

## **The Position of the Russian Church Abroad** *(About economia of ROCOR)*

When the arguments of Archimandrite Epiphanius Theodoropoulos collapsed like a tower made of playing cards, the Serb Hieromonk, Athanasius Jevtich, found another means to come to the aid of his defeated companion. He understood that the Synod of Metropolitan Philaret was the only consolation for the true Orthodox Christians of Greece. Should he be able to succeed in sowing doubts in the consciences of the true Orthodox Christians of Greece concerning the Russian Synod's consistency in doctrinal matters, a split would result in the ranks of the true Orthodox Christians and thus, the latter would become a laughing stock in the eyes of the Greek people. With this intent, he published his first letter in the religious press in which he says the following:

"Metropolitan Philaret Concelebrates ..."

To the Editor,

Having returned to Greece after one years absence and having learned of certain unpleasant things, I judge it my duty to inform your readers of the following, which I do out of a fervent desire to help souls which have been scandalized, so that they might avoid actions which could divide the Orthodox Church. The Russian Metropolitan Philaret, who resides in America, and his Synod of the Russian Church in Exile have recently begun to avoid having communion with Archbishop Iakovos and those under him as well as with the Ecumenical Patriarch. However, *they have maintained excellent canonical relations with the clergy of the Serbian Church, in spite of the fact that the latter is in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarch.* In fact, the Synod of Philaret is in communion, not only with clergy of the Serbian Church who follow the old calendar, but also with Serb clergymen who are found outside of Serbia and who, as a result, themselves *concelebrate with Orthodox who keep the new calendar.* To be brief, I will limit myself to telling you that I myself have concelebrated many times during the last year with clergy belonging to Philaret's Synod, and on the 15th of this last June in Paris, I concelebrated with the Archbishop of Geneva and Western Europe, Anthony, who belongs to the Synod of Philaret. *Let it be noted that the Archbishop in question knew full well that I celebrate with the new calendar, both in Greece and outside of Greece, and that I commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarch when I serve at the Russian Institute of St. Serge in Paris, despite all my opposition to the Patriarch's policies.* Those in Greece who think that the Church of Greece is heretical because it is in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarch are obliged to think the same thing concerning the Serbian Church, which also is in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarch. But if the Serbian Church is heretical, then so is the Synod of Philaret which recognizes the clergy of the Serbian Church and concelebrates with them without hesitation; therefore, all those who are in communion with Philaret's Synod are likewise heretical..."

(The italics are those of the author of the letter.)

We replied in Greek to the Serbian hieromonk, and demonstrated the perfidiousness and hypocrisy of his action. Here, we shall say simply that the true Orthodox Christians of Greece who placed their hopes in our Synod were ridiculed. Thousands of souls who are not acquainted with the state of affairs in the Diaspora, as well as the Fathers of Mt. Athos, were scandalized, not because what Jevtich wrote was inexact, but because of the manner in which he presents the matter. This is precisely what Jevtich sought under the hypocritical mask of seeking to strengthen the "peace of the Church."

When Jevtich passed through Geneva, the Most Reverend Archbishop Anthony reprimanded him for his action and he promised to correct his error. Yet, because this man has his own ideas and designs, he

composed a second letter in which he endeavors, on the one hand, to justify himself before the Russian Bishops, whom he tried to portray as being more or less indifferent to the problems which occupy us (in this present work), and on the other hand, to strengthen the chaos and the deception which his first letter had created in the hearts of faithful Greeks. For this reason his second letter is worse than his first, because in his first letter, the true Orthodox Christians are ridiculed, but in his second letter, the supposedly ridiculous predicament in which they find themselves is strengthened and confirmed by him. Furthermore, to this very day he concelebrates with the clergy of the Synod only in order to trouble the hearts of the Fathers of the Holy Mountain.

We do not have the intention of being silent concerning the instances in which the Russian Church has used economy. Since Her position is so clear, we think that no one of good faith will be scandalized thereby. But those who have evil intent will be scandalized no matter what we say or do. It is possible that not all agree with the economy which the Russian Church uses. They can, however, submit their objections in a fraternal spirit, and these objections will be examined seriously, provided that they arise from pure and honorable motives which have the good of the Church as their purpose. Any intelligent man knows that the present day confusion by which the devil wars against the Church cannot be confronted in 24 hours. At times, we use economy in a more lenient fashion; at other times, in a more rigorous fashion, although it is always a question of the same economy. Further, any intelligent man of good intention can understand that because of the different conditions under which the two Churches (i.e. the Russian Diaspora and the true Orthodox Christians of Greece) exist, the economy practised by the Greek Church is of one sort, while that practised by the Russian Church in the Diaspora is of another. Moreover, the Russian Synod's recognition of the true Orthodox Christians of Greece and Her attitude towards Greek clergymen of the Diaspora who have taken refuge under Her canonical protection, have removed all doubt sown in the hearts of the faithful Greeks by Fr. Athanasius Jevtich' manner of presenting the facts. For what comparison can there be between Philaret and Hieronymus?

We must also examine whether the *partial* tolerance of the Gregorian calendar within the boundaries of the Russian Church in the Diaspora has economy or indifference as its motive. Further, we must examine if there exists a possible relation or comparison between the missionary position of the Russian Church in the Diaspora and the arbitrary action of the Greek Church in 1924. If it is a question concerning the salvation of souls and the interests of the Church, we shall practise economy not only in the issue of the calendar but also, perhaps, in matters of greater importance. The calendar does not constitute an end in itself. *The salvation of souls, however, does constitute an end in itself!* Thus, if the salvation of souls obliges us to make a certain condescension, clearly this would not be a sin. For, this condescension is not enacted with the purpose of scorning the institutions of the Church, but rather, is imposed by necessity. St. John Chrysostom says that "God praises the good intention!" However, no such necessity existed in 1924.

If someone does not agree with what I have just written concerning economy, he must also condemn St. Basil the Great, who in times of necessity did not commemorate the Holy Spirit in his exclamations. But can we suspect the "Eagle of Cæsaria" and the glory of all Cappadocia of being a "*pneumatomachus*" (i.e. an enemy of the Holy Spirit)? God forbid! Concerning this economy of St. Basil, St. Theodore the Studite writes that, insofar as this practice caused no "harm" in the Church, it was permissible to accept it. "We suffered no harm from this since we know also from his other words that he taught that the Holy Spirit is God (for the truth lies not merely in what is said but in what is thought); but the Church would have suffered great harm if, because of one man, the truth was persecuted ... if done but for a certain time, these things are not blameworthy." Thus, our adversaries must first demonstrate to us that the economy applied to the calendar (now is not the time to speak of the other aspects of economy as practised by the Russian Church, but the spirit in which it is applied remains the same) does *not* have as a goal the

avoidance of a "great harm". But if the intentions of the Russian Church aim at the salvation of souls, then, even if we do not agree with the manner in which they are done, we believe, together with St. Theodore that, "these things are not blameworthy."

The difference which existed between St. Basil the Great and Macedonius as regards the issue of the Holy Spirit is the same as exists between the Russian Church in Exile and the Greek Church as regards the calendar issue. It is true, that, for missionary reasons, the Russian Church has not only practised and continues to practise economy concerning the Western calendar, but also concerning the Western *Paschalia* and the Western Rite. We regret this, but let those who wish to be scandalized, be scandalized, and let those who wish to understand, understand.

If, for example, the Russian Church in Exile were to permit one of Her own Russian communities to exchange the Orthodox calendar for the Western calendar, this would certainly place Her on the same level as Archbishop Chrysostom Papadopoulos. But when She is confronted with communities who are, spiritually speaking, barbarians, Her duty is to draw them towards Christ and the Truth, even if she must condescend as regards the Western calendar and *Paschalia* "for a certain time".

Let him who is of good faith note the following well:

- 1). Several years ago, the Dutch Orthodox Mission sought to be placed under the canonical jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Western Europe and later Archbishop of San Francisco, John of blessed Memory. The mission was granted the use of the new calendar and the Western *Paschalia* as well as the Western rite.<sup>1</sup>
- 2). The French Mission which already used the Gregorian calendar and the Western Rite asked that it also be permitted the use of the Western *Paschalia* like the Dutch. Yet the same Archbishop who granted the Western *Paschalia* to the Dutch refused it to the French.
- 3). Several years afterwards, the present Archbishop of Western Europe, the Most Reverent Anthony, deprived the Dutch of the Western *Paschalia*, which had formerly been permitted them.
- 4). The French communities under the canonical jurisdiction of the Synod (under the leadership of the most Reverend Abbot Ambrose) that is, those of Lyons and of Paris, abandoned the Gregorian calendar and adopted the Orthodox calendar.
- 5). Recently two Russian communities, one in Florida and the other in Pennsylvania, sought to join the Synod of Metropolitan Philaret. These communities were formerly under the so-called "Metropolia" which had permitted them to change to the Gregorian calendar. However, our Synod requested that they reject the Gregorian calendar and return to the Orthodox calendar. The communities did not accept this proposal and therefore, their request to join the Synod was also rejected.

Hence, it is evident that the Synod knows when to be lenient and when to be strict in the application of economy. Any intelligent man will understand that he finds before him a true "governing of the household" (from the Greek *ecos* – "house," *nomia* – "governing"), where condescension and strictness, allowance and refusal, and permission "under certain conditions" are found simultaneously. The spiritual benefit of the faithful is the purpose of every act and everywhere ascendance in spiritual matters can be seen. But in the case of the hierarchy of Greece, descendance is to be seen. It does not matter so much at what level one is found, so much as what direction he is taking.

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<sup>1</sup> Since this study was written, the Dutch Mission, headed by Bishop Jacob, has defected to the Moscow Patriarchate.

If one were to ask the Russian Synod in the Diaspora why She permits the partial usage of the Gregorian calendar within Her jurisdiction, She would reply: "In order to save souls, I must sometimes walk according to the 'pace of little children' like the Patriarch Jacob" (Gen. 33:14). But if one asked the same question of Chrysostom Papadopoulos and Meletius Metaxakis, *what would they answer?* Was the Orthodox calendar, perhaps, a hindrance to the salvation of the faithful and, therefore, it was necessary to change it? Behold, therefore, how it is possible to take true facts and present them from a wrong and distorted angle in order to give them another interpretation, according to the method of Fr. Athanasius Jevtich.

Before they came under the jurisdiction of the Synod, Fr. Nektas Palassis, Fr. Panayiotis Carathanasis and Deacon Photius Touloumes were new calendarists, but now all of them follow the calendar of the Fathers. Is there any better proof that the Orthodox calendar is an expression of the spiritual life of the Synod?

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*from 'Calendar Question', Jordanville, 1973*