

The Calendar Question & The Papacy

Protopresbyter Victor Melehov
Great Lent 2022

Introduction

Much of this article will consist of an excerpt from a previous article written by the same author (“A Point of No Return”). The purpose here is two-fold. First, focus must be brought upon one of the major divisions (and the source of this schism) between what is now referred to as the World Orthodox and the True Orthodox. This issue is often called the Calendar Question. The source of this division is the Papacy. Then, it is important to bring attention to what is transpiring today between the World Orthodox and the Papacy. Gradually, and with great caution, the World Orthodox leaders are preparing for union with the Roman Papacy. Have we not noticed both so-called patriarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate and that of Constantinople vying for the seat on the right-hand side of the Pope? Have we not noticed the occasional “trial-balloon” news articles announcing the “possible” visit of the pope to Russia? Why is this still semi-official? Because they still fear the adverse reaction from their laity and certain clergy (especially in Russia) to such bold attempts at a union. Let us not allow them to fear in vain.

Apostolic Succession

On the Sunday before the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Church has set the Gospel reading to be Matthew 1:1-25, the genealogy of Christ. We listen to the names of His ancestors according to the flesh. Here we find representation from all of humanity - sinners and righteous, rich and poor. No one is excluded. Why? Because Christ came into the world to take upon Himself our sinful fallen nature so as to restore it. He further confirms this by saying, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32). Furthermore, for the people of the Old Testament, it was important to know that they were descendants of Abraham. Their genealogy was important to them because it proved they were of the “chosen people.” Christ’s genealogy accomplishes not only this goal, but what is even more important to the people of both the Old and New Testaments, is that it fulfills all prophecy. According to the flesh, Christ is the descendant of both royalty and priesthood.

The understanding of such genealogy continues to be of great importance in the Church of Christ to this day. It is not just a beautiful tradition. It has profound and important significance. For members of the Church (Orthodox Christians) it is a spiritual life-line. We call it Apostolic Succession. For every person who is baptized in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it is important to know that the priest or bishop was not only baptizing that person properly, but was himself properly ordained by bishops who could trace their own ordinations back to the Apostles. Moreover, such clergy must have the same Faith (ecclesiology) as the Apostles. They may not preach something foreign or contrary to the Faith of the Apostles. This invariably leads to heresy. Of course, the Church cannot be in heresy. Therefore, heretics may not be in the Church, and one does not need an Ecumenical Council to declare it. Local churches and their followers who have fallen into heresy (by default) have already fallen away from the Church of Christ.

Our Savior says, "...no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). By these words, we understand the importance of knowing the Son. Who knew the Son better than the Apostles? Therefore, if we are in every sense one with the Apostles, we are one with Christ. Apostolic Succession provides us with this lineage and spiritual link. Nonetheless, Apostolic Succession must not be viewed as a simple mechanical act of succession. God will not be mocked. The requirement for Apostolic Succession is two-fold. One must not only have the lineage of proper ordinations, but also a pure confession of Faith consistent in all ways to the Faith of the Apostles.

The Calendar Question

Many Orthodox Christians are often confronted with the "Calendar Question." To a large extent, the World Orthodox have adopted the Gregorian Calendar (i.e., the "new calendar"). Other World Orthodox (primarily the Moscow Patriarchate, along with its newly acquired hyphenated appendage, ROCOR-MP) still use the Julian Calendar (i.e., the "old calendar"). Because they all subscribe to the heresy of Ecumenism (whether openly, or slyly"), all the World Orthodox are at least in communion with each other (i.e., they all concelebrate regardless of the 13-day difference in feasts). This only demonstrates that the calendar question is no longer an issue for the World Orthodox. The heresy of Ecumenism has long ago become an opaque cataract upon the eyes of these historical, former Churches of Christ. Therefore, it is understood that for the supporters/followers of these institutions, this article will most likely be of little use, or interest.

As a result of the above, we now witness the state of many honest and sincere people who have been negatively affected by the dismissive attitude of World Orthodox clergy to their questions regarding their faith. Since 1924, when Greece adopted the "new calendar," this schism slowly began to spread its malignancy throughout the world. At the time, many people, who found themselves in World Orthodoxy, did not understand what was transpiring. They still considered themselves to be Orthodox Christians. They have friends and relatives on either side of this issue. Yet, as the fog (malignant confusion) of Ecumenism began to engulf the flock, with the help of their own trusted clergy, many have long ago become indifferent to the Calendar Question, dismissing it as "church politics." How and why this change took place is no longer clear, nor important, to them. Others, the True Orthodox, still understand this to be a very important issue relevant to the Orthodox Faith. They understand that if we succumb to Pilate's sarcasm when he asks, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) we accept the secular mindset that everything must be viewed through the lens of relevancy. Sadly, when even truth is only relevant to one's perspective, then all becomes irrelevant.

So, why is the Calendar Question so important to the Church, and how does it affect the Orthodox Faith? The Gregorian Calendar was born through schism and heresy (i.e., foreign to the Faith of the Apostles), both of which are inseparable conditions causing people to be found outside of the Church. We must keep in mind – there are many religions, but there is only one Church of Christ, and beginning with His apostles, the Church is guided through its councils, each ratifying the previous councils' decisions in order to continue with further decisions in full agreement with the past. This chain of councils is important to Orthodox Christians. It is a condition for Apostolic

Succession. Once this chain is broken, schism and heresy take hold, and the perpetrators find themselves outside of the Church.

With this in mind, we must further consider that without sincere and complete repentance, schism only breeds more schism, for it is founded on pride - the fundamental flaw of the unrepentant. As far-reaching as it may seem, the roots of the Calendar Question begin with the fall of the Church of Rome – a major schism upon which the Papacy was founded. Let us look at a brief history of some of the important events in Western society beginning from the year 1054, which initially affected the future of Western civilization, but later, as we see today, that of the entire world.

- The Church of Rome broke away from the other Churches of the Christian world (at that time - Constantinople, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Antioch) in 1054 over Rome's demand for papal supremacy. (It needs to be noted that papal supremacy is not papal infallibility. That came later.). Having been in existence and functioning for some 1,000 years, the other four Churches refused to accept this administrative innovation, which would result in stripping away each Church's autocephalous status, and turn them all into dioceses of the pope of Rome. Through this schism, through breaking with its own 1,000 year legacy, where the pope (patriarch) of Rome was recognized as being first among equals by the other Churches, the Church of Rome passed through a point of no return. This point marked the beginning of the fall of the Roman Church. We do not speak here of Rome's fall as an institution. The papal institution has lasted for almost 1,000 years since that point, and continues to date. We speak here of a spiritual fall – a departure from the Commandments, Faith and the love of God. We speak of the point where Rome began its departure from the Church of Christ. This is a prime example of how returning (i.e., going back) to such a fork in the road is often difficult, if not impossible. However, as we know, with God, all things are possible. Although, we cannot change the past we can certainly amend such points for the future. Here, be it an individual, a city, or an entire nation, there must be repentance. To work a change, there must be a change – for better, or for worse. Yet, today, through many such points over time, even the concept of repentance has been eroded to an act of formality at best.

Since that year, there has been no repentance from Rome. The world has watched Rome fall from being a part of the Church to becoming just a form of a religion, albeit the chief institution of Protestant sects, of which it became the co-founder, and a government unto itself.

- Within a century of breaking from the other four Churches of Christendom, Rome formed a formidable army – the Crusaders. Their stated purpose was to rid the Holy Land of Moslems. Along the way, however, the Crusaders sacked and pillaged Orthodox Christian countries, cities and churches. Would Christ our Savior Himself, the Apostles, or the Fathers of the 7 Ecumenical Councils, or any of the other Churches of Christendom ever form, and support, an army? This is not the behavior, purpose or goal of the Church. Again, within 100 years, the former Church of Rome became a government institution, a state with its own (quite powerful) army. And, the pope's worldly aggression did not end with the Crusades. Let's not forget the forced conversion of nations ranging from Eastern Europe to the New World.

- After assuming papal supremacy (doctrine of papal primacy) in 1054, the doctrine of papal infallibility was introduced somewhere between the 14th and 15th centuries. With time, it became accepted by the Roman World all the more. It was finally defined as a dogma in 1870. This is where the former Roman Church formally, finally and completely abandoned the conciliarity (sobornost) of the Apostles, the 7 Ecumenical Councils, and all councils of the Church (local and otherwise). (Please note: Conciliarity or sobornost is the cornerstone for the decision-making process of the Church from Apostolic times, where each apostle, and later each bishop, archbishop, metropolitan, or patriarch, had one vote in any decision, regardless of his prominence or position of responsibility.) It must be understood, of course, this was not as if sobornost suddenly disappeared to everyone's surprise. It had been eroding ever since Rome's schism from the Church in 1054 – for some 800 years. By then, it most likely came as no surprise at all. It was announced as follows:

We teach and define that it is a dogma [Divinely](#) revealed that the Roman pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding [faith](#) or [morals](#) to be held by the universal Church, by the Divine assistance promised to him in [Blessed Peter](#), is possessed of that infallibility with which the [Divine Redeemer](#) willed that his Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals, and that therefore such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves and not from the consent of the Church irreformable.

So then, should anyone, which God forbid, have the temerity to reject this definition of ours: let him be [anathema](#). (see Denziger §1839).— *Vatican Council, Sess. IV, Const. de Ecclesiâ Christi, Chapter iv*

- With no other patriarchs or churches powerful enough to check Rome's ambitions and acquisitions, confusion regarding the understanding of genuine Church scripture and theology began to take hold of the minds of Western (Roman) scholars. As an example, one major deviation in Western theology was the perceived need to create the heresy of the Immaculate Conception, which made the birth of the Theotokos an exception to all other births. An intense and prolonged movement began by declaring that she was born without sin (i.e., Original). Despite the fact that the early Church (of the first 1,000 years, A.D.) had no such misconceptions, no such feasts, and even no such thoughts, the Council of Basel (1431) first declared the Immaculate Conception to be a "pious opinion." By 1571 it was already celebrated as a feast day (Dec. 8th). By 1854, the Immaculate Conception was declared to be a dogma. Of course, when analyzed, this heresy deprives the Most Holy Theotokos of her human nature, and ultimately of her God-given gift of self will. In short, this Roman dogma has God forcing the Holy Theotokos to be born immaculately (without Original Sin), and simultaneously depriving our Savior Himself of "taking on the sins of the world," thus making God's plan for man's redemption a perfunctory act of formality. (**Author's Note:** For an in-depth analysis of this Latin heresy, please read "The Orthodox Veneration of the Mother of God" by our Holy Hierarch, Archbishop John (Maximovitch) of Shanghai and San Francisco, printed by the St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2012)
- Then, there was the Inquisition. Not only did the Roman pope quickly develop an army of his own, he also created a "judicial system" to enforce his power. The Church does not punish people who disagree with it by using torture and execution. The Church does not burn heretics at the stake. A heretic is one who believes contrary to the ecclesiology of the Church. The Church considers a heretic to be outside of the Church. Is that not punishment enough? Here are commonly accepted facts regarding the Roman papal "judicial system" easily found on the internet under Wikipedia and other sites:

“The Inquisition, in historical ecclesiastical terminology also referred to as the "Holy Inquisition", was a group of institutions within the Catholic Church whose aim was to combat heresy. Torture and violence were used by Inquisition for eliciting confessions from heretics. The Inquisition started in 12th-century France to combat religious dissent, particularly among the Cathars and the Waldensians. The inquisitorial courts from this time until the mid-15th century are together known as the Medieval Inquisition. Other groups investigated during the Medieval Inquisition, which primarily took place in France and Italy, included the Spiritual Franciscans, the Hussites (followers of Jan Hus) and the Beguines. Beginning in the 1250s, inquisitors were generally chosen from members of the Dominican Order, replacing the earlier practice of using local clergy as judges.

During the Late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance, the scope of the Inquisition grew significantly in response to the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation. It expanded to other European countries, resulting in the Spanish Inquisition and the Portuguese Inquisition. The Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions focused particularly on the anusim (people who were forced to abandon Judaism against their will) and on Muslim converts to Catholicism. The scale of the persecution of converted Muslims and converted Jews in Spain and Portugal was the result of suspicions that they had secretly reverted to their previous religions.

During this time, Spain and Portugal operated inquisitorial courts not only in Europe, but also throughout their empires in Africa, Asia, and the Americas. This resulted in the Goa Inquisition, the Peruvian Inquisition, and the Mexican Inquisition, among others.

With the exception of the Papal States, the institution of the Inquisition was abolished in the early 19th century, after the Napoleonic Wars in Europe and the Spanish American wars of independence in the Americas. The institution survived as part of the Roman Curia, but in 1908 it was renamed the "Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office." In 1965 it became the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith."

- The Protestant Reformation began in 1517 with Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, priest and professor, who left his priesthood and married a nun, whom he had helped escape from her monastery. Of course, there is much which can be written about this revolution and how it affected Western society. It quickly spread and spawned a history, a culture, and a new religion of its own. Briefly stated, Luther rejected all things papal, including the Church prior to 1054. He founded his new religion primarily on the New Testament, ignoring all else, including the all-important concept of Apostolic Succession. The apostles ordained bishops, priests and deacons. Luther's Protestant religion would have none of these, only ministers – no priesthood, no sacraments, no tradition, no Apostolic Succession, no continuation of the Church of Christ. This was a man-made religion that had no connection to the Apostles, and no claims to Christianity. Protestant “churches” were simple meeting halls where sermons were preached by religious philosophers with no ties or responsibility to continue the Faith. They each simply made up their own. The Protestant religion became popular for several reasons:
 1. The popes had already rejected their connection to the early Church. Thus, Luther's revolt, not looking back to Church history, only took the “baton” from there by rejecting the unpopular.
 2. The popes imposed various rules of tokens and indulgences for the “purchase” of one's salvation.
 3. With their new-found infallibility, the popes behaved as dictators, making rules in their own favor as needed. Luther merely adopted the same tactics in a populist protest to continue the same.
 4. Luther's rebellion allowed for every protestant to become his own pope. Hence, allowing for the formation of over 2,000 protestant sects to date.

Finally, it needs to be noted that Luther, along with the post 1054 popes, are co-founders of the Protestant religion. Although appearing to be diametrically opposed, both are protestant in their own way. How? It can be successfully argued that the first protestant was Pope Leo IX. He insisted on papal supremacy, thereby, rejecting the Apostolic concept of decision-making through a council of equals. In other words, he protested against the tradition of the Church since Apostolic times. Thus, the subsequent popes, and their actions which followed, all set the example for the formation of Protestantism through Luther's 16th century rebellion, which continues through such schisms to date. Hence, both Luther and the popes are co-founders. Furthermore, both religions are inseparably bound. If there was no Roman Catholicism (its form of protestant-ism), there would be nothing for Luther's Protestants to protest.

- Then there was the Gregorian calendar. It is named after Pope Gregory the XIII, who introduced it in 1582. Presently, the Orthodox world refers to it as the "new calendar." It represents much more. The Gregorian Calendar was not only an innovation (i.e., "new") it was (and remains) a clear rejection of the Julian Calendar. The papal scientists claimed that it was more astronomically accurate (according to the instruments and science of the time). Hence, their justification of the need for replacing the Julian Calendar. It must be noted that most of the world did not immediately accept Pope Gregory's calendar innovation. The protestant world (Europe and North America) continued to follow the Julian Calendar well into the 1700's. The Soviet Union adopted the Gregorian Calendar in 1918 with the Bolshevik/Communist revolution. In spite of its Stalinist/Communist roots, the Moscow Patriarchate still uses the Julian Calendar. Greece adopted the Gregorian Calendar in 1924.

Presently, the Orthodox world refers to the Julian calendar as the "old calendar." Here even more so, it represents a much greater event and an important accomplishment. The Julian Calendar was first implemented by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C. It was established as the Church calendar in 325 A.D. by the First Ecumenical Council. This all-important council, gathered by the Emperor Constantine, decided many historic issues for all time. For example: The four Gospels, which we continue to use today, were confirmed as genuine (as opposed to other apocryphal versions in circulation at that time). The determination of the date for Pascha was established. The Nicene Creed was defined. Arianism was condemned as a heresy. And, of course, the Church Calendar (Julian Calendar) was established for all Christians to be able to celebrate the holy feasts together on the same day. The inaccuracy of the Julian Calendar was known at the time of the 1st Ecumenical Council. This was not as important for the fathers at that Council as was the determination of the date for Pascha with its associated feast days, and the creation of the entire liturgical cycle, joining the movement of celestial bodies with that of the earth and feasts of the Church. Holy fathers such as St. Nicholas, St. Spyridon, and others were participants in these decisions. The decisions of the 1st Ecumenical Council, which ratified the Council of the Apostles, from where we have the Canons of the Apostles, became a benchmark for the subsequent 6 Ecumenical Councils. All 7 Ecumenical Councils, and all the local councils since the 1st Ecumenical Council, have ratified each previous council. So, what has Pope Gregory XIII's decision to create a "more accurate" calendar actually

accomplished? In truth, it put the final nail into the coffin of the Roman Schism of 1054. By rejecting the decision of the 1st Ecumenical Council, a decision ratified by the Church of Christ until this day, Rome had rejected the decisions of the Church, even from the Council of the Apostles. Rome no longer celebrated the feasts along with all other Christians. Rome chose to celebrate Pascha apart from its former brethren. Once again, Rome had already cut itself off from its former brethren administratively, canonically, and to a great extent in terms of ecclesiology. Now, by rejecting the Julian Calendar, Rome severed itself from the Church of Christ liturgically. One might say that at this point there should be no doubt that the Church of Rome is no longer a Church of Christ, but an unfortunate and poorly articulated protestant religion of Rome, and the rest of the West, which it continues to represent.

- Then, there was Rome's relationship to science. Orthodox Christians view science to be a study of God's creation. As science hobbled along, proving and disproving its theories through observation, and research, the Churches of the East never denied its place in improving the quality of life. To the contrary, in the West, Rome viewed science as a competitor. Why so? The Churches of the East were focused on the spiritual, the salvation of mankind. Rome was focused on the worldly, the power of armies, and the subjugation of opposing thought of any kind – one could not question the pope! His decisions (hence, his thinking) must be infallible. The popes not only tortured and killed “heretics,” they also persecuted scientists who dared say the Earth was round and went about the Sun (i.e., Copernicus, Galileo and others). Rome promoted its own version of “acceptable science.” All too often, it was a false and indefensible position, which only led to its embarrassment.

Unfortunately, Rome's militant, heretical presence (and influence) did not end in the 16th or even 17th century. Rome, along with the rest of the Western world it had subjugated, continued to sink further, both morally and spiritually, to date. Rome had departed from being a Church with its glorious martyric and theological 1,000-year history, to becoming a powerful and wealthy sect, an institution, which, specifically, over the last 150 years has taken its Western world to a collective depth hitherto unthought of. Let's not forget the other “contributions” of the Roman and Protestant religions to the world. Reacting to their self-serving over-reach, these two religions spawned adverse ideologies with their revolutions. Hence, Free-Masonry, Marxism, Socialism, Communism, Fascism, Atheism, Secular Humanism, Ecumenism, and their associated revolutions, all formed in the West as a result of, or in defiance to, Roman and Protestant ideology.

Today, we have come to see the “fruits of their labors.” The Roman Church has become riddled with homosexual and pedophile clergy, who openly doubt the Resurrection of Christ. The protestant religions are no greater than their founder, Rome. They, of course, had lost their priesthood altogether. They never had the sacraments. They burned heretics, and “witches” at the stake. Now, they have women and homosexuals as pastors. They promote same-sex marriages. They never had a clear understanding of scripture, nor of apostolic succession. With them, the situation has only gotten worse. Given such conditions of spiritual decay, these western religions gave birth to secularism. One might say that this was a reaction to the anti-Christian cruelty and hypocrisy of the papal institution. Anti-church sentiment grew and revolutions took place. France had a very bloody revolution, which certainly did not spare the religious. Masonry took root. Marxism, socialism, and Communism developed. Although western society likes to think that its

Dark Ages led to the enlightened Renaissance, from a Christian spiritual perspective, one might say the Dark Ages of the West only led to darker ages in its future. Given this brief summary of Rome's deteriorating history, one can successfully argue that, for the Western world, 1054 turned out to be a point of no return.

So, what caused the Churches of the East to adopt the Papal calendar and/or Ecumenism since 1924, and what has this decision done to these same Churches? Unfortunately, the West's power and glamour gradually attracted the Eastern World's interest and engagement, in some cases to a point of envy. By accepting the Papal calendar, which originated through schism from the Church of Christ, the pope's schism was allowed to permeate the unsuspecting Orthodox world, which at the time was torn by revolutions and war. This Papal infusion, with all its heresies, into the Churches of Christendom, has led to the formation of today's World Orthodoxy – a self-contradictory, Ecumenical, and heretical embarrassing remnant of what used to be the ancient Churches of the East.

Given the above, why would anyone who considers himself to be an Orthodox Christian (or even a contemporary patriarch) desire to sit at the same table with the Pope, or accept the papal edict to change the calendar, or the accept the change to the Nicene Creed (the filioque heresy)? What is the profit? What does one gain? Believer or atheist, who would want to be a partner to such crimes, spiritual and otherwise? As previously stated, unless brought to an end through sincere repentance, schism only leads to other schisms and heresy. Having allowed this malignant papal poison to enter their Churches through the crevice of the Calendar Question, the World Orthodox have invited the cancer of Ecumenism into their churches, and into their minds, where the words of Pilate have become enshrined, "What is truth?" Through the secular spirit of compromise (in matters of Faith), people have developed a spirit of indifference. Society has overwhelmingly become secular. Having fallen from their former cathedras and squandered their spiritual wealth as the prodigal, the hapless eastern "patriarchs," now seek favor with the first among prodigals, the Papacy.

In conclusion, if we consider that the Papacy's new Gregorian calendar (in 1582) put the final nail into the coffin of Rome's schism of 1054 by severing itself from the Church of Christ liturgically, then what can one say regarding the World Orthodox doing the same in later years? Are they not joining with Rome's schism? Are they not accepting the decision of Pope Gregory XIII to adopt a more "accurate" calendar? Have they not separated from the Church of Christ by celebrating their feast days together with a new papal religion? Through this action alone, have they not rejected all 7 Ecumenical Councils, and even the decisions and instruction of the Apostles? Do they know Christ? Do they have Apostolic Succession? And now, the World Orthodox leaders are seeking complete union with Papacy while ignoring its schismatic origins and baggage of heresies. In the Old Testament we read how Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of porridge. Here we see how the World Orthodox have given away their "birthright." And, for what – Western worldly recognition?

One might surmise that all this must take place for scripture to be fulfilled. How else might the antichrist be received by the whole world, if the world was not drowning in profound apostasy? Orthodox Christians have long ago considered the Papacy to be the forerunner of the antichrist. And just as this prophecy must be fulfilled, Orthodox Christians of the Church must patiently

endure such times, and faithfully await the fulfillment of the prophecy of all prophecies, our Lord's Second Coming. "In Wisdom, let us attend!"