

**The Union of the Disparate Parts
of the Once Single
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia**

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**With the blessing of the Synod of Bishops of the
Russian True Orthodox Church**

There have been a number of articles and letters recently published and circulated on the internet which address the different parts of the Russian Church (i.e., those standing in opposition to the Moscow Patriarchate and its newly acquired ROCOR (under Met. Hilarion). They call upon these groups to come together and unite as one body of hierarchs and faithful. Certain authors have been critical of the bishops of these disparate jurisdictions, accusing them of personal ambitions, personality flaws, or even fanaticism or extremism. Others have blamed the current stalemate condition on certain clergy for their strict Orthodox perspectives and interpretations.

Here, it is appropriate to make a brief explanation of the term "fragments." The Holy Church of Christ can not be divided, moreover somehow crumble into so-called "fragments." This term came into use within church journalism through a slight-of-hand by some well-known authors. However, we, the children of the Russian Orthodox Church, may not use this to describe the condition of the Church because of its non-ecclesiastical meaning, and its disparaging character in relation to the Church of Christ. We also consider it necessary to note that the term "Alternative Orthodox," frequently used by modern home-grown "theologians," is also unacceptable within church polemics because Orthodoxy can only be true. Given any other case, Orthodoxy could no longer be considered so.

Certainly, the call to union is not only admirable, but also quite desirable. Criticizing individuals as perceived impediments is seldom constructive, even though possibly accurate. Our approach to unity must be founded upon that which brings us all together, regardless of our personalities, ambitions and backgrounds. We should come together based upon the very reasons we all, clergy and laity, attend Church. Hopefully, there we find a common unity with all present. For Orthodox Christians this unity lies in the fulfillment of the commandments: "Love God above all else and thy neighbor - as thyself." Furthermore, we believe where two or three are gathered in His name, there Christ will be also. This condition is built upon the foundation of ecclesiology and canonicity. Ecclesiology is our confession of Faith, which must be one with all the Fathers, from the Apostles to our present-day confessors. Canonicity is our legal status, beginning with apostolic succession right up to present-day canonical adherence. Therefore, in order to unite, these disparate parts of Russian Orthodoxy must have an undamaged canonical foundation, and an Orthodox ecclesiology. To have canonicity

without an Orthodox ecclesiology is of little use, and to have an Orthodox ecclesiology without canonicity is similarly problematic.

In approaching our desired unity, it will be helpful to first conduct a brief analysis of the existing synods – the possible candidates for entering into communion. However, we should first begin with the synods in Greece, and then proceed to those in the Russian Church. In order to better understand the issues of ecclesiology and canonicity in the Russian Church of today, it is important to study the history of these two Churches, at least from the time of ROCOR's restoration of the Greek Orthodox Church's hierarchy. This is not because we may, or may not; wish to enter into communion with one Greek synod or another as sister-churches, or some similar relationship. This is necessary because the Russian Church, beginning with ROCOR under our holy hierarch, Metropolitan Philaret, and then under Metropolitan Vitaly, has been occasionally closely tied to the Greek Church over the last half-century, and for some, even today.

The major synods of the Greek Church which might be considered today are those of Archbishop Chrysostom, Archbishop Macarios (Kalinikites), Met. Cyprian of Oropos & Fili (Cyprianites), the Matthewites (who have their own divisions and, subsequently, first-hierarchs), and the Holy Orthodox Church in North America (headed by Met. Ephraim of Boston).

The Synod of Archbishop Chrysostom –

This synod is directly tied to ROCOR's apostolic succession, in that ROCOR restored its hierarchy.

Originally, this synod, still during the tenure of Archbishop Auxentios as its first hierarch, was recognized by Metropolitan Philaret. (It needs to be noted that the ROCOR Sobor of 1975 resolved not to have communion with any of the Greek groups until they found their own unity.) This synod later suffered a split and existed as two branches, one under A. Auxentios and the other under A. Chrysostom, until A. Auxentios reposed in the Lord. ROCOR ceased to recognize this synod in 1994 when, under the leadership of Metropolitan Vitaly, the ROCOR bishops declared that their ecclesiology was the same as the ecclesiology of the Cyprianite Synod. The Synod of Archbishop Chrysostom has deposed Metropolitan Cyprian, and considers his teachings to be heretical.

By all accounts, only the Synod of Archbishop Chrysostom has an Orthodox ecclesiology and a legitimate canonical status.

The Synod of Archbishop Macarios (Kalinikites) –

This synod split from Archbishop Chrysostom apparently for administrative reasons. There are moral (homosexual) accusations associated with this synod. One bishop of this synod has been convicted on moral infractions and is serving a prison sentence. This synod has a following of clergy, including one bishop, in Russia who are self-proclaimed Name Worshipers.

Because of the above, this synod has a questionable ecclesiology and an uncanonical status.

The Synod of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos & Fili (Cyprianites) –

Met. Cyprian and his followers split from the Synod of Metropolitan Kallistos. Before this, Metropolitan Kallistos split from the Synod of Archbishop Auxentios. Apparently, Metropolitan Cyprian created this schism in order to form his own synod with a unique, self-styled (and heretical) ecclesiology. This group was subsequently defrocked by the Synod of Archbishop Auxentios and the Synod of Archbishop Chrysostom, and their ecclesiology was denounced. As mentioned above, in 1994 the ROCOR under Metropolitan Vitaly abandoned its long-term relationship with the Synod of Archbishop Chrysostom and announced its ecclesiology to be that of the Cyprianites.

At this point, because of its impact on ROCOR at the time, and its continuing influence on the Russian Church to this day, it is important to analyze in some detail the Cyprianite ecclesiology, its purpose, and ROCOR's need to adopt it. For it is this particular event which marked a major turning point in the history and direction of the Russian Church.

The Problem with Cyprianism, and the Danger to Its Adherents

While Cyprianism appears to be defending the Orthodox “old calendar,” their ecclesiology allows those who serve with heretics to continue to believe that they are in the Church. Cyprianism confirms that the Mother Church (i.e., the new calendar State Church of Greece, which often participates in services with Catholics, Protestants, Jews, etc.) can not be judged as heretical. It is only “ailing.” This is certainly a new interpretation. To invite the concept of the Church being “sick” is heresy by itself. Certain followers of Metropolitan Cyprian's teaching insist that this ecclesiology is merely a thesis, and thereby it is neither yet proven, nor disproven. They attempt to put it into a philosophical light, as if an ecclesiology can exist independent of its practice for the sole purpose of an interesting argument or conversation.

For us to naively consider Cyprianism a mere thesis, and juxtapose pro and contrary arguments, meanwhile, suspending our disbelief, we may as well consider doing the same for communism or socialism. This also might be considered to be a simple thesis or idea of Karl Marx. Of course, one can justifiably argue that to compare the atheism of communism to the teachings of a believing bishop is unfair, and perhaps even crude. However, in the arena of ideas, to place one thesis parallel to another, in that both are erroneous and contrary to the norm, certainly qualifies as substantive material for an interesting argument or conversation.

The truth of the matter is that in both cases, the data is complete; the results are in. Neither is any longer a mere argument or conversation. We no longer need to ponder the future development and outcome of such ideas. Both have led their free-thinking followers to disaster. Although, even as the communists, the Cyprianites of today have a very certain and defined following, and both groups will insist on arguments demonstrating their “success.”

Without delving into an analysis of the varying accounts from different sources available today, for the purpose of this discussion, let us establish as a given, what is common knowledge regarding the formation of the “Cyprian Synod.” That is, in 1984, Bishop Cyprian (Koutsoumbas) of Oropos and Fili (formerly of the Kallistite Schism) broke with

his colleagues and formed his own Synod, the "Synod of Those in Resistance," otherwise known as the "Cyprianite" Synod.

Needless to say, there is already plenty written on this topic. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this letter, we will let the above suffice. From the above, let us extract for the very least, that even though it may be referred to as a simple "thesis," Met. Cyprian broke communion with his former Synod and fellow Greek bishops over this "thesis" and established his own church based upon this "thesis." Although some may play with words, and suggest that "Cyprianism" does not exist, history has shown that this Cyprianite Thesis has long ago become the ecclesiology of the "Synod of Those in Resistance." Otherwise, why the schism, and why the new name? And, what does this new name mean other than the Cyprianites are a synod of clergy "resisting" the direction of the Church (i.e., the new calendar State Church of Greece), in which they still remain a part?

Therefore, the Cyprian Thesis in the Greek Church is no longer a thesis. It is in practice an ecclesiology and has already caused at least one schism. Nonetheless, perhaps those in the Russian Church may still intellectually entertain it as a thesis? Despite its simplicity, or perhaps because of it, the ROCOR Synod in 1994 proclaimed the ecclesiology of Met. Cyprian as its very own. One might wonder why ROCOR, with its long-standing relationship with the GOC Synod of Archbishop Auxentios, and then later Archbishop Chrysostom (both having denounced Cyprianism), would suddenly sever such ties to quickly adopt the controversial ecclesiology of Met. Cyprian and concelebrate with Cyprianite bishops?

In 1983, the ROCOR Synod had unanimously adopted the following Anathema Against Ecumenism:

Those who attack the Church of Christ by teaching that Christ's Church is divided into so-called "branches" which differ in doctrine and way of life, or that the Church does not exist visibly, but will be formed in the future when all "branches" or sects or denominations, and even religions will be united into one body; and who do not distinguish the priesthood and mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation; therefore, to those who knowingly have communion with these aforementioned heretics or who advocate, disseminate, or defend their new heresy of Ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, Anathema!

Throughout all the post-revolutionary years of the ROCOR's existence, this was the first clear statement of its ecclesiology relative to contemporary times. The Holy Hierarch, and Metropolitan, Philaret had led his Synod of Bishops to crystallize and articulate this momentous and historic benchmark, delineating the boundaries of the True Faith.

Unfortunately, wishing to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as to become recognized in the eyes of "world orthodoxy," the ROCOR bishops of 1994 found such an ecclesiology an impediment to their desired direction. To officially reject the 1983 Anathema would certainly serve to alarm too many faithful, and would bring down the

charge that these bishops are changing the direction of the Church, established by the earlier beloved Metropolitans.

Instead, the 1994 ROCOR bishops chose to “move on,” as modern politicians prefer to say, and proclaim a oneness-of-mind with Met. Cyprian’s ecclesiology, and, of course, that of his Synod. They gambled, reasoning that no one would realize that their new “ecclesiology” would replace and negate the spirit of the 1983 Anathema; their former ecclesiology. They succeeded. A few clergymen winced, and a few left. The rest went on celebrating with their new-found Greek friends, while their severed, former Greek brethren looked on with disbelief. Only one ROCOR bishop protested. Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), who was previously forced to retire, said the following:

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. (The Dubious Orthodoxy of Metropolitan Cyprian's Group, Please see attached.)

Fortunately, Met. Vitaly had lived long enough to see his mistake in the 1994 decision, and denounced Cyprianism in 2001. (Please see attached.) The fact that Met. Vitaly chose to do this as one of his first decisions after departing from his false brethren under the new ROCOR Synod of Met. Laurus further serves to underscore the danger of this ecclesiology as a heresy, and not a mere “thesis.”

Once again, one might wish to intellectually entertain it as a thesis. However, it has been an official ecclesiology of the ROCOR for some 16 years, and we have lived to see its fruits; union with the Moscow Patriarchate, an open door to “world orthodoxy,” and a wholesale betrayal of the Russian New Martyrs and the faith of our Fathers.

Nonetheless, Cyprianites will argue that Ecumenism and the New Calendar have not yet been condemned by an Ecumenical Council. So, let us once again refer to extreme topics like Communism and the Bolshevik Revolution, Sergianism, the Moscow Patriarchate formed by Stalin, the Russian New Martyrs tortured and killed by the hands of Communism and the Moscow Patriarchate, the persecution of the Catacomb Church of Russia, and the persecuted existence of ROCOR in exile until 1994. These are the results or fruits of communism/socialism. For some, these are still considered to be desired outcomes. For most, these outcomes represent persecution, tragedy and disaster. Do we need to wait for a council to condemn these atrocities before we do so ourselves?

Then, let us look at the fruits of Cyprianism. It has caused a schism in the GOC. For ROCOR, it has driven a union with the Moscow Patriarchate along with its Soviet Sergianism and Ecumenism, and opened a window to World Orthodoxy (i.e., more

Ecumenism). Here too, for some, these are desired outcomes. For the Orthodox Christian, these outcomes represent persecution, tragedy and disaster. Do we need to wait for a council to condemn these sorrowful events before we judge so ourselves? Shall we wait for a council while more souls suffer and perish? Our Savior says that we can judge such things by their fruits. Cyprianism is by all standards an ecclesiology, and a heretical one at that.

Therefore, the Synod of Met. Cyprian of Oropos & Fili (Cyprianites) has a heretical ecclesiology and an uncanonical status.

The Matthewites –

Unlike the previously mentioned Greek synods, this synod is not connected through ordination with ROCOR. Its apostolic succession passes through the irregular ordination by one bishop. Prior to its contemporary splits, the Matthewite Synod applied to ROCOR under Metropolitan Philaret for regularization. Having been granted it, they later rejected the need for regularization, and proclaimed ROCOR to be without Grace.

The Matthewites have a following in Russia, including one bishop. They are generally known for their strictness and austerity.

Both the ecclesiology and the canonical status of the Matthewites should be considered questionable.

The Holy Orthodox Church in North America -

This group of clergy and laity left the ROCOR during the tenure of Metropolitan Vitaly, with the claim that ROCOR was becoming ecumenical and seeking to join the Moscow Patriarchate. They were taken under the omophorion of Archbishop Auxentios (see above) in 1987. The Synod of Archbishop Auxentios had already denounced the schism of Metropolitan Cyprian, along with his ecclesiology. This became the position of this Boston group also. The Synod of Archbishop Auxentios consecrated two bishops for the American group (Bishop Ephraim and Bishop Macarios), who then became members of that synod. After the repose of Archbishop Auxentios, Bishop Moses was ordained for America. Soon thereafter, the remaining bishops in Greece abandoned this synod, leaving three bishops in America. These three bishops declared themselves to be autonomous and thereby created an American church (HOCNA), an uncanonical act by any standards.

It needs to be mentioned that within this group, the Holy Transfiguration Monastery and its clergy have significant influence over its synod of bishops and their decisions. Because of this, it should be noted that there remain a number of uninvestigated moral accusations against certain clergy within the Monastery.

This synod has an Orthodox ecclesiology, but an uncanonical status. By submitting to the influence of the Monastery clergy, the canonical function of this synod is also questionable.

Having briefly discussed the various synods of the Greek Church, let us now turn our attention to the various parts of the Russian Church. They are: the Synod of Metropolitan Valentine (Suzdal-ROAC), the Synod of Archbishop Tikhon (RTOC), the remnants of the dissolved Synod of Metropolitan Vitaly (after leaving ROCOR(Laurus), the Synod of Metropolitan Agafangel (ROCOR(A), and the Gennady-Sekachov Synod.

The Synod of Metropolitan Valentine (ROAC) –

This synod was formed by Metropolitan Valentine and Archbishop Lazar, both canonical bishops of ROCOR during the tenure of Metropolitan Vitaly. They were assisted by ROCOR's well-known theologian, Bishop Gregory (Grabbe). Although this occurred before any official decision to join the Moscow Patriarchate, it was already clear at the time that ROCOR had every intention to silence its bishops in Russia in order to make way for its shameful union with the M.P. This synod has made a clear stand against contemporary heresies such as Ecumenism and Cyprianism.

It needs to be noted that Metropolitan Valentine suffered many accusations of pedophilia. In spite of this, Metropolitan Valentine unfortunately did not see a need for being sensitive to such issues. Disregarding the protest of his own Archbishop Anthony of Yaransk, and a number of ROAC clergy, he consecrated a certain hieromonk, who himself openly admitted to immoral behavior with other people's children. Prior to his consecration to the rank of bishop, this candidate again openly admitted to abandoning his family, and refusing to support his own children.

The Synod of Metropolitan Valentine (ROAC) has an Orthodox ecclesiology, as well as canonical status. Unfortunately, this is of little use when a synod loses its moral authority.

The Synod of Archbishop Tikhon (RTOC) –

This synod was formed by canonical ROCOR bishops soon after the time when Metropolitan Vitaly took a stand against the decision of ROCOR under Metropolitan Laurus to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate. At the time, this synod had voiced its support of Metropolitan Vitaly's position. This synod has also made a clear stand against contemporary heresies such as Ecumenism and Cyprianism.

The Synod of Archbishop Tikhon (RTOC) has an Orthodox ecclesiology, as well as legitimate canonical status.

The remnants of the dissolved Synod of Metropolitan Vitaly (after leaving ROCOR(Laurus) –

Even before the repose of Metropolitan Vitaly, the new synod, centered in Mansonville, began to dissolve. Internal arguments between the newly made bishops, along with internal and external problems with the diocese in France led to the apostasy of Archbishop Varnava, and the disintegration of the unity of the episcopate of this synod. Metropolitan Vitaly's repose only served to solidify the differences and the splits they created.

Bishop Vladimir (Tseleshchev) and Bishop Anastasi (Sourjik) have attempted to form their own synod. They have condemned Ecumenism and Cyprianism. Their ecclesiology appears to be generally Orthodox. However, their present canonical status is questionable.

Metropolitan Anthony (Orlov) along with his bishops declared himself to be Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia, and Metropolitan of Los Angeles and the United States. He resides in California with his matushka. Both ecclesiology and canonicity should be considered questionable.

The Synod of Metropolitan Agafangel (ROCOR(A)) –

Metropolitan Agafangel was a canonical bishop in ROCOR under Metropolitan Laurus. He abandoned ROCOR just before its official union with the Moscow Patriarchate. It needs to be noted that Metropolitan Agafangel had signed and agreed with all of ROCOR's documents leading up to the union with the Moscow Patriarchate.

Instead of seeking to unite with other Russian bishops, who were already in a similar situation (which had been foreseen by the Holy Hierarch Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, in his Ukaze No. 362, November 20, 1918), Metropolitan Agafangel appealed to the Cyprian Greek Synod (see above). Having made a number of bishops with a Cyprian bishop, he proceeded to form his own synod, which proclaimed him as Metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, ROCOR(A). Metropolitan Agafangel did not denounce Cyprianism, but rather confirmed it as his ecclesiology by concelebrating and making consecrations with bishops of the Greek Synod in Resistance. Metropolitan Agafangel continues to insist that the ecclesiology of his synod (ROROR(A)) must continue to be that of ROCOR under Met. Laurus, prior to its union with the M.P.

Considering Bishop Gregory's (Grabbe) position regarding the ecclesiology of the Synod in Resistance, and in light of the 1983 Anathema against Ecumenism, along with the identical positions of Metropolitan Vitaly, and the other synods of the Russian Church today, one must make the conclusion that the Synod of Metropolitan Agafangel does not have an Orthodox ecclesiology, nor can it be considered canonical.

The Gennady-Sekachov Synod –

According to common knowledge in Russia, and my own conversations with some of the clergy of this synod, the ecclesiology of the Gennady-Sekachov Synod varies from one bishop to the next. Some even confess a type of "white magic."

Based upon the determination of ROCOR under the tenure of Metropolitan Vitaly, at the very least, one can conclude that the canonical status and apostolic succession of this group can not be determined.

Therefore, the Gennady-Sekachov Synod can not be considered to have an Orthodox ecclesiology, nor can it be considered canonical.

Conclusion -

I have attempted to present the current Church situation based upon facts as I know them, not to perpetuate arguments, attacks, and counter-attacks, but rather to provide a perspective from which to possibly begin discussions, and to underscore the importance of having a common Orthodox ecclesiology with a canonical basis as a unifying goal.

If we wish to unite the disparate parts of the Russian Church, which have no communication with each other, it must be on a sound foundation; a pure confession of Faith with unconditional canonical authority. If discussions devolve to the level of nostalgia for former alliances or associations with monasteries or other prominent groups or individuals, we will invariably fall short of our goal and fail.

Furthermore, in spite of many who now understand the tragic error of Cyprianism, the 1994 suicidal turning point in ROCOR's history (accepting Cyprianism as its ecclesiology) still remains a fundamental and integral part of Metropolitan Agafangel's ROCOR(A) ecclesiology today. This phenomenon only serves to underscore the need for the Russian Church to develop a more wholesome understanding of the GOC's contemporary history. The deceivers of the MP who infiltrated ROCOR (i.e., Metropolitan Laurus, Archbishop Mark, Met. Hilarion, etc.) merely used this GOC-rejected ailing heresy as a vehicle to unite with the MP. That was the sole purpose of the 1994 decision. Now we have those who desire to adhere to it as a building block of their ecclesiology, while they attempt to create a union.

It must be understood that to unite around an ecclesiology similar to that of ROCOR after 1994 will only lead such participants again to something like the Moscow Patriarchate, or even worse. Those hierarchs and clergy, who in 1994 had signed on to the heresy of Cyprianism as their own ecclesiology, along with those who since then have espoused this false teaching, should follow the example of Metropolitan Vitaly. They must admit their error by renouncing Cyprianism and embrace the 1983 Anathema against Ecumenism. Those who do not return to the ecclesiology of our Holy Hierarch and Father among the saints, Metropolitan Philaret, will be doomed to repeat the same mistakes which recent history has revealed to us.

The ecclesiology of the united Russian Orthodox Church, toward which we strive, must reflect the wholesome and canonical ecclesiology of ROCOR, that same ecclesiology which made it a beacon of guidance and hope to the rest of the Orthodox world. Only then, can our union claim to have the Orthodox ecclesiology and canonicity of the Holy Fathers.

Sources:

"The Dubious Orthodoxy of Metropolitan Cyprian's Group" by Bishop GREGORY Grabbe

(Translated from *Church News* [in Russian], No. 5, Sept. - Oct. 1994, pp. 2-4.)

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

15/01/M

16/29 December 2001

**The Resolution of the Pastoral Conference
of the Canadian and American Clergy
Regarding the Issue of Terminating Eucharistic Communion
with Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili.**

Having studied and discussed Metropolitan Cyprian's teaching concerning ailing and healthy members of the Church in "the realm of a correct understanding of the faith" by the General Committee, whose creation was approved by Archbishop Varnava and Bishop Varfolomey and, likewise, having attended to reports and theological analyses from several volumes of documents regarding this subject, we have come to the following conclusion:

**The Conclusion Concerning the Ecclesiology of Metropolitan Cyprian
of Oropos and Fili.**

On the basis of having studied the ecclesiological teachings of Metropolitan Cyprian, which are set forth in the book "Ecclesiological Thesis, or the Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church for the Orthodox, Resisting the Heresy of Ecumenism" (pub. Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, Fili, Attica, Greece, 1993), Metropolitan Cyprian's report at the 6th Orthodox Conference "The Heresy of Ecumenism and the Patristic Position of the Orthodox" (23 February 1998), and also a host of publications and declarations of other hierarchs of the Synod of the Resistors, we have arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Metropolitan Cyprian and his Synod, while recognizing ecumenist world Orthodoxy to be heretical, nevertheless, considers it to be a part of the Church of Christ, thus contradicting the teaching and tradition of the Church, which clearly bears witness in Conciliar decrees and the writings of the Holy Fathers to the effect that heretics are fallen away from the Church.
2. Metropolitan Cyprian replaces the concept of "heretics" with a description of those who are essentially in error in their judgments concerning the Orthodox. Thus, in regard to ecumenist-heretics, he writes: "Persons in error concerning the correct understanding of the faith -- and thereby sinning, but not yet judged by an ecclesiastical court -- are ailing members of the Church" ("Ecclesiological Theses," ch. 1, 4; pp. 2, 7). Calling for a walling-off from these ailing members, Metropolitan Cyprian, nonetheless, considers them to be within the Church. However, to permit membership in the Church outside an Orthodox confession of faith is by no means possible; hence, "those ailing in the faith" cannot be members of the Church, which is also confirmed by the teachings of the Holy Fathers. "Without a doubt," says the venerable John Cassian the Roman, "he who does not confess the faith of the Church is outside the Church." The same is confirmed also by Patriarch Jeremias II of Constantinople: "Members of the Church of Christ are wholly devoted to the truth, and those not wholly devoted to the truth are not members of the Church of Christ." And St. Cyprian of Carthage teaches: "Just as the devil is not Christ, although he deceives in His name, so also such a one cannot be accounted a Christian as does not abide in the truth of His Gospel and Faith." In agreement with all the Fathers, the Great Hierarch Gregory the Theologian, in his

Second Epistle Against Apollinarius, also teaches: "Avoid those holding to another doctrine and consider them alien to God and to the Universal Church." The Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs Concerning the Orthodox Faith states: "We believe that all amongst us are members of the catholic Church, even the faithful themselves, i.e., those who unconditionally confess the pure faith of Christ the Saviour." And St. Gregory Palamas also explains: "Those who are of the Church of Christ, the same are of the truth; and those who are not of the truth, the same are also not of the Church of Christ..."

Metropolitan Cyprian declares in his thesis that "the Orthodox have become divided into two parts: those who are ailing in the faith and those who are healthy..." (Ch. 3, p. 4), but then he immediately goes on to speak of "restoring to Orthodoxy" those ailing in the faith (Ch. 3, p. 5), whereby he clearly falls into a doctrinal contradiction, for how is it possible "to receive into Orthodoxy" those who already are Orthodox?!

3. Metropolitan Cyprian makes a statement concerning the division of the Church by reason of ecumenism, by drawing an analogy between the present state of the Church and Her state during the time of the iconoclastic heresy. In his ecclesiology, he attempts to compare the present-day new-calendarists and ecumenists with the iconoclasts, whom the Fathers of the VII-th Oecumenical Council united to the Church through repentance and the renouncing of their heresy. Likewise, Metropolitan Cyprian refers to the VII-th Oecumenical Council, the Acts of which employ the expressions "severance," "divisions," etc. He reaches a totally unfounded conclusion, that the iconoclasts, prior to their having been judged by the Council, were not yet heretics, as such; and that their mysteries were therefore recognized as being valid. However, concerning the iconoclasts who were joined to Orthodoxy, neither did the Oecumenical Council consider them as having belonged previously to the Church, nor did they themselves make any pretences as to their comprising Her. Here are the testimonies of the joining iconoclasts themselves. Basil, Bp. of Ancyra: "To the extent of my ability, I investigated the question of icons, and with complete conviction turned to the Holy Catholic Church." Theodore, Bp. of Myra in Lycia: "...I pray God and your holiness to join me, a sinner, to the Holy Catholic Church, as well." John, the most-God-pleasing Locum Tenens of the Apostolic Throne in the East said: "Heresy separates every man from the Church." The Holy Council stated: "that is obvious."

But Metropolitan Cyprian, in his ecclesiology, changes the terminology: "they were received into Orthodoxy," thereby inferring an unthinkable distinction between the Church and Orthodoxy, which is impossible.

The Church, as the Body of Christ, cannot be divided. Such a phenomenon is ontologically impossible, inasmuch as the Lord Jesus Christ cannot have several bodies. Those divisions mentioned at the Council, and in the writings of the Holy Fathers, relate exclusively to a temporary division between Christians, like those arising during times of troubles when heresies are being spread, and when, initially, it can be difficult to discern just who is who. St. Basil the Great compared an occasion like this to a night-battle when, in the darkness, it is not immediately possible to discern friend from foe.

In the Church there can be no division; there can only be a falling away from Her. The Catechism of Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitski) states the same concerning this: "Question: Is it possible to grant that there once took place, or that there will take place, a division within the Church, or a separation of Churches? Answer: In no case: heretics and schismatics fell away from the one indivisible Church at various times and thereby ceased to be members of the Church, but the Church, as such, cannot lose her unity" (Experience of Christian Catechism. Pub. Australo-New Zealand Ep. 1989, p. 65). In its Epistle of 18 November/ 1 December 1962, the ROCOR Sobor of Bishops likewise confessed: "We cannot accept their (the ecumenists') point of view, that the Church has become divided. We believe in One, Exclusive Church, the Head of Which is Christ. As there is one Head, so also is there one Body – the Church. If a house is divided within itself, then it cannot stand. Thus, also, the Church, having become divided, would cease to be the Church. There can only be a falling-away from the Church – a departure from Her of individuals -- or of entire groups who are not of like mind with Her." In accordance with this confession, the 18/31 December, 1931, Declaration of the ROCOR Synod of Bishops states: "Preserving the Faith in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Synod of Bishops confesses that this Church has never been divided."

4. Contradicting the decrees of the Church, Metropolitan Cyprian declares that "the new-calendarists have not yet been condemned, to this day" and that he recognizes "their Mysteries" to be "valid" (Ch. 3, p. 5). But the Gregorian paschalion and the Gregorian menologion were thrice condemned by Local Councils of the Church of Constantinople: in 1583, in 1587 and in 1593, with the Eastern Patriarchs taking part. For example, the 1593 conciliar definition of the Church states: "Whosoever does not follow the customs of the Church, but desires to follow the Gregorian menologion and paschalion, is subject to anathema, to being excommunicated from the Church and from the entire assembly of the faithful." Patriarch Cyril's 1756 Encyclical declares: "he who accepts the Gregorian menologion will be separated from God."

5. The unification Council that Metropolitan Cyprian is hoping for can unite only these "separated Orthodox." But heretics do not belong to the Church and can return into the Bosom of the Church of Christ only through being united to Her. Metropolitan Cyprian sets forth a false theory of uniting those of unlike mind, at the same time making the very convening of said Council dependent upon this unnatural union.

In this fashion, Metropolitan Cyprian's doctrine, being the fundamental position of the Synod of Resisters, contradicts the Patristic traditions of the Church. He declares that he is not in communion with heretical ecumenist churches. Meanwhile, however, he and his Synod fail to sever themselves from these churches spiritually, considering themselves to be the "healthy" part of the one Church at the same time as the heretical, ecumenist and new-calendarist churches are the "ailing" part. Thus, Metropolitan Cyprian's Synod, despite the absence of communion in the mysteries, finds itself, de facto, in a total "healthy-ailing" union with heretical world "Orthodoxy." This "Orthodox" crypto-ecumenism, so to speak, even as open ecumenism, falls under the 1983 anathema against the heresy of ecumenism, which was proclaimed by the ROCOR Synod of Bishops under presidency of the third First Hierarchy of the Church Abroad, Metropolitan Philaret. (This anathema was subsequently confirmed by the ROCOR Sobor of Bishops in 1998):

"and to those who have communion with these heretics, or who aid and abet them, or who defend their new heresy of ecumenism, supposing that to be brotherly love and the uniting of separated Christians: Anathema!"

Thus, by appending our signatures hereunto, we ratify the 2nd Point of the Declaration of the Synod of Bishops of our Church, No. 7/01/M, on 26 October/8 November, 2001, wherein is announced:

"(In accordance with the decree of the 1974 ROCOR Sobor Of Bishops) The termination of the 1994 ROCOR Sobor's rashly-established eucharistic communion with the Synod of the Resisters under the Presidency of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili on account of his unorthodox teaching concerning the Church (regarding ailing and healthy members of the Church in the realm of "the correct understanding of the faith") and the recognition of the Mysteries of the new-calendarists as being valid" (see Met. Cyprian "Ecclesiological Thesis," pp. 2 and 5).

+ *Metropolitan Vitaly*
+ Archbishop Varnava (in agreement with the resolution)
+ *Bishop Sergii*
+ *Bishop Vladimir*
+ Bishop Varfolomei (in agreement with the resolution)

Protopresbyter Victor Melehov,
Archpriest Sergii Petrov,
Archpriest Joseph Sunderland,
Archpriest Spyridon Schneider,
Priest Anatolii Trepachko,
Priest Andrew Kencis,
Priest Nikita Orlov,
Hieromonk Damian (Hansen),
Priest Michael Marcinowski,
Priest Yevgenii Santalov,
Abbess Eugenia (agrees with the Resolution),

Deacon Mark Smith

Holy Transfiguration skete,
Mansonville, Canada