of *oikonomia* will essentially be transformed “into an axe whereby the edifice of the Church herself will gradually be undermined and demolished.”<sup>55</sup>

In vain, however, did the then right-believing votaries of academic theology labor. Their memorandum, like other dogmatic texts, was shut up in the “vault”<sup>56</sup> of Church history, and, fifteen years later, in 1986, at the Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation, the basic canonical and ecclesiological principle of this study, “as a sharpened axe,” was endowed with the mantle of pan-Orthodox authority.

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It is noteworthy that the study “*Oikonomia* in the Orthodox Church” received support from the Patriarchal Metropolitan, Chrysostomos (Konstantinides) of Ephesus, who characterized it as “a seri-

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<sup>54</sup> *Ἡ Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Οἰκονομία, Ὑπόμνημα εἰς τὴν Ἱερὰν Σύνοδον τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος* (Ecclesiastical *oikonomia*: memorandum to the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece) (Athens: 1972), pp. vi-vii.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vii.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Patriarch Athenagoras (†1972): “Dogmas are the power of the Church, her wealth; for this reason, we keep them in the vault”; “the age of dogma has passed” (Archimandrite Spyridon S. Bilales, *Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Παπισμός* [Orthodoxy and Papism] [Athens: Ekdoseis “Orthodoxou Typou,” 1969], Vol. II, pp. 339, 340).

ous and meticulous essay on *oikonomia*,” as a work “that came from the hands of the best dogmatists that Orthodox theology had at its disposal back then.”<sup>57</sup>

## XII. Damaskenos of Switzerland and the “Rift” in the Church

There is no doubt that Metropolitan Damaskenos of Switzerland, who served from 1969-2003 as Secretary of the Commission for the preparation of the Great Synod and consequently was chiefly responsible for coördinating the entire preparatory process, played a decisive rôle in the composition of both of the aforementioned documents.

His book *Οἱ Θεολογικοὶ Διάλογοι - Μία ὀρθόδοξος προοπτική* contains texts which express his theological thinking precisely during the period of preparation for the Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation in 1986.

In his preface to this collection of his studies, he puts forth the fundamental principle of this new ecclesiology of the innovating Orthodox ecumenists, envisioning “the path toward unity that will heal the wounds of the tragic rift in the body of the One, Holy, and Catholic Church.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Metropolitan Chrysostomos (Konstantinides) of Ephesus, *Ἡ Ἀναγνώριση τῶν Μυστηρίων τῶν Ἑτεροδόξων στις Διαχρονικὲς Σχέσεις Ὁρθοδοξίας καὶ Ρωμαιοκαθολικισμοῦ* (The recognition of the sacraments of the heterodox in relations over time between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism) (Katerine: Ekdoseis “Epektase,” 1995), p. 102. • Metropolitan Chrysostomos regards as “a detailed response” to the five professors the protracted work of the then Metropolitan Methodios of Axum (subsequently Archbishop of Thyateira and finally Metropolitan of Pisidia), “Περὶ τὴν Ἐκκλησιαστικὴν Οἰκονομίαν - Ἀπάντησις εἰς Καθηγητὰς τῆς Θεολογίας” (Concerning ecclesiastical *oikonomia*: a response to certain professors of theology), *Ἐκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος*, Vol. LVI (1974), pp. 5-55, 261-270; Vol. LVII (1975), pp. 65-79, 309-353; Vol. LVIII (1976), pp. 5-24.

<sup>58</sup> Metropolitan Damaskenos of Switzerland, *Οἱ Θεολογικοὶ Διάλογοι - Μία Ὁρθόδοξος Προοπτική* (Theological dialogues: an Orthodox perspective) (Thessalonike: 1986), p. 13.

Metropolitan Damaskenos speaks about a rift in the One Church, even though, according to the Orthodox understanding, the scission—not a rift in the Church—of Western Christianity from the *una, sancta, catholica et apostolica Ecclesia* was, and remains, a most tragic historical event, with incalculable consequences and repercussions.

It is well known that St. Justin of Ćelije mentions three falls which determined the course of the entire world: they are the falls, first of Lucifer, secondly of Adam, and thirdly of the Pope.

The cutting off and falling away of the West from the Body of the God-Man does not entail in any way a rift therein, a rift in the One, Unique, and Indivisible Church.

Demetrios Tselengides, a professor of dogmatic theology, writes in this connection: “When someone consciously talks about a ‘divided Church,’ this is a rejection of the Faith of the Church, a denial of her identity and self-understanding.”<sup>59</sup>

With regard to the recognition of the ecclesiality of those outside the boundaries of the Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Damaskenos writes: “I personally believe, as I expounded in the foregoing, that it is possible to acknowledge the existence of the Church outside the Church, in the full sense of the word ‘Church.’”<sup>60</sup>

### XIII. Conciliarity, or an Eastern Version of “Papal Primacy”?

We should stress with particular emphasis the great significance of the adverb in Metropolitan Damaskenos’ phrase “I personally believe,” since it betrays to us something very important about the nature of the Great Synod being planned by the innovating Orthodox ecumenists.

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<sup>59</sup> “Εἶναι οἱ Ἑτερόδοξοι μέλη τῆς Ἐκκλησίας;” (Are the heterodox members of the Church?), in “Οἰκουμενισμός - Ἱστορική καὶ κριτική προσέγγιση” (Ecumenism: an historical and critical approach), *Ἐν Συνειδήσει* (an occasional publication of the Holy Monastery of Great Meteora) (June 2009), p. 78.

<sup>60</sup> Metropolitan Damaskenos, *Οἱ Θεολογικοὶ Διάλογοι*, p. 136.

In his article “The Authority of the Ancient Councils and the Tradition of the Fathers,” Father Georges Florovsky cites the basic principle of the ancient Church concerning the authority of Synods: “The Council is not above the Church.”<sup>61</sup>

Truly Orthodox Synods were convoked, functioned, and always arrived at decisions collectively, and solely as representing the conscience of the Church as a whole, since they were charismatic events, which bore witness to the Truth and the Faith of the Catholic Church and never expressed any “personal or subjective credo” of their members.

On the contrary, in the case of the Great Synod under way, we observe something completely different: the manner in which it is being prepared testifies that its convocation does not aim at a genuine Synodal, collective, and Catholic representation of the Church, which would evince an Orthodox and Theanthropic resoluteness in the face of our contemporary historical challenges.

It is quite evident that the purpose of the rationalistic preparations being made for the Great Synod is to turn it into a platform on which the personal ideological whims of the ecumenist minority, without the essential participation of the official local Churches, might acquire pan-Orthodox authority and a cloak of conciliarity.

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On account of their estrangement from the mind of the Fathers, the ecumenists who are preparing for the Great Synod either forget or overlook the salvific truth that the content of our Faith is “the Faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints.”<sup>62</sup>

It is a fundamental ecclesiological principle that we are not called to figure out the Orthodox Faith in our day or to define it according to personal and subjective criteria.

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<sup>61</sup> “The Authority of the Ancient Councils and the Tradition of the Fathers,” in *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, Vol. I in *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* (Vaduz, Liechtenstein: Bùchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), p. 97.

<sup>62</sup> St. Jude 3.

The Orthodox Faith has been handed down to us from generation to generation, through praxis and theory, just as the God-Man handed it on to the Apostles and they to their successors.

Thus, as disciples at the feet of the Apostles and the Fathers, it behooves us to accept without alteration whatever has been handed down by them, that is, the Orthodox Faith that was once and for all revealed and handed down, to adopt it, and, through an upward journey of purification, illumination, and deification, to make it our own personal possession.

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It is true that, especially in the twentieth century, an era of syncretistic globalization, under the influence of the ecumenical movement there had developed a wide-ranging discussion of the ecclesiological issue of the Orthodox Church's self-understanding in relation to the heterodox Christian communities.

This issue, in essence a soteriological one, since it pertains to the boundaries of the Church, should be addressed in accordance with the "Faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints," not according to the subjective and personal understanding of the innovating Orthodox ecumenists.

In order to accomplish this, we need to delve deeply into the Theanthropic mind of the Church and to study carefully the Patristic, Synodal, and canonical Tradition of Orthodoxy.

This methodology is most clearly evident in the proceedings of the Holy Œcumenical Synods: each Œcumenical Synod formulated a dogmatic decree (Œπος). In order for it to become accepted by the conscience of the Church as a dogma of the Faith, it was necessary to prove, by means of Patristic and Synodal texts, that such a decree was in conformity with the antecedent Evangelical, Apostolic, Patristic, and canonical Tradition (the *consensus Patrum*).

This procedure, guided by the Holy Spirit, which evinces the vivid and charismatic consciousness and conviction that we are "following the Holy Fathers," is demonstrably absent from the preparations

being made for the Great Synod.

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The replacement of the Orthodox institution of the Synod, as we have previously stated in brief, with a system which permits the imposition and entrenchment of the ecumenical ideology dear to the leading ecumenists in all of the official Orthodox Churches was censured by the ever-memorable dogmatician St. Justin of Ćelije when, in 1977, he addressed himself for a second time to the Holy Synod of the Serbian Church, protesting against the convocation of the “Holy and Great Synod.”

In his famous memorandum to the Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church “Concerning the Proposed ‘Great Synod’ of the Orthodox Church,” he forcefully asserts:

Behind all such activities there is a secret desire on the part of certain persons in the contemporary Patriarchate of Constantinople: that [this Patriarchate] exercise definitive and decisive hegemony over the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, and that it validate and consolidate this neo-Papal hegemony through an ‘Ecumenical Synod.’<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Archimandrite Justin, *Περὶ τὴν Μελετωμένην “Μεγάλην Σύνοδον” τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας*, p. 15.

- Similar observations have been made recently by:

a. Metropolitan Hierotheos of Naupaktos: “The documents prepared decades ago at the Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultations are unknown to the majority of the Hierarchs, myself included; they languish in committees and offices, and we do not know their content” (“Ἡ Σύναξι τῶν Προκαθημένων τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων Ἐκκλησιῶν” [The Assembly of the Primates of the Orthodox Churches], *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 2020 [May 2, 2014], p. 7);

b. Demetrios I. Tselengides, in his momentous Epistle to the Holy Synod of the official local Church of Greece, in which he notes the “deviation from the conciliar functioning of the Church, which is governed by the Holy Spirit” and the appearance of “some form of Papism in the domain of the Orthodox Church” (“Ἐπιστολὴ τοῦ Καθηγητοῦ Δ.Ι. Τσελεγγίδη γιὰ τὸν Διμερῆ Θεολογικὸ Διάλογο Ὁρθοδόξων καὶ Ρωμαιοκαθολικῶν, στὸ Ἄμμάν τῆς Ἰορδανίας (15-19.9.2014)”) (A letter of Prof. D.J. Tselengides concerning the bilateral Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics, in Amman, Jordan (September

In 1986, at the Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation, the prophetic nature of this conviction of his was confirmed, since it is obvious with what great ease and nonchalance this neo-Papal hegemony or Eastern neo-Papism<sup>64</sup> abrogates and ultimately destroys genuine conciliarity within the realm of so-called official Orthodoxy.

Now, what transpired back then?

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In addition to the four approved documents concerning matters on the agenda of the “Holy and Great Synod,” the Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation also ratified the “Functioning of Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultations.”

Article 16 clarifies the nature and authority of the documents on which agreement is reached:

They are in the nature of proposals for the ‘Holy and Great Synod,’ since, although they reflect the Orthodox tradition on the specific issues, they do not possess direct binding authority for the local Churches prior to the decisions of the ‘Holy and Great Synod.’<sup>65</sup>

However, strangely enough, on the first page of the aforementioned ecclesiological text, “Relations Between the Orthodox Church and the Rest of the Christian World,” there appears the following telltale footnote, which truly sheds light on the destruction of the Synodal ethos on the part of the ecumenists:

Although the Second Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation stipulated that decisions taken by Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultations before the ‘Holy and Great Synod’ do not have any canonical force prior to a decision thereon by the ‘Holy and Great Synod,’ nevertheless, owing to the nature of the issue, the present Consultation judges that the preliminary decisions thus arrived at can be

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15-19, 2014), <http://aktines.blogspot.gr/2014/11/15-19-2014.html>).

<sup>64</sup> Archimandrite Justin, *Περὶ τὴν Μελετωμένην “Μεγάλην Σύνοδον” τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας*, p. 14.

<sup>65</sup> “Τελικὰ Κείμενα - Ἀποφάσεις τῆς Γ’ Προσυνοδικῆς Πανορθοδόξου Διασκέψεως,” *Ἐπισκευσις*, No. 369 (December 15, 1986), p. 5.

immediately implemented.<sup>66</sup>

This raises the following justifiable questions:

- When the decisions of a Pre-Synodal Consultation are already being implemented *de facto* at a pan-Orthodox level, what reason is there henceforth for convening the Great Synod?
  - Does this not constitute a total abrogation and destruction of the Synodal institution of the Orthodox Church?
  - Is it not the case that a small cabal of professional ecumenists is hereby accorded a position of superiority over the Catholic Synodal conscience of the Church?
  - Who authorized them, with their unquestionably neo-Papal ethos, to make hasty and anti-Orthodox decisions and even to issue pronouncements about the “real” and “ontological” existence of heterodox communities?

#### XIV. Recognition of the Eighth and Ninth Œcumenical Synods<sup>67</sup>

We can understand more profoundly the distortion and alteration, not to mention the deliberate Papalization, of the Synodal polity of the Church within the ranks of the ecumenist official local Churches if we consider one major issue.

In October of 2014, an ad hoc “Synaxis of Clergy and Monastics” from among the anti-ecumenist circles of the New Calendar Church

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<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9. • It is significant that the clarification in this footnote was not included in the text of the “Rules for the Functioning of Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultations” (Article 16: The reception of texts—the decision-making process—the nature of such decisions), but inserted as a footnote in the third document, “Relations Between the Orthodox Church and the Rest of the Christian World,” where reference is made to the “real existence of all Christian Churches and Confessions” (*ibid.*; Metropolitan Damaskenos, *Πρὸς τὴν Ἁγίαν καὶ Μεγάλην Σύνοδον*, p. 66).

<sup>67</sup> Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, “Saint Photios the Great and the Eighth Œcumenical Synod: Patristic Conciliarity and Papism,” <http://hsir.org/p/j6a>; Bishop Klemes of Gardikion, “The Hesychastic Synods of the Fourteenth Century as the Ninth Œcumenical Synod of the Orthodox Church,” <http://hsir.org/p/pwc>.

published a document entitled “Περὶ τῶν Η΄ καὶ Θ΄ Οἰκουμενικῶν Συνόδων,” in which the recognition of the Eighth and Ninth Œcumenical Synods is regarded and proclaimed “as the primary, crucial, and outstanding issue for any Great Pan-Orthodox Synod that is going to be convoked.”<sup>68</sup>

The New Calendarist anti-ecumenists have repeatedly stated, in divers instances, that the Great Synod will be judged on this point, namely, what position it will take towards the Great Synod of 879-880 (under St. Photios the Great) and the Hesychastic Synods of the fourteenth century (during the time of St. Gregory Palamas).

However, on the basis of what we have thus far ascertained from the available evidence, the following legitimate questions arise:

- Is there even a faint hope that such a Great Synod, with its prior history, and with sponsors of a fundamentally ecumenist outlook, would be capable of acknowledging as Œcumenical the anti-Papal Synods of the ninth and fourteenth centuries?

- How is it possible for the New Calendarist anti-ecumenists to nourish such hopes, when at the same time they accept “that today ecumenism prevails and predominates among the great majority of Hierarchs of almost all of the Patriarchates and autocephalous Churches”?<sup>69</sup>

An earlier statement by the Dean *Emeritus* of the School of Theology at the University of Athens, Father George Metallinos, supports our conclusion that not only will the Synods of the ninth and fourteenth centuries not be recognized as Œcumenical, but that the exact opposite will occur:

Here is a timely question: What is the Pan-Orthodox Synod that is to be convened going to do? This Synod is being planned for the

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<sup>68</sup> Synaxis of Orthodox Clergy and Monastics, “Περὶ Η΄ καὶ Θ΄ Οἰκουμενικῶν Συνόδων” (Concerning the Eighth and Ninth Œcumenical Synods), <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/AB28A263.el.aspx>. • See also *Θεοδρομία* (July-September 2014), pp. 440-446.

<sup>69</sup> Holy Metropolis of Piræus, “Πορευόμεθα ὄντως πρὸς τὴν Μεγάλῃ Σύνοδο;” (Are we really journeying toward the Great Synod?), <http://www.impantokratoros.gr/6DC8D27C.el.aspx>.

purpose of leading us, as we read and as we see, to an acceptance of Papism and Protestantism as authentic forms of Christianity. This is a tragedy. I pray that it will never happen. But that is the direction in which things are moving.<sup>70</sup>

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In connection with this subject, that is, the acknowledgment by the Great Synod that the Synods of the ninth and fourteenth centuries are Œcumenical, we deem it expedient to cite a truly distressing event that occurred in October of 2011, at the Synod of Bishops of the official local Church of Greece.

- Metropolitan Hierotheos of Naupaktos was scheduled to deliver his presentation “Περὶ τῆς ἀναγνωρίσεως τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ἐν ἔτει 879/880 μ.Χ. συγκληθείσης Συνόδου, ὡς Ὀγδόης Οἰκουμενικῆς” (Concerning recognition of the Synod convened in Constantinople in 879-880 as the Eighth Œcumenical Synod).

- Metropolitan Jeremias of Gortys had prepared a similar presentation concerning recognition of the Synod of 1351 as the Ninth Œcumenical Synod.<sup>71</sup>

Following these presentations, the speakers were going to propose to the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece that this issued be highlighted at the upcoming pan-Orthodox Great Synod.

And the result? In the end, the presentations were not even delivered, and it was resolved that they be tabled until some unknown date in the future!

At the time, Metropolitan Hierotheos, thoroughly disheartened, made the following truly tragic statement: “Since, as it was said, the Hierarchy is ‘not competent’ to discuss such dogmatic issues, but is competent to discuss VAT and the ESPA, these presentations can

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<sup>70</sup> Protopresbyter George Metallinos, *Ὁ Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς Πατέρας τῆς Θ’ Οἰκουμενικῆς Συνόδου* (St. Gregory Palamas, Father of the Ninth Œcumenical Synod) (Hiera Mone Megalou Meteorou, 2009), p. 29.

<sup>71</sup> For the full texts of these presentations, see *Θεοδρομία* (July-September 2014), pp. 405-427, 428-439.

be dispensed with!”<sup>72</sup>

On the basis of the foregoing, the adulteration of the ecclesiological and Synodal ethos of the innovating Orthodox ecumenists, which is gradually being eroded by what is correctly characterized as neo-Papal hegemony, is now incontrovertibly clear.

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Of astonishing interest, in any case, in view of our reference to the Ecumenical Synods of the ninth and fourteenth centuries, is the proposal that the renowned—and completely anti-Papist—Pan-Orthodox Synod of 1848 be included with them as Ecumenical, since in truth any future genuine Pan-Orthodox Ecumenical Synod will have to be “portrayed not as detached from the previous Synods, but as being in continuity with them”; if these are disregarded, “then there will be a serious theological and ecclesiological problem.”<sup>73</sup>

## XV. The Fourth Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation

With the approval of the four documents at the Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation in Chambésy in 1986, the topics of the second and third sections of the agendum of the Great Synod were out of the way.

Consequently, there opened up a new stage in the preparations for the “Holy and Great Synod,” which was supposed to bring closure to the remaining four topics of the first section of the agendum, to wit: the Orthodox Diaspora, Autocephaly, Autonomy, and the Diptychs.<sup>74</sup>

Whereas in the acceptance of the new ecclesiology of the ecumenists there was complete agreement among the representatives

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<sup>72</sup> *Ἐκκλησιαστική Παρέμβαση*, No. 183 (2011).

<sup>73</sup> Metropolitan Hierotheos, “Ἡ Σύναξη τῶν Προκαθημένων,” p. 7.

• For an English translation of the text of the renowned Pan-Orthodox Synod of 1848, see [http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc\\_1848.aspx](http://www.orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc_1848.aspx).

<sup>74</sup> “Τελικά Κείμενα - Ἀποφάσεις τῆς Γ' Προσυνοδικῆς Πανορθοδόξου Διασκέψεως,” *Ἐπίσκεψις*, No. 369 (December 15, 1986), p. 5.

of the official local Churches, on the remaining four topics the pre-synodal proceedings “reached perhaps their most critical turning point.”<sup>75</sup>

Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Myra, the chairman of the Third Pre-Synodal Consultation, in a speech delivered during the consultation, showed that the ecumenists set greater store by administrative issues like primacy and authority than by the preëminently dogmatic issues of Orthodox ecclesiology, and characterized these last four topics in the following way: “We acknowledge that they are the most difficult and complex. They pertain to the contemporary structure of the Orthodox Church throughout the world. And they need to be resolved.”<sup>76</sup>

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Although the Fourth Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation was supposed to be convoked in the near future after the Third Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation, in the end it was postponed for twenty-three years (!) and was convened in July of 2009.

The delay in the preparatory process attests to the deep rift and mutual distrust that prevail among the Primates and representatives of the official local Churches, even though they are of one mind in embracing the heresy of ecumenism.

In the opinion of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, the delay is due “to a fundamental deterioration in bilateral relations between the Orthodox Churches of Constantinople and Russia, something that even led to a temporary (four-month) rupture in Eucharistic communion between them.”<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Barella, *Διορθόδοξοι και οικουμενικαί σχέσεις*, p. 138.

<sup>76</sup> Secretariat for Preparation for the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church, *Συνοδικὰ ΙΧ* (Chambésy: 2014), p. 198.

<sup>77</sup> “Ἡ διορθόδοξη συνεργασία στὰ πλαίσια τῆς προετοιμασίας τῆς Μεγάλης Συνόδου” (Inter-Orthodox coöperation in the context of preparation for the Great Synod), <http://www.romfea.gr/patriarxeia/patriarxeia/patriarxeio-mosx-as/6821-9767>. Metropolitan Hilarion is alluding to the crisis over the Estonian

The Fourth Pre-Synodal Pan-Orthodox Consultation convened at the Orthodox Center of the Œcumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy, Switzerland, in July of 2009, under the chairmanship of Metropolitan John (Zizioulas) of Pergamon, and dealt for the present only with the burning issue of the canonical organization of the Orthodox in the “Diaspora.”

According to the final Communiqué,

The Consultation decided to establish new Episcopal Assemblies in certain regions of the world in order to resolve the problem of the Diaspora.... The Presidents of these Assemblies are the Primate of the Œcumenical Patriarchate in that region.... The members of these Assemblies are all those recognized by all Orthodox Churches as canonical Bishops.<sup>78</sup>

## XVI. Epilogue

Such has been the journey of the innovating Orthodox ecumenists in their endeavor to convoke the “Holy and Great Synod.”

One of the leading experts in the area of Patrology and Church history, Father Georges Florovsky, who contributed decisively to the liberation of Orthodox theology from the “Babylonian captivity” of Western theology, describes as follows the place of Synods in the life of the ancient Church:

It will be no exaggeration to suggest that Councils were never regarded as a canonical institution, but rather as occasional *charismatic events*. . . . And no Council was accepted as valid in advance, and many Councils were actually disavowed, in spite of their formal regularity. . . . Indeed, those Councils which were actually recognized as ‘Œcumenical,’ in the sense of their binding and infallible

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Church in 1996, when the Patriarchate of Constantinople reactivated the tomos of autonomy that it had granted to the Orthodox Church of Estonia in 1923, thereby restoring its canonical subordination to the Œcumenical Patriarchate—TRANS.

<sup>78</sup> “Τελικὸ Ἀνακοινωθὲν Δ’ Πανορθοδόξου Διασκέψεως, Ἰούλιος 2009” (Final communiqué of the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Consultation, July 2009), <http://www.romfea.gr/ektakta-nea/10638-2608>.

authority, were recognized, immediately or after a delay, not because of their formal *canonical* competence, but because of their *charismatic* character: under the guidance of the Holy Spirit they have witnessed to the Truth.<sup>79</sup>

Father Florovsky sets forth for us the two fundamental characteristics of an authentic Orthodox Synod: it is a charismatic event (its nature) and a witness to the Truth (its purpose); that is, the Synod is a precious gift of Grace from the Triune God to His Church and a revelation of the Spirit of Truth dwelling therein.

As we have demonstrated with supporting evidence, these two characteristics are absent in the case of the “Holy and Great Synod” planned by the innovating ecumenists.

This very method of preparation, which is patently rationalistic and bureaucratic, should be seen as yet another innovation of official Orthodoxy.

And the goal of this Synod? Instead of undertaking, with the criteria of the Patristic, Synodal, and canonical Tradition, a diagnosis and condemnation of the syncretistic pan-heresy of ecumenism and a cure of the wounds that it has inflicted on the Body of the Church, it is preparing for the exact opposite: an amnesty of heresies, that is, a recognition of the *real and ontological existence* of heterodox Christian communities.

Even if this Great Synod is not convoked in the near future (2016), the impending catastrophe for the official local Churches is immense and incalculable, given that the preparation for the “Holy and Great Synod” is the chief platform on which the syncretistic pan-heresy of ecumenism is being cultivated, promoted, and consolidated.

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Anti-ecumenical Genuine Orthodoxy watches this journey of the so-called official local Churches toward alienation from her with sincere grief and deep sorrow, being profoundly aware that the more the apostasy of the innovators advances, the greater becomes her

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<sup>79</sup> “The Authority of the Ancient Councils,” p. 96.

responsibility for the preservation of Orthodoxy, which is the light and hope of the world.

It is precisely in this perspective that Genuine Orthodoxy interprets the inexpressible gift of the Divine Founder of the Church, to wit, the recently achieved union (March of 2014) of the Old Calendarist anti-ecumenists at an international level.

This gift and charism of union in the correct confession of the Faith and in the Divine Eucharist affords us the hope that, despite our unworthiness, we may, God willing, be vouchsafed the resultant gift and charism of convoking a Major Synod of the Genuine Orthodox Church, in which Genuine Orthodox Old Calendarist anti-ecumenists will participate exclusively and solely.

At this Major Synod, as envisaged in the unifying common ecclesiological document of the Genuine Orthodox,

there will be proclaimed to all of creation, on the one hand, the Sole Hope that exists among us in the True Church as the only way out of all impasses ‘for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation,’ and, on the other hand, the complete and definitive antithesis between Orthodoxy and syncretism of an ecumenist and a Sergianist bent as mutually exclusive, unto the glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, by the intercessions of the Mother of God, the Apostles, and the Fathers.<sup>80</sup>



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<sup>80</sup> “The True Orthodox Church and the Heresy of Ecumenism: Dogmatic and Canonical Issues,” ch. VII, §6, <http://hsir.org/p/be>.