



THE CHURCH OF
THE TRUE ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS
OF GREECE

The Ecclesiastical Union
of the Orthodox Community
in Resistance
with the
Church of the
True Orthodox Christians of Greece

Objections, Concerns,
and their Resolution

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Commemoration of the Prophet Moses the God-Seer



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Objections, Concerns, and their Resolution

A. Preface

The **God-pleasing Union** of the Orthodox Community in Resistance with the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece was brought to fruition, by the Grace of Christ our Savior and by the intercessions of the *Theotokos* and all the Saints, on the Tuesday of the Third Week of Great Lent, March 5/18, 2014, and was officially proclaimed and brought to fruition by a Union Liturgy concelebrated on March 10/23, 2014, on the Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross.

1. This truly historic event, particularly in view of the simultaneous achievement of Union with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Romania, was a cause of inexpressible joy and spiritual euphoria for all of the true members of our Church.

- All those who were present at and took part in the Union Liturgy can attest to the exceptional and ineffable spiritual gladness that they felt.

2. There were, however, some who had negative reactions, a small number of clergy and laity, both in Greece and abroad, who in sundry ways voiced their objections and doubts, right from the outset, concerning the genuineness and canonicity of the Union.

3. Our Holy Synod, with spiritual sensitivity and love in Christ, made repeated efforts to explain to our brethren who opposed the Union that their various objections and doubts were groundless, and that it behooved them to trust our Hierarchs and to share with them in the blessed joy of our Union.

4. Up until the meeting of our Holy Synod on July 15/28, 2014, although quite a few of the naysayers had finally been persuaded as to the canonicity of the Union, there still remained a few who persisted in their objections and doubts, which they expressed at times with tenacity and at times with a meek and suitable theological spirit.

5. At the meeting held on July 15/28, 2014, “following a proposal by His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle,” it was decided that the Holy Synod “should issue a document for the purpose of clarifying the positions of the Synod” and of dispelling the doubts of those opposed for various reasons to the Union, after taking into consideration the different misunderstandings published unofficially, in the meantime, on the Internet.

6. With the prospect of promulgating an official Synodal document, “Toward a Clarification of [our] Positions,” it would have been necessary to surmount the very weighty issue of replying to an interminable list of drawn-out questions, in many respects scholastic in nature. Had we done so, our clarifications and responses would have constituted, without any pressing reason, a literally voluminous tome.

7. This being so, avoiding a scholastic mode of response and cleaving to the essence of the points in dispute, we hereby set forth expressly and plainly the positions of our Synod on issues relating to the Union, with the aim of somehow comprehensively grouping together the various criticisms thereof, as well as the well-intentioned doubts, questions, and concerns with regard to it, in order to allay all possible anxieties and to bring peace to the hearts of all.

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B. Synodal Positions

B1. Issues pertaining to the Union process

- a1.** Reactions toward, and concerns about, the Union arose both from within Greece—and these were expressed by a small group of persons (originally two Priests and nine laymen, and now one Priest and four laymen)—and from abroad (two or three laymen).
- a2.** There have also been reactions from external elements, that is, from persons who are not members of the True Orthodox Church of Greece and who in some cases have a hostile attitude toward Her.
- a3.** Our Hierarchs could have ignored this reaction, since there were no grounds for it and it did not reflect the overall conscience of the membership of our Church. They nonetheless have handled it from the outset with pastoral sensitivity.

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- b1.** Our Holy Synod is not obligated, on the basis of the Synodal and canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church, to publish—and immediately, at that—all of the documents and detailed proceedings pertinent to a particular matter that it is addressing.
- b2.** It is, however, necessary for the Holy Synod to keep its flock informed by way of communiqués, a practice which it has sedulously observed through postings on our Synod website, both during the fourteen-month dialogue for Union and in the wake of every session of the Synod.
- b3.** Communication of the decisions of our Holy Synod at the meeting held on March 5/18, 2014, at which the Union was brought to fruition, was delayed by reason of the bulk of data that had to be recorded and by

reason of the Feasts that intervened both before and after the Holy Pascha. Nevertheless, the fact of our rapprochement and the great likelihood of a Union had already been made known and publicized through other avenues and channels, and it was also possible for those so interested to communicate in person with the Shepherds responsible for the Union process.

b4. The argument that our Holy Synod did not make public those proceedings in which detailed descriptions of the Synodal Union process were contained, as supposedly happened in the past, is absurd.

- During the era in which the Holy Œcumenical Synods were convoked, their *proceedings* were not made public, but were deposited in the Patriarchates for safekeeping, while the *decisions* reached by the Holy Fathers were made public immediately, a procedure punctiliously followed by our Holy Synod in the course of the dialogue in question.

b5. In any case, our Holy Synod did not have, nor does it now have, anything to hide in connection with the Union, and certainly does not consider everything to have been done in haste. It can, however, register its profound sorrow that, as it discovered, the naysayers desired, and desire, to impose on our Hierarchs their own blueprint, their own exclusive view, concerning the manner of the Union, as though their Shepherds were ignorant of history and of Synodal and canonical Tradition, or as though there were signs of their undervaluing matters of the Orthodox Faith.

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B2. Issues pertaining to the former Synod in Resistance

a1. The Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance, together with our Hierarchs, and also with the Russian and Romanian Hierarchs, signed the official ecclesiological statement, “The True Orthodox Church and the Heresy of Ecumenism: Dogmatic and Canonical Issues” (March 2014).

a2. By way of this document, which constitutes an Orthodox Confession of Faith, the Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance set aside their previously formulated ecclesiological views, which they also withdrew from their official website. They have also stated in writing that they will not henceforth employ terms and phrases antithetical to the ecclesiological basis of the Union document.

a3. The contents of the Union document, which the Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance today confess and proclaim with full knowledge and sincerity, leave no margin for doubt as to their mind-set, which is in every respect Orthodox.

a4. The Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance have, through their Orthodox Confession, and also through their self-sacrificial actions, forcefully emphasized the genuineness of their mind-set and attitudes, inasmuch as they

- dissolved their distinct Synod;
- relinquished all of their pastoral prerogatives;
- placed their prodigious pastoral and missionary work under the protection of our Synod;
- displayed exceeding humility;
- regretfully accepted any responsibility on their parts for the estrangement from 1984 onwards and its ramifications.

a5. Our Hierarchs were fully aware, by the Grace of God, of the demands that they were making of the Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance in joining our Synod, especially after an arduous dialogue of many months' duration, which was brought to fruition by the Orthodox Confession and action of our brethren.

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b1. There has never existed a heresy with the name of “Cyprianism,” and never did our Holy Synod officially employ this term. The Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance not only did not *officially* and *synodally* proclaim all that was ascribed to them under the name of “Cyprianism,” such as their alleged conception of the official [New Calendar] Church as the Mother Church, but have also clearly expressed opposition thereto, and in particular throughout the Union process.

- Moreover, the ecclesiological formulations of the Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance, which were indeed denounced by our Church, were not in the past put forth tenaciously, dogmatically, or definitively—in which case they might indeed have constituted a heresy, and might have been called that—but as “ideas for rumination and discussion.”

b2. The most indisputable Orthodox Confession and action of the Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance constitute on their part a courageous rising above what transpired from 1984 onwards, and also above the exchanges that took place during the unofficial dialogue (2008-2009). In truth, their Confession and action blot out the reasons for separation and estrangement.

b3. Much was written, in an intensely charged atmosphere, especially from 1984 and following, which some people today maliciously and erroneously invoke in order to provoke new tensions. But we, as responsible Shepherds, now consign them, by the Grace of God, to oblivion, emulating the example of the Holy Fathers, such as that of the Holy Patriarchs Ignatios and Photios after their reconciliation.

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c1. The reinstatement of the reposed Metropolitan Cyprian († May 17, 2013 [Old Style]), from which ensued the reading of Hierarchical me-

morial prayers over his tomb by His Beatitude, Archbishop Kallinikos (March 7/20, 2014), was a canonical ecclesiastical act, since there were reasons that permitted it, as happened also with the reinstatement of the late Archbishop Auxentios.

c2. We would offer a reminder that in the past there were similar acts in the case of reposed persons, even though there were imposed on them not only depositions but also anathemas—and indeed by a Patriarchal Synod—as occurred, for example, in the fourteenth century with Archbishop Joanikije of Serbia and Tsar Stefan Dušan, who were judged guilty (as was the entire Serbian people—a general excommunication) and exonerated *post mortem*, twenty years later, under the Holy Patriarch Philotheos of Constantinople.

c3. The late Metropolitan Cyprian clearly expressed his desire for the restoration of communion with our Holy Synod. It should be noted that he never worked against our Synod, nor was he minded to supplant it, and that our Synod made decisions against him in 1986, essentially on the grounds that he formed his own Synod, even though—as the Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance assure us—this was of a temporary nature, with the [eventual] prospect of Union.

c4. Other charges were certainly mentioned in these decisions of our Synod against the ever-memorable Metropolitan Cyprian. They were examined in detail during the dialogues that took place, and the conclusions were as follows:

- The accusation of ecumenism, which was bound up with the alleged conviction of the late Metropolitan Cyprian concerning the official Church as the Mother Church, is completely refuted by the following public affirmation of the Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance in 2008:

This indeed inexpert expression, which has been employed by one of our Bishops and which has already been withdrawn by him as inapposite, has

never been officially proclaimed by our Synod in Resistance, nor has it ever been used in, let alone incorporated into, the basic and foundational documents that express our ecclesiological and anti-ecumenist self-understanding.

- The accusation concerning the indiscriminate imparting of Mysteries by the late Metropolitan Cyprian to laity from the New Calendar Church is quite groundless, since the Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance, following a Synodal decision from some years ago, which was officially published, “exclude from Divine Communion all who do not belong to the Church of the True Orthodox Christians.”

- The accusation concerning joint prayer between the late Metropolitan Cyprian and the then Patriarch Nicholas of Alexandria, which is unthinkingly characterized as a concelebration, is entirely without foundation, since eyewitnesses of the unexpected visit of the Patriarch to the *Katholikon* of the St. Cyprian Monastery testify that the opposite occurred: “The late Metropolitan, from the Beautiful Gates, publicly called upon the Patriarch of Alexandria to return to the Traditions of the Fathers.”

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B3. Issues pertaining to the Union document

a1. The Union document, which was drawn up by the True Orthodox Churches of Greece and Romania and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (March 2014) does not offer the possibility of a plurality of views on matters of Faith, nor any leeway for such, since it is a product of merging and agreement on issues of Faith.

a2. There has been no agreement to suppress different ecclesiological views, and the suspicions to this effect are due, we suppose, to misunderstandings of statements which, one way or another, were made in a pastoral context prior to our merging and Union.

b1. Although the phrase in the Union document that “the True Orthodox Church does not provide assurance concerning [the] validity” of Mysteries celebrated by the New Calendarists (ch. VI, §6) has been sufficiently clarified in the relevant footnotes of the version of the document in simpler Greek, it should be stated here that this is certainly not an innovation, nor does it abrogate the past, since the Encyclicals of 1935, 1950, and 1974, which were local in nature, are now placed in the context of our common inter-Orthodox Confession and interpreted correctly.

b2. It should also be emphasized that in the unitive ecclesiological document it is clear that the issue of the validity or invalidity of the Mysteries celebrated by the innovationists in general is not examined directly or specifically in a special chapter, but parenthetically.

- In ch. VI, “The Return to True Orthodoxy” (§6), the following position is in essence set forth:

Non-celebration of the Mysteries from the beginning, provided their form has been preserved, in the case of those returning from the New Calendar Church, does not ‘provide assurance,’ that is, should not be understood as an affirmation concerning the validity of Mysteries performed in the New Calendar Church.

b3. In the end, we need to realize that the True Orthodox Church ought not to cultivate the mistaken impression that Her unity is founded on our view of the Mysteries of the New Calendarists; on the contrary, Her fidelity to Apostolic teaching and Succession should be the focus of Her unity. It is fidelity to our Confession that unites us, and not our view of the Mysteries of the New Calendarists, who are, in any case, fallen away in the Faith and “not in communion [with our Church].”

b4. A striking and Grace-filled contemporary discourse by a now deceased Presbyterian, from among our Matthewite brethren, renders more accessible the view that we have been articulating:

“When I was younger and lived abroad, some modernist ecumenists asked the following question in order to ensnare me:

“Do we have Mysteries or not?”

“I replied: ‘Are you literate?’

“Yes, we are literate.’

“Do you know the Canons and the Tradition of the Church?”

“Yes, we do know them.’

“Then this is what I have to say to you: Although I am a sinner, since the Grace of God has safeguarded me from becoming separated from the Truth of Christ and from deviating to the right or to the left, I know that I have Mysteries. As for you who have changed course, since you are literate, read what the Canons and the Tradition of the Church say about your case and draw your own conclusions.’

“I am of the opinion that it is neither expedient nor prudent for True Orthodox Christians to quarrel among themselves and to be concerned about the Mysteries or non-Mysteries of the New Calendarists. The Apostle says: ‘For what have I to do with judging them that are without?..... Them that are without God judgeth’ (I Corinthians 5:12-13).

“Since we have commended them to the mercy of God, He knows whether He will show them forbearance, how He will show them forbearance, and to what extent He will forbear with them. We are not dispensers of God’s mercy. We have an obligation, since we regard every innovation as a suggestion of the Devil, not to violate the ‘Faith handed down to us’ in even one jot or tittle.

“Our priority, therefore, is that we continue the good beginning that we have made, that all of us True Orthodox Christians in general be united under a single Orthodox Confession, with which we will be consistent, following a common course, and that thereafter we convene a Pan-Orthodox Synod, which will be the official mouthpiece of the Church and will issue official determinations concerning those who have deviated and have become estranged from the Faith of the Fathers.

“Until such a time, however, we cannot have any communion in the Mysteries or in prayer with them, thereby becoming ‘sharers in the sins of others,’ but must confess that we reject and abhor their calendar innovation, their ecumenism, and their newfangled form of Baptism, or rather, affusion.

“From the little that I know, I think that this is how the Fathers acted toward heretics. They immediately broke communion with heretics, awaited the convocation of a competent body, namely an Œcumenical Synod, not in order to learn and decide whether the misbelief was a heresy, but in order—through the official mouthpiece of the Church—that formal clarifications and formulations concerning correct doctrine might be made and the formal condemnation of heretics be pronounced.

“It should be known that such a Synod consists only of Orthodox.”

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c1. The discretion of each Bishop in applying exactitude or œconomy in the reception of persons from the New Calendar Church certainly does not entail absolute freedom or, consequently, license.

c2. The local Bishop, it says in the Union document, “makes a decision on the basis of synodally determined criteria” (ch. VI, §11); if he is unable to reach a decision, then “a competent Synod” does so.

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d1. There are no grounds for anxieties about a Major General Synod, since in the Union document (ch. VII), and also in its simpler Greek version, there are clear answers to dispel them.

d2. Taking part in this Synod will be all of the local True Orthodox Churches, united on the basis of their common and correct Confession of the Faith and their fidelity to Apostolic teaching and Succession.

d3. The Major Synod will ascertain and proclaim the falling away—already a reality—of the ecumenists and Sergianists from the standpoint of a correct Confession and from the Body of Christ, the Church.

- It is well known that a lack of fidelity to Apostolic teaching and Succession is leading innovationists of every stripe outside the boundaries of the Truth and the Church, far away from Christ and the Mysteries.

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B4. Other issues

a1. The alleged “statement of Metropolitan Agafangel in the periodical *Vestnik*” requires no commentary, for the following reasons:

- it is merely an artifact, that is, an unattested, unsubstantiated, and nonexistent “statement”;

- if—as it is rumored—it had been uttered in the 1990s, under Metropolitan Vitaly (†), it would have been dealt with synodally; this, however, never happened;

- in any event, the signing by Metropolitan Agafangel of our Union document (March 2014) henceforth constitutes his Orthodox Confession, which expresses his fidelity to Apostolic teaching and Succession.

- in addition, at the inter-Orthodox deliberation on March 8/21, 2014, after a lengthy discussion, Metropolitan Agafangel gave full assurance of his Orthodox Confession and observance of canonical order regarding various issues, to the great exultation of all those participating in the meeting.

a2. The views of Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Etna, as expressed before or after the Union, should not arouse such disquiet, for the following reasons:

- those that he expressed before the Union pertain to the need for upholding the principles of courtesy and moderation, which he inherited from the ever-memorable Metropolitan Cyprian, and not to any ecclesiological positions; consequently, whatever doubts or misunderstandings were provoked by them are annulled by his signing of our Union document;

- those that he expressed after the Union pertain to the unfathomable mercy and forbearance of God toward the innovationists for as long a time as He judges fit, and were, in any case, unofficial and of private and pastoral nature.

- At any rate, the unfraternal interception and exploitation of private pastoral texts by certain persons with a hostile attitude toward the Metropolitan of Etna, and also towards our Holy Synod, unmask those who habitually seek to undermine our God-pleasing Union.

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C. Epilogue

a. Those opposed in various ways to the God-pleasing Union of our Holy Synod with the Hierarchs of the former Synod in Resistance, who are now our brethren in Christ and in our common Orthodox Confession, should not forget the Apostolic injunction: “Wherefore receive ye one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God” (Romans 15:7).

- “I advise you to receive one another with love, just as Christ also received all of you and made you His own beloved, that God the Father may be glorified.”

b. The Union, or reunion, is a gift of God; our Hierarchs did not accomplish anything in the matter under consideration, but simply—through their good intentions and endeavors—permitted our Lord to work His miracle: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights” (St. James 1:17).

c. Those who oppose the Union will be at peace with it only when they view it through the prism of all that we have written, albeit with humility and love, for “obduracy is not from” Christ “Who calleth us” (*cf.* Galatians 5:8); strong self-opinion, which is not submissive to Truth and Love, leads to divisions and schisms, for which each one of us is answerable to God, the Church, and history.

*From the Secretariat
of the Holy Synod*

**† The end,
and glory and thanks to God!
Amen!**