

# **"The Dubious Orthodoxy of Metropolitan Cyprian's Group"**

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The newspaper \*Pravoslavnaya Rus\*, in its issue number seventeen of the present year, published the Decision of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad concerning the establishment of prayerful Eucharistic communion with the group of Old Calendarists headed by Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili.[1]

In its concluding section the Decision elucidates the causes that prompted the Sobor to take this step. However, in not one of its six points does it mention that the Sobor of 1975 resolved not to have communion with the Greek groups until they themselves had become united, and the Synod, already presided over by Metropolitan Vitaly, reaffirmed this wise decision in the spring of 1993, that is, a mere year and a half ago. Everyone is aware that the Greek groups can in no wise boast of having already achieved unity, yet the present Conciliar Decision offers no explanation whatsoever for this abrogation by the Sobor of its previous resolutions.

Thus, in the Decision it is stated,

"After deliberation and analysis of all aspects of these questions [concerning the history and ideology of this group][2] the Council of Bishops maintains that at the present time, when apostasy is spreading and the so-called official representatives of Orthodoxy, such as the Patriarchate of Constantinople and other patriarchates, are succumbing to and embracing the position of the Modernists and Ecumenists, it is very important for the True Orthodox to unite, make a stand together, and oppose the betrayers of the Orthodoxy of the Holy Fathers. In this regard, the Council of Bishops has decided:

"1) To establish communion in prayer and the Eucharist with the Greek Old Calendarist Synod of Metropolitan Cyprian, as well as with His Grace, Bishop Photios of Triaditsa, who heads the Bulgarian Old Calendar diocese."

Bishop Photios was consecrated for the Bulgarians by the self-same Metropolitan Cyprian, and thus his legitimacy is dependent upon the legitimacy of Metropolitan Cyprian.

It is of interest that our Sobor, while seeking union with the "True Orthodox" Greek groups, made no effort whatsoever toward unity with the far more numerous and decent group of Archbishop Chrysostom (Kiouisis) of Athens, who has a Sobor consisting of nineteen bishops.

The second point [of the decision] deals with informing the flock abroad of this event.

In point number three it is stated, "During the deliberations, the statements of those opposed to the union were also taken into account, in which the question was raised concerning the canonicity of Metropolitan Cyprian's group and their allegedly un-Orthodox teaching on Grace."

Aside from his personal teaching on Grace (more on this below), Metropolitan Cyprian has likewise been accused of preaching the heresy of chiliasm.

Concerning the "canonicity" of this group enough has already been said and written. But what then is their "allegedly un-Orthodox teaching on Grace"?

Preparing the ground for possible union with the Church Abroad well in advance, Metropolitan Cyprian issued a pamphlet entitled "An Ecclesiological Thesis, or Exposition on the Doctrine of the Church, for the Orthodox Opposed to the Heresy of Ecumenism"[3] It would seem that, judging from the title of the pamphlet, nothing could be said against such a program. The pamphlet is quite handsomely printed, even to the point of using the old orthography [i.e., pre-Revolutionary]. It was very widely distributed, and each member of the Bishop's Sobor undoubtedly received a copy.

However, with great consternation and dismay one is forced to point out that apparently the very members of the Bishops' Committee investigating the Greek question themselves, [4] and all the members of the Bishops' Sobor together, failed to pursue sufficiently what is called "reading between the lines" of this pamphlet, which abounds in ancient texts and is deftly put together, but which bears little relation to the contemporary ecclesiastical situation.

Moreover, it is obvious that they took scant notice of the canonicity (very doubtful) of Metropolitan Cyprian's group, for the subject is not at all reflected in the text of the Sobor's Decision. Likewise evident is the fact that the committee took no account whatsoever of the motives behind our own previous resolutions.

Let us now attempt to determine precisely what sort of Orthodoxy Metropolitan Cyprian does confess and whether or not one can actually say with a clear conscience that both he and his synod \*adheres wholly to the exact same ecclesiological and dogmatic principles as our Russian Church Outside Russia\* (point five of the Sobor's Decision).

In the chapter [of the pamphlet] entitled "The Church and Heresy," page two, it says:

"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 of these unsentenced members are valid as such, according to the Seventh Ecumenical Council, as, for example, the President of the Council, Saint Tarasios, remarks: "[their] ordination" "is from God." [5]

Later, in the third chapter, the author turns to the matter, "The Division in the Church Over Ecumenism" - as he calls it.

It seems strange to hear from a bishop who proclaims his Orthodoxy the idea that the Church can be "divided." The Holy Fathers have taught that She always was, is, and shall be the indivisible Bride of Christ. One can only fall away from Her or be reunited to Her through repentance. Metropolitan Anthony [Khrapovitsky] especially emphasized to his priests the necessity, after confession, of reading the ancient Prayer of Absolution which contains the word, "reconcile and unite him to Thy holy Church," thereby indicating that he who sins falls away from the Church. Although private confession can heal personal moral falls, it in no wise cures a public and obdurate inclination to heresy.

Metropolitan Cyprian correctly points out that the beginning of the malady was the introduction of the Western calendar into the life of the Church in 1924. But then later he advances an opinion which in no wise corresponds to the present ecclesiastical situation.

"The followers of the festal calendar innovation," says he, "have not yet been specifically judged in a pan-Orthodox fashion, as provided for by the Orthodox Church. As Saint Nicodemos 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 judgment and shall be judged on the basis of the decisions of the holy Councils, both Ecumenical 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 conciliar or synodal verdict,' as is allowed in the Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Council. That is to say, the innovators are still unsentenced. Consequently,\* [according to the teaching of Metropolitan Cyprian],[6] \*their Mysteries are valid.\*[Emphasis mine.][7]

Metropolitan Cyprian chooses a convenient quotation from this canon to suit his purpose, but intentionally does not cite the subsequent text of the canon concerning those who separate themselves from their presidents before a synodical judgment in cases where the open preaching of heresy is taking place:

"Such persons as these not only are not subject to canonical penalty for walling themselves off from communion with the so-called bishop before synodical clarification, but [on the contrary] they shall be deemed worthy of due honor among the Orthodox. For not bishops, but false bishops and false teachers have they condemned, and they have not fragmented the Church's unity with schism, but from schisms and divisions have they earnestly sought to deliver the Church. (Canon Fifteen of the so-called First-Second Council)"

The adherents of Roman Catholicism in Russia have from of old cited the fact that not one Ecumenical Council has ever condemned Roman Catholicism and therefore it, they say, is not a heresy. Such an opinion was quite widespread among our intelligentsia, and especially in military circles.

Chapter Four is entitled "Repentance and Return." That which is expounded therein concerning the principle of repentance is entirely correct and in accord with the canons. Yet while offering us numerous examples of repentance which took place at one or another Ecumenical Council, Metropolitan Cyprian never so much as mentions the fact that the New Calendarists/Ecumenists not only have no intention whatsoever of repenting, but on the contrary, they persecute the True Orthodox in a most cruel manner. We have before our eyes the example of how quite recently they "strangled," one could say, Patriarch Diodoros of Jerusalem, who was attempting to defend the Orthodoxy of the Holy Fathers. Only a few months have now passed since they - by means of threats of expulsion from their monasteries, and canonical sanctions, have forced to repent before them that last bastion of Orthodoxy, the Holy Mountain - which was defending the Church from the inroads of the heresy of Ecumenism.

Metropolitan Cyprian sees no grounds for severing communion with the New Calendarists/Ecumenists until such a time as it will be possible for a future Ecumenical Council to judge them. But who could not be aware (including the Metropolitan himself) that for almost twenty years now the Ecumenists have been preparing the program for the future - and not in the least Orthodox - "Eighth Ecumenical Council"? The Preconciliar Committee has already on more than one occasion published its drafts for the reports to be delivered at this future "Council." The issues to be discussed at it include the unification of all Christians, the total abolition of the fasts, married bishops, and second marriages for the clergy.

Who, then, will be the president of this dishonorable assembly, which, according to Metropolitan Cyprian's daydreams, is supposed to condemn the Ecumenists/New Calendarists? Obviously, that crypto-Roman Catholic, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. And those like unto him will prove to be its members: the Patriarch of Alexandria, Parthenios (who has officially declared Mohammed to be a great prophet and personally considers him an Apostle!); the Patriarch of Antioch (who has already issued a directive to his clergy granting them permission to concelebrate with the heretical Monophysites); the Patriarch of Moscow (who has signed both the Balamand Unia and the agreement concerning the

Monophysites, and who has even initiated a dialogue with the Jews "on the highest possible level").[8]

I have been given the opportunity to acquaint myself with several letters written by one of the bishops of Metropolitan Cyprian's group. From these it is quite evident that he and his fellow bishops confess their own personal, and in no wise Orthodox, doctrine concerning the possibility of the Grace-filled activity of the Holy Spirit within churches which have become manifestly heretical. \*ALL the New Calendarists - without the least exception - are likewise very active Ecumenists.\*[9] The Old Style Churches (Russian and Serbian) have for a long time now also confessed this very same heresy.

But behold, this hierarch of Metropolitan Cyprian's group insists on the opinion that, so he says, "the New Calendarists, besieged by the heresy of Ecumenism and Innovation,

have not been deprived of Grace,[10] or at any rate, it is not within our competency to make such a pronouncement on our part ... we are not speaking of union with Belial, but (only) with those ailing in faith, several of whom are in need of spiritual treatment ... in view of this, we do not totally break off

communion with them.” [11] In another letter the same hierarch expresses the thought - totally unacceptable and absurd from a dogmatic point of view and from that of the Holy Fathers - that this group, while recognizing that the Ecumenists have Grace, is only "walling itself off from their errors."

In pronouncing its Decision concerning communion with Metropolitan Cyprian's group, our Sobor, unfortunately, did not also call to mind the text of that Decision taken formerly, under the presidency of Metropolitan Philaret, anathematizing the heresy of Ecumenism. Among others it contains such words as these \*"Therefore, to those who knowingly have communion with these aforementioned heretics, or who advocate, disseminate, or defend their new heresy of Ecumenism: Anathema." \*[12]

Indeed, by not investigating the matter seriously and by forgetting about this previously confirmed anathematizing of the New Calendarists/Ecumenists (or perhaps not venturing to abrogate this resolution), our Sobor, as frightful as it may be to admit, has fallen under its own Anathema. Had it probed the net spread before it more carefully, it would never have issued such a contradictory Decision.

Our previous Bishops' Sobors never raised the particular question concerning whether or not the New Calendarists have Grace. But the fact that formerly concelebrations with them were never permitted already testifies with sufficient clarity that the Church Abroad considered them to be without Grace.

Must we consider that our Synod has entered upon the path of betrayal of the traditions of the Holy Fathers, or did it merely commit an error owing to poor judgment which it is still not too late to correct at the next session of the Sobor to be held in November in France?[13]

+ Bishop GREGORY