



Российская Православная Автономная Церковь

АРХИЕРЕЙСКИЙ Собор

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Protocol #1.

(January 26/February 8, - January 30/ February 12, 2008)

The Sobor took place in the Synodal Hall of the Convent of the Deposition of the Robe of the Theotokos, in the God-protected city of Suzdal from January 26/February 8 through January 30/February 12, 2008.

The Sobor was attended by the Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

The deliberations opened with the singing of the troparions to the Holy Trinity, “Blessed art Thou, O Christ our God” and to the Holy Spirit, “O heavenly King.”

Agenda:

1. Opening remarks, report and comments on the activity of the Synod of Bishops from 1995 through 2008. (report delivered by Metropolitan Valentine).
2. Remarks on the violations of Bishop Sebastian of Cheliabinsk, vicar of the Suzdal Diocese, against the holy canons.
3. Report on the canonical status of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church. (Bishop Ambrose).
4. Report on the civil organization of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (Archbishop Theodore).
5. Report on the canonical status of the Moscow Patriarchate and other ecclesiastical organizations belonging to “World Orthodoxy.” (Archbishop Ilarion).
6. Report on the new heresy of Metropolitan Cyprian of Fili and Oropos (Bishop Andrew).
7. Report on the new church calendar as an ecclesiastical heresy (Bishop Geronty).
8. Report on the canonical rite of reception for receiving clergy and laity from various communities into the ROAC. (Igumen Theophan).

9. Proposed new version of the Synodicon for the Sunday of Orthodoxy.
10. Epistle of the Synod of Bishops to the God-loving flock of the ROAC.
11. Miscellaneous.

Heard:

Proposal of the President of the Synod of Bishops to establish an editorial committee.

Resolved:

To establish a committee composed of His Grace Bishop Ambrose, Archpriest Michael Ardov, Archpriest Arkady Makovetsky and Igumen Theophan (Areskin) to serve as an editorial committee for the Sobor.

Heard:

The President of the Synod of Bishops, Metropolitan Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir, who gave a report on the life and times of the Synod of Bishops for the period from 1990 to 2007:

“Your Eminences, Your Graces, my dearly beloved fellow Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church!

Let me briefly recall for you the main canonical underpinnings upon which the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church is based.

The canonical foundation of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church is based upon, as we all know, ukase #362 of St. Tikon, Patriarch of Moscow and All-Russia, of the Holy Synod, and of the Higher Church Council, i.e. the Higher Church Authority of the Russian Local Church, dated November 7/20, 1920.

The Russian civil war, the Bolshevik persecution, and the subsequent political situation resulting from the Soviet, totalitarian, and atheistic party in our long-suffering homeland resulted in the once unified Greek-Russian Eastern Orthodox Local Church being forcibly split into three self-governing parts: the Russian Catacomb Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, and the official, so-called, Moscow Patriarchate, which was formed by the Godless authorities from the Sergianist renovationist schism, and which later became involved in the heresy of ecumenism, and thereby fell away from the Russian Orthodox Church.

Before our very eyes, we have witnessed the fall of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia from a confession of the true Orthodox faith, and in actuality, as the long-time expert in canon law for the Church Abroad, His Grace Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), has said, ‘the only canonical and dogmatically irreproachable descendant of the Greek-Russian Local Church today is the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.’

In 1990, the ROCOR first established the Free Russian Orthodox Church, after receiving the clergy and faithful of the Tsar Constantine Cathedral in Suzdal into its jurisdiction.

To our great disappointment, however, the Church Abroad has now embarked upon a 'new course' of rapprochement with 'ecumenical Orthodoxy' (the Serbian Patriarchate), has strengthened the bonds of friendship with the ecumenist synod of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, and then with the Moscow Patriarchate.

The Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church has continued to follow the holy Canons and the directions of the last legitimate Higher Church Authority in the Russian Local Church.

Only in the year 2007 did we come to find out from an interview with Archbishop Laurus, that he and his companions had been planning as far back as 1980 to unite themselves to the Moscow Patriarchate, but we, not being aware of this, continued to sincerely believe that we had finally found true archpastors under whose leadership we could continue to bear our pastoral burden in true Orthodoxy. However, it did not take long for the intrigues of Archbishop Mark and of Bishop Barnabas to make their appearance, which culminated in our departure from the ROCOR. We were left to face the MP on our own, since soon after that Archbishop Lazar and Bishop Agathangel returned to the ROCOR.

On the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, February 27/March 12, 1995, the third Hierarchical Synod of the Russian Bishops re-established the Temporary Higher Church Authority (THCA), which had been established in 1994, but subsequently closed down. On March 30, 1995, it was registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation as the 'Free Russian Orthodox Church.'

In accordance with the Church's needs, and on advice of His Grace Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), on May 8, 1995, the THCA passed a resolution to consecrate, not vicar bishops, but ruling ones. As a result, Bishop Theodore (Gineevsky), vicar bishop of the Suzdal Diocese, was appointed as ruling bishop of Borisovskoye and Sanino, and Bishop Seraphim, vicar bishop of the Suzdal Diocese, was appointed as ruling bishop of Sukhumi and Abkhazia. On June 21, 1995, Bishop Victor was consecrated for the Diocese of Daugavpils and Latvia.

In May of 1995, His Grace Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) visited Suzdal. He fully supported the decision of the Russian Bishops to withdraw from their subjection to the administration of the Synod Abroad for the sake of preserving their faith and the holy Canons.

On January 15, 1996, the THCA was renamed the Synod of Bishops, and in October of 1998, our Church was re-incorporated as the 'Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church' (ROAC).

In October of 2000, at the 8th Clergy/Laity Conference, the consecrations of Archimandrite Timothy (Sharov) as Bishop of Orenburg and vicar of the Suzdal Diocese, and Archimandrite Ambrose (Epiphanov) as Bishop of Khabarovsk and vicar of the Suzdal Diocese, were performed. In February of 2001, Archimandrite Geronty (Rindenko) was consecrated as Bishop of Sukhodolsk, and Bishop Ilarion of Sukhodolsk was re-assigned as Bishop of Smelyansk. Bishop Anthony (Grabbe) was also admitted into prayerful communion. A little later, Archimandrites Irinarkh (Nonchin) and Ambrose (Epiphanov) were consecrated. And so the episcopacy of our Church was expanded to twelve bishops.

During these years, our Church's policy remained on the same course as before.

Several times we appealed to the ROCOR Bishops not to depart from the path of confessing the Truth and to rethink their policy in Russia. We also appealed to members of the churches of 'world Orthodoxy' counselling them to forsake the perilous path of heresy and their heretical hierarchies.

As far as the Moscow Patriarchate and the other churches of 'world Orthodoxy' are concerned, our Synod of Bishops has more than once repeated its former position: 'the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church is not in prayerful communion with any of the so-called 'local churches' of 'official Orthodoxy,' because they are all involved to one degree or another in the heresy of ecumenism. In addition to this, we consider that the genuine and rightful successors of the Local Orthodox Churches of ancient times are the True Orthodox Churches, which are to be found in several countries of the world, attempting to hold on to the Orthodoxy of the holy Fathers without compromise.'

'The Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church does not admit the possibility of having any prayerful contact with the MP.' We consider that the time has come to add the legitimately composed anathemas against the heresiarchs of Sergianism and ecumenism to the canonical text of the Synodicon of Orthodoxy.

As far as our relationship with the official Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (led by Met. Laurus) is concerned, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church has had to come to the sad conclusion that in the ROCOR(L) an 'ecclesiastical revolution' has, in fact, taken place, which has effectively removed it from the number of True Orthodox Churches. For this reason, we do not foresee any communion of any kind between the ROAC and the apostate hierarchs of the ROCOR(L) until such time as they should repent of their actions.

In like manner, we decided to have no communion with the ROCOR Synod of Met. Vitaly until such time as he should break communion with the 'Synod of Resisters' of Met. Cyprian of Fili, which confesses a heretical teaching about the nature of the Church.

As to the question about how to receive clergymen and laymen who wish to join the ROAC from other jurisdictions (especially from the MP and the ROCOR), the Synod of Bishops has decided that it is necessary to present this question to the entire episcopacy of the ROAC at a sobor for their decision.

In the matter of organizing church life, it is very important that there should be a feeling of brotherly cooperation between the Bishops, clergy, and faithful; a feeling of mutual love and oneness of mind, as taught by the Gospels and by the holy Fathers. For this reason, our Archpastors have been traveling among the parishes in Russia, the neighboring countries and further abroad.

During this time, in Suzdal, there have been eight clergy/laity conferences of the Suzdal Diocese, at which some of the then current problems concerning church life were resolved.

As of today, our Church is comprised of parishes and communities, not only in the Russian Federation, but far beyond her borders, in neighboring countries and in countries further away. There are more than one hundred churches and communities under the omophorion of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church. Many of them have been unable to incorporate because of pressure from

local, and regional officials.

Besides these, there are catacomb communities, which are being taken care of by Bishops of the ROAC. Our Church has been joined by communities and parishes in Belarussia, Georgia, Ukraine, Argentina, Bulgaria, Israel, the USA, and Switzerland.

There have also been cases where a community or brotherhood falls away from general church life, being drawn into non-ecclesiastical, secular activities. In these cases, the Synod of Bishops has had to exclude them from membership in our Church as 'those who have no contact with their Bishop' and with their brethren in the Church, and their clergy have been suspended from serving.

In 1997, in Suzdal, with money received from the St. Vladimir Fund, we have been able to build our Synodal Headquarters, which, at present, houses a monastery, two churches dedicated to the Iveron Icon of the Mother of God and to the holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, as well as the Suzdal Diocesan Administration.

The Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church has a Mercy House in honor of St. John of Shanghai, one convent dedicated to the feast of the Deposition of the Robe of the Mother of God, and one catacomb convent. We have been able to incorporate fifteen churches throughout the city of Suzdal and the region of Suzdal. In one newly constructed residential area of town, we have been able to construct a church dedicated to the holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. We have also built a chapel dedicated to St. Vladimir the Great Prince by the municipal cemetery, and a chapel dedicated to the holy Great Martyress Barbara on ground upon which once stood a most magnificent church dedicated to St. Barbara, which had been destroyed by the Communists and atheists during the years of their madness.

In October of 2000, at our Church's Eighth Conference, our Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church canonized the holy and great ascetics of piety, the Blessed Women of Diveevo, and in May of 2001, that Defender of True Orthodoxy and First Hierarchy of the ROCOR, Met. Philaret (Voznesensky), was canonized, who was like a steep cliff upon which the heretical waves of ecumenism, which attempted to sink the ship of the Church Abroad before She was able to fulfill Her mission in re-establishing a canonical hierarchy for the Russian Church, were broken up. Together with the holy Patriarch Tikhon, Met. Philaret became a sign designating the true path for the Russian Church of the twentieth century to follow.

All kinds of unhappy events demonstrate that our Church remains persecuted by the evil of this world, even unto the present day. Our churches and communities in Oboyan, Noginsk, Trubchevsk, Votkinsk, Zelenchuk, Zheleznovodsk, Ryazan, Tver province, the Suzdal region, and in other cities and towns of the Russian Federation have been attacked.

We have repeatedly explained our position concerning new passports, Social Security numbers, and microchip implants. We have recommended to our faithful to refrain from voluntarily taking Social Security numbers and microchips, as much as possible.

During the period when these recent events surrounding the unification of the

ROCOR with the MP were taking place, there were many instances, and continue to be many instances, of slander directed at the ROAC; demonstrations have been organized against us, with placards bearing slogans such as: 'Schismatics get out of Suzdal!' and 'Schismatics get out of Russia!' There have been frequent attacks against us from the mass media and television, and we have been frequently threatened by physical violence as well. Churches belonging to the ROAC have been the target of vandalism, our ability to incorporate new parishes in our Church has practically come to a standstill, and we, not without reason, see in these things the intrigues of the MP and the certain government offices of the Russian Federation, which insistently require that the ruling bishops of the MP 'take the most radical measures vis-à-vis the ROAC.'

There is no justification for expecting that those who are in power will act any time soon to obey the law and protect the rights of citizens in our country. We cannot be sure of anything, other than the mercy of God and His help concerning our persecuted Church.

Our Church has its own publishing apparatus. Since December of 1990, the life of our Church has been enlightened by the magazine 'The Suzdal Pilgrim.' In September of 1997, the first issue of the re-established publication 'Diocesan Bulletin.' This publication has become the official mouthpiece of the Synod of Bishops. It contains a chronicle of the life of our diocese and various materials concerning the history of the Church.

Since December of 2001, we have had a continuously operative theological-pastoral study course, which was established by decision of the Synod of Bishops, and is attached to the Diocesan Administration.

On April 14th, 2004, the Suzdal Diocesan Administration organized the first Euphemius Lecture series to mark the 600 year anniversary of the repose of St. Euphemius of Suzdal and Wonderworker of all Russia. The triumphant services were followed by a conference in the auditorium of the Deposition of the Robe Convent, where various clergymen and laymen of the ROAC read their lectures.

In this way, with the help of God, the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church has existed and will continue to exist, openly or secretly, for as long as witnesses to True Orthodoxy continue to exist in Russia.

It is a difficult burden to bear witness to the truth in this world filled with lies. But this burden is the burden of Christ, and it is light for those whose eyes are turned toward the Lord, who live, not for themselves, but for the Lord. For the present time, this burden lies upon all of us, and we must be ever thankful to the Lord that He has chosen us to bear it. I call upon all of you to stand fast always in the Truth, remembering that recompense, which our Lord Jesus Christ has promised to all those who hunger after righteousness and are persecuted for what is right.

Today it is essential for us to hear out, deliberate and decide those issues which are troubling our Bishops, pastors, monastics and faithful members of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church:

As everyone knows, the greatest evil to befall the Church of Christ was inflicted by the new schismatics/Sergianists, the followers of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), who was the first leader of the Moscow Patriarchate, founded by

Joseph Stalin in 1943. Since then, the leaders of the MP have introduced the new calendar into the Church of Christ abroad, in order to facilitate union with the heretical Papists and Protestants. We must be in obedience to the commandments of Christ, Who commanded that we deliver such persons to the Church as evildoers (Matt. 18:17), and, if they do not repent before God and the people, to surrender them to anathema.

In view of the fact that the Moscow Patriarchate belongs to 'world Orthodoxy,' and that her status is the same as that of the Roman Catholic Church and other 'ecumenical' organizations, the Synod of Bishops has thought it expedient to place this question before the Sobor of Bishops for a clarification of the status of the Moscow Patriarchate.

It is quite apparent that ecumenism and the new calendar are being used as instruments in the destruction of the Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church should, and indeed must, follow the example of the Catacomb Church, condemn the new calendar movement, and issue a statement in defense of the old calendar; in defense of the truth.

From ancient times, the Church has received repentant heretics and schismatics into canonical communion through administering the Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, or Confession, depending on the degree of seriousness of their separation from Orthodoxy. Following this tradition, which we have received from the Apostles, from the holy Fathers, and from the catholic tradition of the Church, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church is placing this issue before the Sobor of Bishops as well.

The Synod of Bishops is also asking the Sobor to condemn the Greek Metropolitan Cyprian, who confesses the possibility of the action of the grace of the Holy Spirit in heretical churches, and as a proof of its being a heretical opinion offers the words of His Grace Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), who rightfully showed that the teaching of Met. Cyprian is not Orthodox."

Resolved:

To take the report of His Eminence Valentine, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir, on the life and times of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church for the period from 1995 to 2005 under consideration, and to express gratitude to His Eminence for his many years of service for the glory of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

Heard:

The President of the Sobor of Bishops, Metropolitan Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir, who informed us that His Grace Bishop Sebastian has ignored the numerous calls for him to appear before the Synod, and has continued to violate the holy Canons and regulations of the Church of God by his uncanonical actions, bringing scandal to the clergy and the laity.

At a meeting of the Synod of Bishops held on January 15/28, 2007, (protocol #55) the following decision was taken: "Let His Grace Bishop Sebastian be in communion with us no longer, until such time as he shall purge himself from the

accusations which have been brought up in this case. If His Grace Bishop Sebastian does not, during the course of the present year (2007), appear before the Synod of Bishops of the ROAC, does not give an exhaustive explanation, and does not offer repentance for such grossly blatant violations of the canons of the Church, then let him be condemned as one who has brought sentence upon himself. For as long as he remains out of communion with us, let him not receive the Holy Mysteries, either in his own church, or in any other church of the ROAC.”

According to the canons, an accused bishop is supposed to be summoned to court by the Metropolitan up to three times, and is given thirty days to comply (Apostolic Canon #74 and interpretation). If the accused bishop, for legitimate reasons, is not able to present himself for judgment during these thirty days, he is given an extension for another thirty days, but if he does not then appear before the court (on purpose), then he is to be deprived of communion with his brethren, and “he is not to receive the Holy Mysteries, either in his own church, or in any other church belonging to any parish of his jurisdiction” (Carth. 28), as opposed to lower ranking suspended clergy, for whom it is strictly forbidden in any case (Sardica 14).

In the present case, Bishop Sebastian’s deliberate failure to appear before us is what permits us to apply to him the epitimia of excommunication. Besides this, his violations are widely evident, and do not “require any investigation,” which fact allows us to try him in absentia.

The Synod itself did not adopt any strict measures, but rather offered Vladyka Sebastian a chance to correct his mistake, to bring repentance, and excommunicated him from the chalice until he could present himself before a Sobor of Bishops. If he should serve the Divine Liturgy before his exhoneration, and, by the way, the sin of which he is accused is “definitely considered as such in the rules” (interpretation of Balsamon on Carth. 38), then he “himself pronounces the sentence of condemnation” upon himself (Carth. 38) and deserves to be deposed from his rank (interpretation of Balsamon on Carth. 38). Besides the concelebrations, there is a whole series of other significant and serious violations.

On the other hand, if the allegations against Bishop Sebastian were incorrect, then why did he not simply come to the Synod and openly say so, show where they were wrong, explain what induced him to behave as he did, etc.? This is what the position of a man who is honest and sure of the rightfulness of his cause, a Hierarch of the Church, and a man who fights for the truth of the Church would have done.

As far as the accusations against the Synod for being uncanonical are concerned, they are completely groundless. The ROAC was founded on the basis of ukase #362; the Russian Bishops came together and founded the Temporary Higher Church Administration – the Synod of Bishops, which is the seat of authority insofar as, according to the bylaws of the ROAC, all of its Bishops are automatically members of the Synod. And on the basis of their agreement and consensus, was the Synod instituted and the First Hierarch elected.

His Grace Bishop Sebastian, and his anti-church group in St. Petersburg, which had been excommunicated from the Church earlier, continue to spread

accusations against the Metropolitan, claiming that he is a Sergianist, and has single-handedly usurped the authority of the episcopacy. Almost all of the decisions of the Synod are taken with the knowledge and agreement of the episcopacy; no one is obligated to follow the will of the Metropolitan, and the opinion of the other Bishops is always requested. It is sufficient to recall that it was Their Eminences Seraphim and Anthony who were the first to be upset and worried about the appearance of name worshipping in the St. Petersburg community, and for some strange reason Bishop Sebastian found nothing wrong then.

The President and Synod of Bishops, on more than one occasion during the course of the entire year of 2007, sent several warnings and summonses to appear before the Synod. However, His Grace Bishop Sebastian did not seem to understand the gravity of his actions, paid no attention to the warnings of the Synod of Bishops, brought no repentance to God for his violations of the Apostolic regulations and resolutions of the holy Fathers of the Church, nor did he seek to be reconciled with his brother Bishops, from whom he received his consecration to the episcopacy in the first place.

In connection with all of the foregoing, it is essential to adopt the most radical of measures to prevent further violations of the canons within the bosom of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

Resolved:

In light of the fact that His Grace Bishop Sebastian:

- refused to respond to the warnings of the Sobor of Bishops;
- never once responded to any of the numerous demands to come before the Synod of Bishops while in session and speak;
- continued to serve the Divine Liturgy despite being forbidden to do so by the Sobor of Bishops;
- permitted the defrocked Vasily Louriye to concelebrate the Divine Liturgy with him;
- received the thrice married Oleg Amelina as a priest and permitted him to concelebrate the Divine Liturgy with him;
- defended and blessed the schismatic activity of former clergymen of the ROAC;

In accordance with rules 10, 11, and 12 of the holy Apostles; rules 2 and 6 of the Council of Antioch; rule 13 of the Council of Sardica; rules 9 and 38 of the Council of Carthage; rule 2 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (cf. rule 17 of the holy Apostles and rule 12 of St. Basil the Great), for violating his Episcopal oath and for schismatic behavior, in agreement with the rules of the holy Apostles and the holy Fathers of the Church, **Bishop Sebastian should be deposed from his rank of Bishop and should be placed under ANATHEMA.**

Heard:

The report of His Grace Bishop Ambrose “On the Canonical Authority of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.”

Recently, several misguided zealots for a technically sounding, but not ecclesiastically canonical, “discipline” have provoked arguments, divisions and a lot of tongue-wagging concerning supposed canonical violations in the organization of the leadership of the ROAC, and the paralysis of her ecclesiastical governing authority. The critical din of these rabblers has risen to the point where they have begun accusing the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church of having lost its collegiality, and demanding that it call a “canonical sacred council.”

In connection with this, it seems like it might be a useful endeavor to take an objective look at whether these accusations might have any basis in reality or whether they might be directed at destabilizing the internal peace of the Church, and placing the hierarchy in a compromising position.

Is there collegiality in the ROAC? Without question. In full accord with the definition of academic “canon law,” the Russian “Church is collegiate, i. e. catholic, universal, insofar as it comprises all rational creatures who have ever entered into it, not only of the living, but also of the dead; not only people, but the angels as well.”

According to “The Experience of Christian Catechesis,” of His Beatitude Metropolitan Anthony, “The Church is called collegiate, or catholic, or universal, because it is not limited by any locality, time frame, or nationality, but comprises within itself all true believers of all places, times, and nations.” Absolutely, by all of the criteria presented by His Eminence, the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church is in full compliance with this definition, and therefore, it is catholic.

Now let us pass over to the question about whether the way in which it is governed is canonical. First of all, I would like to ask the main critics of the hierarchical structure of our collegiate Church what it is exactly that they mean by a “canonical sacred council?” In Orthodox canon law, there is no provision for any such instrument of church government. Under certain external conditions of ecclesiastical life, it may take place, but only that instrument of government which acts in accordance with the holy Apostles and holy councils can have legitimate canonical authority. Below, we will see that our church administration is in complete compliance with them, and that those demands that are bandied about by these rabble-rousers, estranged from church life, are foreign to Orthodox tradition and are more akin to the worship of this world in the style of renovationist democracy. In contrast to the democratic model, the God-established church model of government, in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and provided for in the holy canons, is government by the hierarchy. And the highest body of authority in this method of government, established by the Holy Spirit Himself, is the Sobor of the Church’s Bishops.

In connection with this, we wish to make the following historical/canonical note.

When Christianity was first recognized by the government, there appeared a custom, confirmed by the canons (Ap. #37; First Ecum. #5; Fourth Ecum. #19; Antioch #20) according to which sobors should be held twice a year in one region

or another, and later on, once a year. This latter practice first appeared in the Church of Carthage (Carth. #27), and later became widespread (Fourth Ecum. #8; Seventh Ecum. #6). All bishops were required to appear at sobors of Metropolias, although, of course, exceptions were made for extenuating circumstances (First Ecum. #5; Fourth Ecum. #19; Sixth Ecum. #8; Laod. #40). Rule #8 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council replaced Apostolic rule #37, rule #5 of the First Ecumenical Council, and rule #19 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council concerning biannual episcopal sobors. Further on, we shall examine how the bylaws of our Church correspond with the holy canons mentioned above, and we shall also see how, with complete justification, how the spiritual/administrative life of the ROAC is strictly guided by them, and is unshakeably and irreversibly founded upon them.

The bylaws of the religious organization know as the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (approved on June 22, 1993, revised and expanded on March 14, 1995 and July 17, 1998), was registered with the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation on October 19, 1998. Its certificate of registration is #239.

According to ¶ 3.5 “The highest authority of the Church is the Sobor of Bishops, headed by the President of the Synod of Bishops. Between Sobors, the continuing active governing body is the Synod of Bishops, which answers to the Sobor of Bishops.”

In ¶ 3.7, it states that, “The Sobor of Bishops of the Church consists of the Ruling and Vicar Bishops of the Church, and is called by the President of the Sobor of Bishops as needed, but not less than once every three years. A Sobor is considered as having a quorum when at least two thirds of the Bishops of the Church are present.”

Our Church has been governed by the Synod of Bishops since 1996, when it was formed from its preceding Higher Church Authority. At that time, our Church had only four Bishops. They were all members of the Synod. In this manner, the Synod of Bishops served concurrently as the Sobor of Bishops of our holy Church. Since that time, it has been meeting regularly several times a year. The position of President, of the Sobor of Bishops and of the Synod of Bishops, is filled by the Bishop who is oldest in rank according to when he was ordained, in agreement with the rules of the Church.

As we can see, from that time, the canonical governance of our holy catholic Church corresponds completely to the ancient order, hallowed by the holy canons.

Now, I would like to address those who with their characteristic obscenity blab about whether or not our First Hierarch is legitimate. In the year 2000, when the number of Bishops in our Church grew larger, although not required to do so, since he occupied his position by virtue of his rank as senior Bishop of our Church, the then Archbishop Valentine submitted his request to retire. In November of that year, during the Eighth Clergy Conference, there was also a meeting of the holy Synod. At this meeting, the motion was made, in accordance with the bylaws, to elect a new First Hierarch. At that time, there were already eight Bishops in our Church. At that session (which for all intents and purposes could also be considered a Sobor of Bishops), the entire episcopacy of the Church was present, except for Bishop Ilarion of Sukhodolsk (now Archbishop of Smelyansk). Archbishop Valentine was again elected First Hierarch, absolutely unanimously.

His Grace Bishop Ilarion also expressed his desire for Archbishop Valentine to be re-elected by telegram. At no time before this meeting, or after it, either among the Bishops, or from others inside or outside of our Church, was there ever even the slightest question about the legitimacy of the First Hierarch of our Church. Only when the so-called “St. Petersburg Initiative under the leadership of the defrocked monk Gregory Louriye...” set up shop, did it start to bandy about this non-problem, which for us is not a problem at all.

In March of 2001, by unanimous decision of all the Bishops of the ROAC, Archbishop Valentine was raised to the rank of Metropolitan, with the right to wear a second panaghia. Now, I would like to answer those who assert that he accorded himself the right to wear the white klobuk. The question about raising him to the rank of Metropolitan had been raised earlier. The Bishops, representatives from among the clergy, and several groups of the faithful had, numerous times, petitioned the Synod to give Archbishop Valentine the rank of Metropolitan. Archbishop Valentine constantly waved aside or cut short any discussion about this matter. And it was only after the Bishops unanimously passed a resolution that the First Hierarch of the ROAC should have the rank of Metropolitan, that there was nothing left for Vladyka to do but accede to the will of the holy Church.

And even later on, when the episcopacy began to grow in number, despite the intrigues and machinations of all kinds of “Initiative groups” our Church administration never reversed its course, and never departed from the path of following the canons. The makeup of the Synod, indeed, was never voted upon, but only because every single one of the Bishops is invited to every Synod meeting, and each one is apprised of the agenda ahead of time. Even if a Bishop cannot be physically present, in any case he is required to express his opinion. With all of the channels of communication that are at our disposal today, (telephone, telegraph, fax, the internet), it is practically the same as being present in person, and more than equally significant to the canonical practice of antiquity, when an absent Bishop would send his representative, or would delegate a Bishop from a neighboring diocese to speak on his behalf. Any delay in the dissemination of information coming from these meetings can be explained, not by anyone having any underhanded ulterior motives, as these “initiative know-it-alls” would like everyone to believe, but by the need to submit the resolutions to all of the Bishops for their signature, who, as a rule, usually confirm the decision of the Synod, although they have the right to express their own opinions.

In the final analysis, one could make the case that any session of the Holy Synod of Bishops could be considered as a full-fledged canonical Sobor of Bishops.

As far as the idea of a “Sacred” Council is concerned, we will say that insofar as the makeup of the ROAC contains catacomb Bishops, clergy, monastics and lay communities, which make up the catacomb Church, any such Sobor would be one-sided, since a greater part of the flock would have no chance to be present and express their voice. However, to the credit of our Bishops, it should be noted that they always take the opinions, hopes, and expectations of their flocks into account, and demonstrate their fatherly care for them, for which the flock is grateful to them.

In accordance with ancient traditions and the holy canons, our junior Bishops

listen to the more senior Archpastors, who had to endure suffering and persecution in the catacombs from the totalitarian regime and from the Moscow Patriarchate, which formed a part of it and served it, during those times when the representatives of all of these “initiative groups” were sporting their Komsomolsky (Communist Youth League) lapel pins and developing their oratorical skills at Communist meetings.

In conclusion, it must be noted that, of course, even in the administration of the Church, it is impossible to always avoid mistakes and temptations. But here it is completely appropriate to recall the words of St. Joseph of Petrograd, “Do not judge me too harshly, especially by your Balsamon. I consider that he was far from being in the same league as the authors of the holy canons themselves, who wrote in a way that everyone could understand, with no need for interpreters, and that, at any rate, this Balsamon could never be an authoritative and proper interpreter of the events of our time, which could never have been anticipated by any rules or interpretations.”

Heard:

Report of Archbishop Theodore of Borisovskoye and Otradna “On the Canonical and Juridical Status of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.”

“Your Eminence, Your Eminences, and Your Graces,

As you are well aware, after the abolition of the Local Russian Church’s Higher Church Authority, all of the ‘branches’ of Russian Orthodoxy have as a basis for their canonical existence the well-known Resolution of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon #362.

Paragraph #2 of this Resolution speaks about organizing a higher level of Church authority for the dioceses ‘in the form of a temporary higher church governing body, or a metropolia, or something else.’ For this ‘the diocesan Bishop should make contact with the Bishops of his neighboring dioceses as quickly as possible.’

According to paragraph #6, in the region made up by these dioceses, the Bishop ‘enters into the administration of regional church affairs in accordance with the canons.’

According to paragraph #5, the higher church authority has the right ‘to institute after collegiate consultation with the other Bishops, new episcopal sees with semi-independent or independent rights.’

Every such ecclesiastical arrangement requires for all dioceses entering into the newly configured region the formation of some kind of directions, regulations and, for the purpose of incorporating under the civil government – bylaws. It is understood that this arrangement is temporary, i.e. it has validity only until such time as a normal governing authority can be re-established Russia-wide. This is addressed in paragraph #10 of the statute.

It was on the basis of this regulation that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia existed, and the ROAC exists even now.

In this way, on the canonical plane, the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church

remains an independent and self-governing part of the Local Russian Church, and, like every other Church, remains part of the full-fledged Church of Christ, the Body of Christ, sharing one faith and one life with the universal Orthodox Church, which contains within itself all the Saints who have ever lived before us, and all true Orthodox Christians who are alive now. Having separated from 'world Orthodoxy,' our Church forms a small part of the True Orthodox Church and historically brings together, for the most part, Orthodox Christians united by the Russian tradition and the Russian language.

The most important organizational undertakings in the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, or rather in that part of it which was formerly in the Russian Empire, were the clergy/laity conferences, sobors, in effect, of the Russian dioceses of Archbishop Lazar and Bishop Valentine in 1993, 1994 and 1995. It was at these conferences that the Temporary Higher Church Administration was established, which was later renamed the Synod of Bishops. In order to register the legal aspect of the Church in Russia, a corporation with the name Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (ROAC) was set up. As a model for its bylaws, the bylaws of the Free Russian Orthodox Church were used, which were adopted by the Synod of Bishops with several insignificant changes, and the ROAC was registered; and on December 16, 1998, its Suzdal Diocese was registered by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation with the number 414.

The Orthodox Church is required not only to confess the teaching of the Orthodox Faith, in strict accord with the Church's dogmas, but also to adhere to the canons of the Church. For this reason, it is reflected in the bylaws that the life of our Church is governed by the Canons of the Orthodox Church, the Rules of the Ecumenical and Local Councils, the Rules of the holy Fathers, and the decrees, ukases, regulations and determinations of the Russian Orthodox Church (§ 1.4).

'The highest authority of the Church is the Sobor of Bishops, headed by the President of the Synod of Bishops. Between Sobors, the continuing active governing body is the Synod of Bishops, which answers to the Sobor of Bishops. The determinations and resolutions of the Sobor of Bishops of the Church, as well as of the Synod of Bishops of the Church, are binding upon all members and subdivisions of the Church's administrative structure.' This is spoken about in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6 of the bylaws.

In actuality, our Church has been governed by the Synod of Bishops, acting on behalf of the Sobor of Bishops, since 1996. At that time, we had only four Bishops, and with their agreement, and with the expression of their free will, i.e. with their collective voice, the former Temporary Higher Church Authority was renamed as the Synod of Bishops, which all of the Bishops belonged to. This is nothing new. Such Synods have existed in the past, and even now do exist, not only in the churches of 'world Orthodoxy,' but in True Orthodox Churches as well. In connection with the proliferation of the heresy of ecumenism, and the disappearance of historical fully developed organizational structures in the form of the usual Local Churches, and also because of the small size of the episcopacy in contemporary True Orthodox Churches, they are organized, as a rule, in the form of Synods of Bishops, which for all practical purposes are also Sobors of Bishops, and fulfill the role of the Higher Church Administration.

In connection with the present complicated state of Orthodoxy in the world, it

is namely this form – the Synodal form – that is the only possible form by which a church can be organized at all. And herein we can see the workings of the Providence of God Himself, since it is more difficult for the oppressors of Orthodoxy to persecute and subject several church administrations to their influence, than one.

According to the bylaws, ‘The Synod of Bishops shall consist of the President of the Synod and of two permanent members of episcopal rank, a secretary, and of regular members of the Synod taken from the number of Ruling Bishops of the Church, whose rotation and term of service in the Synod shall be determined by the Sobor’ (¶ 3.9).

The President of the Synod of Bishops shall be the Ruling Bishop who is eldest in terms of when he was ordained (¶ 3.12). For us, this means Metropolitan Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir, who unanimously, with the agreement of the entire episcopacy, was elected President of the Temporary Higher Church Authority to replace Archbishop Lazar in 1995. The President of the Synod is also the First Hierarch of the Church. He represents the Church and the Synod in its relations with the civil authorities of the Russian Federation, and beyond its borders, and has other powers as well (¶ 3.15).

As a rule, in order to decide day-to-day matters, the President invites all of the Bishops of the ROAC to take part in the work of the Synod. But it often happens that not all of the Bishops are able to travel to Suzdal to do so. For this reason, in order to keep the process of resolving church matters from coming to a standstill, the Synod convenes with whatever quorum is available (those who are able to make it to a meeting), and the resolutions and protocols of the meetings are forwarded to all of the Bishops of the Church for their information. In all questions of a principal nature, the President of the Synod always requests the opinions of the Bishops who are absent, and reads them aloud at the sessions of the Synod. For resolving questions of an urgent nature, or for composing Epistles addressed to the entire flock, a quorum of three Bishops is sufficient.

It should also be pointed out that the Synod of Bishops, in essence, is not simply some kind of administrative chancery office, but a small Sobor of grace-filled hierarchs, who resolve issues as they present themselves, in accordance with the powers delegated to them by the Bishops of the entire Church.

At the present time, strange as it seems, the complaints against the canonicity of our Church are being put forth, not only by the enemies of our Church, but even by our own church workers. However, it is not up to them to decide what form the composition of the Synod shall take, and what powers are expedient for it to have at this point in our Church’s life, but to the Sobor of Bishops.

Thus, it is the Synod of Bishops and its President who are the active body of administrative authority in the Church, accountable to the Sobor. They carry out the resolutions of the Sobor, which pronounces its decision on questions of a principal nature.

In the past, the Synod of Bishops has made a number of important decisions. As I have already pointed out, the President was chosen, the Synodal Chancery Office was established, new dioceses of the ROAC were opened – the Orenburg and Kurgansky Diocese, the Denver and Colorado Diocese, the Diocese of

Yaransk and Vyatka, the Vicariates of Pavlovskoye, Chelyabinsk, and others. A canonization committee was formed in 2001, and a theological committee was formed in 2004. I would like to underscore that all of these decisions were taken with the knowledge and approval of the Sobor of Bishops, and have, therefore, a collective sanction.

According to ¶ 3.7 of our bylaws, a Sobor 'consists of the diocesan and vicar Bishops of the Church, and is called by the President of the Synod of Bishops as needed, but not less than once every three years.' Here in the Suzdal Diocese, we have had clergy/laity conferences, at which all the Bishops who could manage to come were present. For this reason, the collegiate atmosphere in our Church has always been alive, and the unanimity of the episcopacy and the people of the Church, the faithful, has always been preserved, and is with us even now.

From 1991 through 2005, we have had ten conferences, on average, one conference per year. During the most critical days when complicated questions such as the registration of the bylaws of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, the organization of diocesan administrations and the registration of the bylaws of the Dioceses of Suzdal, Bryansk, Orenburg, Tula and Borisovskoye-Otradna, for example, we had several Sobors, which for one reason or another, it was decided not to announce ahead of time, so as not to disturb the process. Besides the historical documents produced by these Sobors, the Right Reverend Bishops who took part in the proceedings of the Sobors themselves can confirm that they took place.

The behavior of the First Hierarch and of the Synod are under the control and supervision of the Synod of Bishops and the Sobor of Bishops, and the behavior of the Bishops is under the control and supervision of the First Hierarch and the Synod. This is underscored by the fact that in the oath which each Bishop takes at his consecration, he promises to 'be always in submission to the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church and its President, Their Graces my brother Bishops, and to be agreeable and cooperative with them, in accordance with Divine Law and the sacred rules of the holy Apostles and Fathers, and to have spiritual love towards them, wholeheartedly, and to count them as my brothers.'

The unity which exists amongst our episcopacy is based primarily upon our unity in the true faith of Christ, and also upon the unity in love that we have amongst ourselves. If one of the Bishops should have any question, disagreement or doubt about anything, or there should be something that he does not understand, he, first of all, should consult with his brothers in Christ, ask the advice of the older and wiser ones, and do nothing without hearing their comments, and to keep, in the words of the Apostle, 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' If one of the Bishops should start to act in a self-willed manner, for example, should interfere in the internal matters of another diocese, should permit himself to commemorate clergymen who have been excommunicated or suspended, or should accept suspended clergymen without letters of release, then he is in violation of the holy Canons of the Church, and sins against love for his brethren, for which he incurs the judgment of the holy canons.

According to the canons, the Diocesan Bishop has extremely broad powers. Nothing can be done in his diocese, by the clergy or the laity, without his blessing, directive, control, supervision or approval. He has within his prerogatives the

power to open parishes, appoint and remove priests, call diocesan meetings, clergy conferences, preside at ecclesiastical court cases, etc.

The budget for every church is formed from dues sent in from the dioceses and parishes – voluntary donations (¶ 4.2). Unfortunately, Their Graces and the clergy do not take an active part in the life of the ROAC. They do not deduct their diocesan dues, upon which the work of the Church depends for its existence and development. Because of this complacency, we are not able to publish church literature, print our own calendar, help the poorer priests or have a benevolent fund. We are grateful to Archbishops Ilarion and Seraphim, who contribute substantially to the support of the ROAC with their dues. Sometimes Archbishop Anthony sends in a one-time donation, for which we are extremely appreciative.

As far as the priests are concerned, we can say that we receive a great deal of help from Frs. Michael Ardiv, Valery Yeltsov and Arkady Makovetsky. The rest, however, seem to have vanished, and remain deaf to the appeals of the ROAC for help. We have no reason to believe that the consciences of the clergy will wake up anytime soon and that they should begin to fulfill their obligations by sending in their ‘tithes’ on a regular basis to support the needs of the diocese.

Unfortunately, in our bylaws, through ignorance or maybe through an oversight, there was no mention made about the the ROAC being a successor to the Free Russian Orthodox Church, under whose name we registered several of our churches in Suzdal during the 1990’s. In connection with the numerous inspections that the government has been carrying out of late concerning the documentation of our churches, this has caused us some legal difficulties. For this reason, it has become necessary to amend our bylaws to reflect this connection with the FROC, which, according to ¶ 5.1 of the bylaws, falls within the competency of the Sobor of Bishops.”

Resolved:

1. On the basis of the Report of the Chancellor of the Synod, to accept and confirm the registered civil bylaws of the ROAC as the actual bylaws of the ROAC.
2. To amend ¶ 1.5 of the registered bylaws of the ROAC to read: “The Church is the juridical rightful successor of the centralized religious organization known as the Free Russian Orthodox Church.”
3. To confirm the permanent members of the Sobor and Synod of Bishops as follows:
 - a. Metropolitan Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir (President);
 - b. Archbishop Theodore of Borisovskoye and Otradna, Chancellor of the Sobor and Synod of Bishops;
 - c. Bishop Irinarkh of Bryansk and Tula, Secretary of the Sobor and Synod of Bishops;
 - d. assistant: Igumen Theophan (Areskin) – (non-voting member). Opening remarks, report and comments on the activity of the Synod of Bishops from 1995 through 2008. (report delivered by

Metropolitan Valentine).

4. To confirm all of the decisions of the Synod of Bishops for the entire Synodal period, as correct and exclusively useful to the Church of God. Remarks on the violations of Bishop Sebastian of Cheliabinsk, vicar of the Suzdal Diocese, against the holy canons.
5. To direct all of Their Graces, rectors of communities and parishes to send in their "tithes" in support of the Church's budget. Report on the canonical status of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church. (Bishop Ambrose).

Heard:

Report of His Grace Archbishop Ilarion of Smelyansk "On the Spiritual/Canonical Status of the Moscow Patriarchate and Other Churches of 'World Orthodoxy.'"

"Your Eminence, Your Graces!

At the present time, the Moscow Patriarchate belongs to the community of so-called 'world Orthodoxy,' which the Sobor of Bishops defines as a conglomeration of pseudo-ecclesiastical groups that have fallen into the heresy of ecumenism. However, each one of these groups has its own individual history of its fall from grace. One fell immediately into heresy, and others fell away from the Church earlier, through schism.

On at least three different occasions, the Moscow Patriarchate has committed transgressions, any one of which would be enough to cause it to fall away from the Church completely. It was only in 1961, after their triple fall into schism, that the MP adopted their heretical (ecumenical) confession of faith.

The MP's first schism came in 1927, when Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) usurped the authority of the Sobor of Bishops, delineated a 'new course' for the Church in relation to the godless authorities, and subjected the Bishops who refused to embark upon this course to unlawful repercussions. Metropolitan Sergius started to exercise the full scope of power as Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne, although the legitimate Locum Tenens, Metropolitan Peter (Polyansky) was still alive, and even tried to talk some sense into Metropolitan Sergius through his letters from exile. The major part of the episcopacy of the Russian Church recognized Metropolitan Sergius' actions as uncanonical, as also his usurpation of church authority, and broke canonical communion with him.

The MP's second schism came in 1936, when, after the NKVD's false report of the death of Metropolitan Peter, Metropolitan Sergius unlawfully declared himself Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne, and took over the Diocese of the Patriarch. Together with this, in an article in the 'Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate' for 1931, Metropolitan Sergius officially announced that the powers of Deputy automatically cease with the death of the person he is filling in for, which was quite correct.

The MP's third schism came in 1943, when three bishops who had been sent for by Joseph Stalin, together with several other like-minded bishops, elected Metropolitan Sergius as 'patriarch.' This meeting of 19 bishops, which they

announced as a 'Sobor of Bishops,' had received no authority of any kind to elect anyone patriarch, not only because at this meeting only an insignificant part of the hierarchy of the Russian Church was represented, but because, according to Determinations of the Local Council of 1917-1918, the election of a Patriarch was the exclusive prerogative of the Local Council. The canonical episcopacy of the Russian Church, represented by its two 'branches,' – the catacomb Church and the Church in exile – refused to recognize Sergius as 'patriarch,' and thereby confirmed the utter fall of the MP, headed by him, into schism.

From schism the MP moved to heresy after it entered into the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1961, which meant its participation in ecumenism. Upon entering the WCC, the MP delegation signed the ecumenical organization's confessional 'basis,' thereby admitting on behalf of the entire MP that they have the same confession of faith as the WCC. Many of the documents of the MP dating from the 1960's contain an open confession of the heresy of ecumenism. By these actions, the MP has given all Orthodox Christians sufficient reason for separating themselves from it as a heretical association, in accordance with rule 15 of the First/Second Council.

As to whether or not the heresy of ecumenism continues to be part of the official creed of the MP, it is enough to note that not only has the MP never repented of this heresy, but it has refused to withdraw from the WCC. At each of the last four Sobors of Bishops of the MP (1994, 1997, 2000, 2004), the hierarchy passed heretical decisions confirming the participation of the MP in the ecumenical movement and expressing the totally free voice of the hierarchy of the MP. This means that any attempt to claim that the MP's participation in the heresy of ecumenism is forced upon them by the godless authorities is unsubstantiated.

It is not due to one act of lawlessness on the part of a few bishops in 1927 that the Moscow Patriarchate is in schism. Their schism has been confirmed in triplicate, the consequences of which they did not try to eradicate even when the political conditions became completely amenable to doing so in the 1990's. Besides this, their schism has been coupled with heresy. Thus, separating from the MP can be justified not so much on the basis of rule 15 of the First/Second Council, as much as on the fact that they have utterly fallen into heresy. Our Sobor of Bishops asserts that, at the present time, the spiritual/canonical status of the MP does not substantially differ from the status of the Roman Catholic Church.

Our Sobor of Bishops considers it futile to attempt to fix a concrete date for the final fall of one or another community from the Church. Instead, our Sobor makes the case that at the present time, neither the Moscow Patriarchate nor 'world Orthodoxy' as a whole has any relationship to the Church of Christ. This means that there can be no genuine sacraments of the Church being performed there.

In these church-like associations, just as among all of mankind in general, there is at work only the general grace of God which calls all men to salvation. This grace first calls them to return to a more sober and God-centered life, and then unavoidably forces them to critically re-evaluate the experience of their artificial church life outside of the Church and return from heresy and schism to the true faith. They are aided in this by those liturgical traditions of the Orthodox Church

that they still manage to hold onto in ‘world Orthodoxy’ – the services, venerating icons and relics, and hearing the words of the Gospel.”

The Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, having heard the report of Archbishop Ilarion, on the basis of Sacred Tradition and the holy canons of the Church of Christ,

Determines:

The so-called Moscow Patriarchate is an unlawful successor of the Greek-Russian Orthodox Church, and through its three-part schism, which took place in the bosom of the Local Orthodox Church of Russia, it, and all those churches of ‘world Orthodoxy’ who are in canonical communion with it, have fallen away from Orthodoxy, and consequently, from the Church of Christ, into the heresy of ecumenism.

For this reason, canonical communion between the children of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church and the Moscow Patriarchate, as well as with other churches of ‘world Orthodoxy,’ is intolerable. Those who have entered into such communion in ignorance should be given an epitimia, and those who have consciously entered into such communion should be cut off from all association with the Church.

The Sobor of Bishops calls upon all of the clergy, monastics and laity of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church to actively explain to the followers of the MP and of the other churches of ‘world Orthodoxy’ the disastrousness of their path.

Heard:

The report on the teaching of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili by His Grace Andrew, Bishop of Pavlovskoye, who, in part, said, “Just as from the beginning, the prince of this world, the devil, warred against God, so also now does he not cease, through those persons who are under his authority, his servants, to wage war against Almighty God and His chosen camp – the Church of the Saints and His beloved city (Rev. 20:9). He endeavors to distort Divine Truth, the Revelation of God to humankind, the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints, through the invention and dissemination of every manner of false teaching and heresy, insomuch that, if it were possible, he shall deceive the very elect (Matt. 24:24), and tear them away from the saving body of the Church of Christ unto eternal perdition. Even amongst the tiny flock of True Orthodox Christians, the enemy raises up temptations and divisions. In our irreligious times, when faith has waxed cold, he has introduced the pernicious heresy of ecumenism, which has washed over and torn away all of the historical patriarchates from the Church. One subtle and hidden form of this heresy is the novel teaching of the Greek Old Calendar ‘Synod in Resistance,’ headed by Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili.

Having separated from his bishops in 1985, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Metropolitan Giovanni of Sardinia formed their own synod and established their own ecclesiology, which they believe to be the only correct one, branding all other True Orthodox ‘extremists.’ This ecclesiology has been laid out by Metropolitan Cyprian in his *Ecclesiological Theses, or the Exposition of the Teaching about the*

Church for Orthodox Christians Opposed to the Heresy of Ecumenism, Fili, Attika, 1993. In addition, the Synod in Resistance has stated that the ‘collectively established ecclesiological foundation of our Holy Synod in Resistance clearly differs from the ecclesiology of the other Synods that follow the ancestral calendar in Greece’ (epistle to ROCOR, June 24/July 7, 1993).

The teaching of Metropolitan Cyprian was condemned in 1985 by the Synod of the True Orthodox Church (GOC) of Greece under the presidency of Archbishop Chrysostomos II as unorthodox. Other True Orthodox Churches in Greece have condemned it as a false teaching as well.

From among the Russian Bishops, this teaching was condemned only by His Grace Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), who gave a short critical overview of the ecclesiology of Metropolitan Cyprian, and came to the conclusion that Cyprian ‘confesses his own teaching, which has nothing to do with Orthodoxy, about the possibility of the grace of the Holy Spirit acting in churches that have clearly become heretical.’ His Grace Vladyka Gregory (Grabbe) correctly pointed out that in accepting the teaching of Cyprian, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia had fallen under its own anathema against ecumenism of 1983.

The main tenets of this teaching are as follows:

1. The sacraments performed by heretics and schismatics continue to be valid until such time as these individuals should be condemned by an all-church Orthodox council, and the resolutions of the councils that have taken place to date, are insufficient. From this it follows that heretics and schismatics are not yet such in actuality, but are only ‘ailing-in-faith members of the Church who have yet to be brought to account’ (ch. 1).
2. The Orthodox Church is not One in reality, but has been divided into those who are ailing-in-faith, and those who are resisting heresy. Heretic ecumenists are considered members of the body of the Church, and are called ‘Orthodox ecumenists.’

Thus, Metropolitan Cyprian sees the entire assemblage of the churches of ‘world Orthodoxy,’ together with True Orthodox Christians, comprising one church body, in both parts of which one and the same saving grace of the All-Holy Spirit is at work.

Cyprian compares ecumenists with the iconoclasts and asserts that before the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the iconoclasts were somehow not heretics, and that their sacraments were valid. Cyprian makes a blasphemous statement when he says that repentant iconoclasts were received by the holy Fathers, not into the Catholic Church, but ‘into Orthodoxy,’ thereby separating the Church from Orthodoxy.

However, the common tradition of the Orthodox Church affirms that Orthodoxy and the Church are indivisible; it is impossible to be in the Church and not have the right faith. The Divine Maximus the Confessor once said, ‘The God of all creatures has revealed by means of the catholic Church the right and saving confession of faith in Him (την ορθην και σωτήριον ομολογίαν).’ St. Cyprian of Carthage spoke similarly, ‘Just as the devil is not Christ, although he uses His name to deceive, so also no one can count himself a Christian who does not remain in the the truth of His Gospel and faith’ (On the Unity of the Church, 14).

St. Gregory the Theologian teaches, 'Turn away from anyone who holds any other teaching, and count him as estranged from God and from the universal Church' (Second Epistle Against Apollinarius). St. Gregory Palamas wrote, 'Those who are of the Church of Christ, are of the truth; and those who are not of the truth, are not of the Church of Christ... for we must distinguish Christianity, not according to person, but according to the truth and exactness of faith.'

In the Epistle of the Eastern Patriarchs on the Orthodox Faith it is written, 'We believe that the members of the catholic Church are all, and for that matter, exclusively, the faithful, i.e. those who confess, without doubting, pure faith in Christ the Savior' (¶ 11). Thus, outside of Orthodoxy, there is no Church, and whosoever distorts Orthodoxy, falls away from the Church.

The holy Fathers at the Councils received repentant heretics, specifically, 'into the Church.' Thus, the Seventh Ecumenical Council said, 'Let the bishops standing before us read their rejections as ones now converting to the Catholic Church.'

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself said in the Gospel, 'He that believeth not is condemned already' (Jn. 3:18). The holy Apostle Peter also teaches, 'There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction' (2Pet. 2:1). In his epistle to Titus, the holy Apostle Paul says, 'A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself' (Tit. 3:10-11).

Every year, on the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the Church pronounces an anathema upon all heretics, whose teachings were ever conciliarly condemned, so that it will be clear to everyone that all of the decisions taken by the Church at the Councils of the holy Fathers remain in force to this day, and She cuts off from Herself all who are in disagreement with Her correct and salvific confession.

The Byzantine canonist Zonara, in his interpretation on rule 6 of the Second Ecumenical Council says, 'Heretics are all those who think not in accordance with the Orthodox Faith, no matter how long ago or how recently they were cut off from the Church; no matter how ancient, nor how new the heresies that they hold.'

In agreement with this, the Eastern Patriarchs also, in their Encyclical letter to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, declared that the Orthodox Faith, 'Being already, once and for all, revealed and sealed, permits no additions or subtractions, nor any other kind of amendment whatsoever, and whosoever would dare to do so, or advocate or propose to do so, has already rejected the faith of Christ, and has already voluntarily fallen under the eternal anathema against those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit.'

St. Philaret of New York seconds this voice of the Fathers, 'The anathema pronounced by the Church is a cutting off from Her of him who has in reality already ceased being part of Her' (Sermons, vol. 1, p. 115).

Thus, the judgments of the holy Fathers and Councils are eternal determinations and fall upon the head of anyone who perverts the faith of the Church. The 15th rule of the First/Second Council calls a bishop who preaches heresy, and who has not yet been judged at an ecclesiastical court, a 'false bishop,' since he, as is ob-

vicious, has fallen under the sentence of earlier holy Councils, and is condemned by them.

And so, the Church, despite what Cyprian says, has always taught, and even now teaches, that it is not Councils, but the heretics themselves who cut their adherents off from the Orthodox Church and from God, depriving them of God's grace and of salvation. Councils only loudly proclaim the condemnation of heresies and their followers, uphold the dogmas of the faith, and make them general requirements for those who desire to be saved.

Cyprian impiously teaches that the One Church of Christ is divided into two groups – those who are infected-in-faith and those who are uninfected. According to Cyprian, the entire Church consists of 'healthy members' – the Orthodox, and 'sickened members' – heretics and schismatics who have yet to be judged and are therefore 'not yet torn away' from the body of the Church. The healthy members are forbidden to mix with the sick members. But the sick members and the healthy members are potentially (δύναμι) one, and only those who have been formally condemned are separated in actuality (Metropolitan Cyprian, publication of the Synod in Resistance, #1, January, 2000, pp. 31-32).

However, this teaching is foreign to Orthodox Tradition, which teaches that the Church, as the Body of Christ, cannot possibly be divided. One can only fall away from it. Just as it cannot be that the Lord has several bodies, so also is it impossible for Him to have more than one Church. The Lord is the One Who said, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church (Matt. 16:18)."

Resolved:

To express gratitude to His Grace Bishop Andrew of Pavlovskoye for such a thorough report, together with our desire for him to remain ever on guard for Orthodoxy.

Having heard the report of His Grace Bishop Andrew of Pavlovskoye, and having examined the unorthodox and crypto-ecumenistic teaching of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos, the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church...

Determines:

Following the holy and God-bearing Fathers of the Church and the whole of Church Tradition, we believe and confess that heretics condemn themselves by their own stubborn adherence to their heresy, and incur the condemnation of the holy Councils and of the Church's anathema, and immediately deprive themselves of the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, tearing themselves off from the body of the Church of God.

For this reason, heretics do not have, and cannot have, the sacraments of the Church of God, but only the visible, superficial forms of them. All members of all heretical communities, even those who in their own hearts reject the heresy of their hierarchs but continue to remain in prayerful and eucharistic communion with heretics, have no inheritance in the portion of Christ, but have their lot with the father of lies – the devil. For the Church *is* the mystical union in the one Body

of Christ, in one Eucharist, in one faith of the believers and the hierarchy, and it cannot be divided.

We also confess that any local Church, though it be no larger than one city, by virtue of the Holy Spirit living within it, may condemn heresy and heretics.

The teaching of the Greek Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos we recognize to be impious sophistry, which secretly introduces into the minds of the faithful the pernicious heresy of ecumenism, and we condemn it. All those who share in this teaching of Cyprian's are under the anathema that was pronounced in 1983 by the Sobor of Bishops of the ROCOR, and by the True Orthodox Churches of Greece, against the heresy of ecumenism.

Heard:

The report of His Grace Bishop Geronty of Sukhodolsk on the new church calendar as an ecclesiastical heresy:

“We all know about the two great dangers which the devil has placed on the straight path of the Church of God during the last century. These are ecumenism and its precursor, the new-calendarism. If ecumenism arose as a teaching at the end of the nineteenth century, then the new-calendarism, or the introduction of the new calendar into Church as opposed to the Julian calendar, arose 300 years earlier. If ecumenism can be considered primarily an outgrowth of Protestantism, then new-calendarism owes its origins to Roman Catholicism.

During the twentieth century, the new calendar schism touched almost all of the Local Churches. In all cases, the introduction of the new calendar served as a way for the heresy of ecumenism to gain a foothold in the Church, and in the absence of surgical intervention by the hierarchy, what followed was a kind of gangrene, leading to the new calendarists falling away from the Church altogether, first into schism, and then into heresy.

The True Orthodox Christians of the Greek Church, who had to endure the first blow of new-calendarism, exposed and condemned the new calendar as a dangerous and heretical innovation. We think that it is time for the Russian Church to weigh in on this issue and add its voice to the defense of the Truth, insofar as the new calendar remains a potent weapon for the destruction of the Church in the hands of the heretics.

From ancient times, since the time of the Old Testament, Divine Revelation was expressed to mankind in the language of religious services, in which an important role, if not the main one, was played by the liturgical calendar. One could even say that the theology of many of the books of the Bible is expressed, for the most part, in the language of the divine services. The unity of the nascent Christian Church was expressed by conformity in the divine services and by conformity in the calendar.

During the first centuries of Christianity, there were several calendars in use, and it is possible that in the various communities the calendars differed slightly, as also some liturgical rituals and the canon of Holy Scripture differed in some of their details. The most important feast on the ancient calendars was the feast of Pascha, which expresses several dogmas of the faith at once – the incarnation,

passion, death, descent into Hades, the gift of the Holy Spirit to the righteous of antiquity, the resurrection, the ascension of Christ the Messiah and the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church of Christ.

Later, in the Byzantine period, when the emperors were introducing standardization in the liturgical rites, in the united state Church of the united empire, a standard liturgical calendar was secured, the Julian calendar, and a standard Paschalion, the Alexandrian (Roman).

A second important principle of the Church was the prohibition against Her believers praying together with unbelievers. From the most ancient times, the Church guarded Her flock from association with people of other faiths, the heterodox. It is prohibited to pray together with pagans, Jews or heretics, because the Church and the heterodox have different beliefs and different gods. There cannot be any fellowship of light with darkness, of Christ with Belial, or of the righteous with the unrighteous (2Cor. 6:14-15).

From the very beginning, the Fathers of the Church sought to protect the flock from the influence of the Jews. The 7th Apostolic Canon cuts laymen off from the Church who celebrate together with the Jews, and the 1st rule of the Council of Antioch (341 A.D.) cuts off members of the clergy for doing so. There can be found many prohibitions against celebrating, fasting, and having any kind of religious association at all with Jews in the patristic literature of the time.

Later, during the period when the great heresies arose, some groups that had broken off from the Church sometimes would specifically revert to ancient calendars and rituals, in order to underscore their differences with the Orthodox Church, and sometimes the Orthodox Church Herself would change the calendar somewhat, in order to separate Her flock from the heretics liturgically. This is why, for example, in the sixth century, the emperor Justinian, with the aim of disseminating the Orthodox teaching on the two natures in Christ, issued a command that in the eastern reaches of the empire the widespread practice of celebrating Theophany and the Nativity of Christ separately, although the ancient practice had been to celebrate the two feasts together on one day. In 698 A.D., the Fathers at the Council of Trullo abolished the ancient four day long 'Ninevite Fast,' or 'Fast of the Prophet Jonah,' ordering the Orthodox to eat meat during this fast (this is our Butter Week, before Meatfare Week), in order to keep them separate from the Monophysite Armenians.

And so, the liturgical calendar is seen by the Church as a vehicle for expressing theological truths. In and of itself, the calendar, like ritual, could vary in different Churches, but what was more important was conformity in the Orthodox faith. The calendar was often used to clearly demonstrate the contrast between the faithful and heretics.

So, on its own, the calendar has no dogmatic significance, but is rather an instrument for preventing the faithful from falling into heresy, for example, into Judaism or Latinism. It was precisely in this sense that the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council understood it (so that Christians would not celebrate together with Jews), or the Councils of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (against papism).

But soon afterwards, the use of the calendar was turned around in the opposite

direction. In the sixteenth century, the papal calendar began to be used by Latin missionaries trying to attract Orthodox Christians into the Unia. In the twentieth century, the new calendar began to be used by 'Orthodox ecumenists' to facilitate the acceptance of the heresy of ecumenism.

In 1582, the Roman Pope Gregory XIII instituted the reform of the calendar, placing yet another barrier between the Orthodox Church and the Latin West. Alongside papism and the dogmatic heresies of Latinism, the new Gregorian calendar was understood as the beginning of a new papal expansion eastward. In 1582, Patriarch Jeremiah II (Tranos) of Constantinople acted quickly to call a Synod and condemn the innovation as being incompatible with the patristic tradition of the Church. In the following year, 1583, Patriarch Jeremiah II convened a local council at which, together with the participation of Patriarchs Sylvester of Alexandria and Sophronios VI of Jerusalem, and of many other Orthodox Metropolitans and Bishops, the Gregorian calendar and the new Roman paschalion were anathematized.

In the Conciliar Epistle of November 20, 1583, it said,

'Patriarchal and Synodal Sigillion (Bull) of Jeremiah, by the mercy of God
Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Universal Patriarch.

Since again the church of old Rome, as if rejoicing in the vanity of its astronomers, has imprudently altered the most excellent determinations concerning Holy Pascha, celebrated by the Christians, which were determined and defined by the 318 holy Fathers of the holy and Ecumenical First Council in Nicea, who are revered by Christians the world over and celebrated as has been handed down, for this reason it has become a source of temptation. For there have appeared before Our Mediocrity Armenian men with questions concerning the practice of celebrating inasmuch as they also are being required to accept this innovation.

For this reason, it behooved Us to say that which was commanded by the holy Fathers. Our Mediocrity, having pondered this question together with the Blessed Patriarch of Alexandria, and the Blessed Patriarch of Jerusalem, and with other members of the Synod 'in the Holy Spirit,' has determined, explaining the decision on this matter of the holy Fathers:

That whoever does not follow the customs of the Church as the Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils decreed, and Holy Pascha, and the Menologion with which they did well in making it a law that we should follow it, and wishes to follow the newly-invented Paschalion and the New Menologion of the atheist astronomers of the Pope, and opposes all those things and wishes to overthrow and destroy the dogmas and customs of the Church which have been handed down by our Fathers, let him suffer anathema and be put out of the Church of Christ and out of the Congregation of the Faithful.

That ye pious and Orthodox Christians remain faithful in what ye have been taught and have been born and brought up in, and when the time calls for it and there be need, that your very blood be shed in order to safeguard the Faith handed down by our Fathers and your confession; and that ye beware of such persons as have been described or referred to in the foregoing paragraphs, in order that our Lord Jesus Christ may help you and at the same time may the prayer of Our Medi-

ocrity be with all of you. Amen.

Done in the year 1583 since the incarnation of the Word, November 20, Indiction 12. Jeremiah of Constantinople, Sylvester of Alexandria, Sophronios of Jerusalem, and the other Bishops at the Council.'

As we can see from the Sigillion, the Council anathematized, not only those who had changed the paschalion, but also those who had changed the menologion, since these had been considered by the Church from the beginning to be inseparable.

Not long after this, Patriarch Sylvester of Alexandria (1566-1590), in his *Cyclical Epistle to the Orthodox Christians of Western Europe* wrote:

'The Roman calendar innovation has caused much woe. For it has brought disturbance into the Church, confusion among the people, derision upon the holy Fathers, disdain amongst the children, and error, close to Judaism. The Romans say that the matter has nothing to do with the faith, and therefore the innovation poses no threat. O hardhearted sons of men! Small things are not minor, according to Basil the Great, when they cause great harm. And it is such a small thing to disturb the Church, exalt oneself before the holy Fathers, and despise the Divine precepts? For God Himself commands: *Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set* (Prov. 22:28). Following the example of our Fathers and leaders, both eastern and western, we properly prefer that which is ancient to that which is modern, for of old it was deemed proper by the Orthodox Church to accept no innovation, and to remove not the ancient landmark (Tomos of Alexandria [1584], St. Petersburg, 1904).

The following Patriarchs of Constantinople: Parthenios I (1639-1644), Paisios II (1726-1733), Cyril V (1748-1751), Gregory VI (1835-1840), Anthimos VI (1845-1848), as well as the Patriarchs of Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and the Archbishops of Cyprus, in defending their flocks from Latin proselytism, explained to them that the celebration of Pascha together with the Latins, is tantamount to a rejection of the resolutions of the Orthodox Church on fasting, a betrayal of Orthodoxy, an apostasy from the testaments of the holy Fathers, and is disastrous for Orthodox Christians.

In yet another example, the Ecumenical Patriarch Kallinikos XI, together with the Antiochian Patriarch Athanasios (1686-1728), turned their attention to the fact that not only celebrating Pascha together with the Jews, but the rejection of the decisions established by the Orthodox Church on fasting is a betrayal of Orthodoxy and a departure from the testaments of the holy Fathers. Thus, if using the Roman calendar while keeping the Alexandrian Paschalion, the Apostle's Fast (for those years when Pascha falls between April 20-25), completely disappears, which is a direct violation of the sacred Tradition of the Church, since this fast is mentioned in the rules of the holy Apostles, 'After Pentecost, celebrate for one week, and then fast' (Book 5, chap. 19). 'For this reason, every true Orthodox Christian must be firm in the rules of the Orthodox Church,' continues their Encyclical letter, 'and is obligated to celebrate Pascha, the other feasts that depend on it, and all of the ecclesiastical seasons, as dictated by the practice of the Orthodox East, and not the heterodox West, which is alien to our faith' *Tserkovniye Vedomosti* M: 1906, № 13, p. 685.

In 1756, the Ecumenical Patriarch Cyril V and the Council of Constantinople, in their Encyclical letter concerning the new calendarists, said, 'Whether he be priest or layman, let him be cut off from God, accursed, and let his body not dissolve after death, and let him endure eternal torments... Let such inherit the leprosy of Giezi, and suffer the strangulation of Judas, let them be like Cain upon the earth, moaning and trembling, having the anger of God upon their heads, and let their fate be with that of the traitor Judas, and with the enemies of God – the Jews... an angel of God pursuing them with the sword all the days of their lives, and let all of the curses of the Patriarchs and the Councils be upon them, unto everlasting excommunication in the torments of eternal fire. Amen. So be it!'

In 1848, the Ecumenical Patriarch Anthimos VI, together with the Patriarchs Ierotheos of Alexandria, Methodios of Antioch, and Cyril of Jerusalem, in their Encyclical letter on behalf of the One, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, yet again reminded the papists of their apostasy with the adoption of the Gregorian calendar:

'For us, neither Patriarch nor Council could ever introduce anything novel, because the keeper of piety for us is the very Body of the Church, i.e. the people, who ever desire to maintain their faith immutable and in agreement with the faith of their Fathers... Let us preserve our confession just as we have received it from such men – the holy Fathers; let us turn aside every innovation as being inspired by the devil, lest if by deed, by word, or by thought, one should dare to renounce faith in Christ, or voluntarily submit himself to eternal anathema for blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, as if He failed to speak perfectly in the Holy Scriptures and at the Ecumenical Councils. And so, to all innovators: whether heretic, or schismatic, voluntarily putting on cursing like a garment (Ps. 108:18); whether pope, or patriarch, or layman, or an angel from heaven – let him be anathema' (Letter of the Eastern Patriarchs, 1848).

However, the question of the calendar never completely disappeared from the view of the leaders of the Church. The results of a 1903 survey of Orthodox Church leaders done by Patriarch Joachim III of Constantinople were expressed in an Encyclical letter dated May 12, 1904, 'from an ecclesiastical point of view, we see no need to change the calendar.' The leaders stated that this reform would have extremely undesirable consequences upon the church life of Orthodox nations.

The enemies of the Orthodox Church understood that it was precisely the calendar that could, and should, serve as the vehicle for the unification and subjugation of the Orthodox Church to the heterodox West. In January of 1920, the Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople, Metropolitan Dorotheos (1919-1921), published an Encyclical letter entitled: *To the Christian Churches of the Whole World*.

In this ecumenistically inspired document, the call was made for all Christian Churches to unite, in spite of their dogmatic differences. It was written in a papal tone, as if on behalf of the entire Church. As a first step towards unity, the Encyclical proposed 'the adoption of a single calendar to facilitate the simultaneous celebration of the major feasts of Christendom.'²

In 1921, with help provided through the intrigues of the Entente Powers, the

Freemason and heretic Meletios Metaxakis was elevated to the throne in Constantinople. His main goal, in his own words, was the modern reform of Orthodoxy: 'I offer myself in service to the Church, in order to facilitate to the degree possible, from Her foremost throne, the development of closer friendly relations with the non-Orthodox Christian churches of the East and of the West, and to move forward the work of unification between them all.'

In 1923, Meletios called a conference in Constantinople, later renamed a Congress, which he falsely called 'pan-Orthodox.' It was attended by only nine persons: six bishops, one archimandrite, and two laymen. The goal of this conference consisted in the radical modernization of the entire structure of the Orthodox Church, specifically: the introduction of the new calendar, not necessarily the Gregorian, but one on which Christmas and the other immovable feasts would coincide with the calendar of the Catholics and Protestants; Pascha and all of its dependent feasts Metaxakis proposed to make immovable, i.e. to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ every year on the same calendar day; allowing a married episcopacy; allowing priests to marry a second time and permitting priests to marry after ordination; abbreviating services; shortening the fasts; and allowing the clergy to wear secular clothing, cut their hair and shave off their beards. This program was extremely similar to the program of the Living Church in Russia, and it is not surprising that Meletios recognized the Renovationists' Synod as 'the only legitimate organ of the Russian Orthodox Church.'

This was meant to be only the first phase of the calendar reform. The next phase called for the 'congress' to approve the new Paschalion, which was also supposed to coincide with the Roman reckoning. All of these renovationist reforms, previously nonsensical, became the origin of the intrusion of the modernistic heresy of ecumenism into Orthodox teaching.

Resolution of the ROCOR Sobor of Bishops:

'The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia sees the adoption of the new calendar as an error, which has introduced confusion into the life of the Church, and in the final analysis, as a cause of schism. For this reason, She did not in the past, does not now, nor intend in the future, to adopt it, and avoids concelebrating with new calendarists. On the question of the presence or absence of grace in the churches of the new calendar, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia does not consider Herself, or any other Local Church, to have the authority to make any such conclusive determination, since an absolute assessment of this issue can be made only by a duly convened and competent Ecumenical Council, with the indispensable participation of the free Church of Russia. +Metropolitan Philaret, September 12/25, 1974.'

The enemies of the Orthodox Church understood that the new style, i.e. the new calendar, could, and should, serve as the vehicle for the unification and subjugation of the Orthodox Church to the heterodox West. St. Theophan the Recluse used to say that between Orthodox Christians and the new calendarists 'there should be absolutely no prayerful communion whatsoever...'

In view of the fact that the 'new style,' as well as ecumenism itself, are weapons for the destruction of the Orthodox Church, and that it remains a dangerous and heretical innovation, the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church has...

Resolved:

The liturgical calendar of the Church, although it, like church ritual, enters into the domain of *oeconomia*, and has special significance in the life of the Church, remains the only vehicle for the visible expression of the Church's unity in our time of ecclesiastical divisions. For this reason, it cannot be changed from the Julian for any other.

Following the decisions of the pan-Orthodox councils of 1583, 1587, 1593, 1722, 1827, and 1848, et al., we condemn the papist calendar (or the so-called 'reformed Julian') as a heretical innovation, because the only purpose for its introduction into the Orthodox Church was, and remains, the implantation of the heresy of ecumenism, through facilitating common prayers with heretics.

We decisively condemn all concelebrations with the clergy of new calendarist jurisdictions, and we also recognize the attempts at receiving new calendarist parishes into the bosom of the Church, as happened in the ROCOR in the twentieth century, as unjustifiable.

At the present time, those who come to the Holy Church from the new calendarist ecumenistic communities should be received through the rejection of their heresy and anointing with Holy Chrism."

Heard:

The report of Igumen Theophan (Areskin) on the history of the rite of reception into the Orthodox Church:

"Your Eminence, Your Graces, God-beloved Archpastors, bless me to express my opinion on the foundation of the historical opinions and decisions of the holy Fathers of the Church on the baptism of heretics, which in ancient times were called Gnostics, since their teachings had little in common with Christianity, and these heretics were everywhere received into the Church through baptism.

The ancient tradition of the Church, going back to the teaching of the Apostles, but codified in the fourth century, declared all of the sacraments of the heretics, including baptism and ordination, to be invalid. This they clearly said in rules 47 and 68 of the Apostolic Canons: 'If a Bishop or Priest baptize anew anyone that has had a true baptism, or fail to baptize anyone that has been polluted by the impious, let him be deposed, on the ground that he is mocking the Cross and Death of the Lord and for failing to distinguish priests from pseudo-priests.' (rule 47) 'If any Bishop, or Priest, or Deacon accepts a second ordination from anyone, let him and the one who ordained him be deposed, unless it be established that his ordination has been performed by heretics. For those who have been baptized or ordained by such persons cannot possibly be either faithful Christians or clergymen.' (rule 68)

The appearance of the Montanist heresy in the third century again put the question of how to receive heretics before the Church, since the teaching of the Montanists coincided with the teaching of the Church. How should the baptism of the Montanists be viewed? In the third century, the local councils of Asia Minor (Iconium, Synadda), and of Northern Africa (Carthage, 220 A.D.) determined that they should be baptized, and the ordination of these heretics was not recognized as

being valid (Eusebius of Caesaria, *Church History*, book 7, chaps. 5 & 7).

Later on, the problem of how to receive heretics into the Church was further developed by arguments in the West between the Carthaginian and Roman Churches.

In the Roman Church, the schism of Novatus made its appearance, and in Africa, that of Novatian. The dogmatic teaching of the Novatian schismatics did not differ from that of the Church in any way (they broke off over a question involving church discipline on how to receive penitents back into the Church), however, the Novatians re-baptized those who came over to them from the Church. There was an especially large number of Novatians in Rome, and the Roman Bishops, hoping to attract them back to the Church, were lenient with them, receiving them through Confession. During the reign of Pope Stephen (254-257), the question was even raised about whether or not to receive the Novatian clergy 'in their orders.'

The Roman practice caused confusion in Africa. At the Council of Carthage in 255 A.D., eighteen bishops were asked if the baptism of heretics was valid. The council answered that it was not. This decision was confirmed by the Council of Carthage of 256 A.D. as well, and the head of the African Church, St. Cyprian of Carthage, sent Pope Stephen the protocols of the council with his rather heated commentary, in which he insisted upon the idea that heretics cannot have baptism. However, at the end of his commentary, St. Cyprian made an important explanation; namely, that he was not saying that his opinion should be the law, and that the rite of reception should be left up to the local bishop, for which he will have to answer to the Lord, 'In this matter we do not compel anyone, nor do we make it a law for anyone, because each president is free to govern his Church as he wills, having to give an account for his actions to the Lord' (Letter 59 to Pope Stephen). And so, according to the teaching of St. Cyprian, the question concerning the rite of reception into the Church is not a dogma of the faith per se, and is up to the discretion of the local bishop.

Pope Stephen refused to receive the ambassadors from Africa, and wrote letters to Africa and to the East demanding that all Churches adopt the Roman practice of receiving heretics through Confession (the laying-on of hands). However, these demands coming from Rome brought only amazement. St. Dionysios of Alexandria wrote to the Pope asking him not to upset the Church's peace, since the Church has Her councils with their own determinations about how to receive heretics.

In September of 256 A.D., St. Cyprian called 87 bishops to a council in Carthage for the express purpose of discussing the disciplinary practice of the reception of heretics. If heretics repent and wish to be joined to the Church, then it is necessary to receive them. But how? There were two points of view. One was that all heretics should be baptized, and the other was that some heretics could be received without baptizing them. The question about chrismating them did not come up since at that time chrismation was never done separately from baptism.

The council resolved: It is absolutely essential to baptize heretics. In doing so, the Church does not 're-baptize' but baptize.

The difference in the approach to the rite of reception was elicited by divergent ecclesiologies. Even as far back as then, church thinkers were beginning to

structure their thoughts according to the framework of Roman law, which gave rise later on to the teaching that in order for a sacrament to be valid, it was enough for its form to be correctly administered.

Pope Stephen considered that if the schismatics (i.e. those outside the Church) were Orthodox in their belief, then according to their belief, baptism was administered. But St. Cyprian taught that the sacraments can be performed only in the Church. If the heretics are not in the Church, it means that they have no baptism, since there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and 'outside of the Church there is no salvation.' If one should have the faith of the Church, but remain outside of the Church, then he cannot be saved. In baptism a man is cleansed from his sins by the action of grace, dying to his former life, is sanctified by the Spirit and by water, and is born into the Church. Baptism cannot be separated from the Spirit; where there is the Spirit, there is baptism, and where the Spirit is absent, there is no baptism. But neither can the Spirit be separated from the Church, or the Church from the Spirit. For this reason, only in the Church is the water of baptism capable of engendering rational sheep for the flock of Christ. Outside of the catholic Church, water is capable of giving birth to no one since, outside of the Church, water does not cleanse, but defile. Therefore, no one can be baptized outside of the Church. If we say that heretics have baptism, then we must say also that they have the other sacraments, i.e. the grace of the Holy Spirit acting to save outside of the Church. In this manner, the heretics would also have a Church, meaning that there would be two Churches of Christ, which is impossible.

On the other hand, one must not think that the heretics have sacraments, but that they are a kind of imperfect, damaged, or incomplete sacraments. St. Cyprian taught that there is no such thing as an incomplete sacrament, insofar as, the 'Holy Spirit is not given in measure, but is poured out fully upon the believer.' The sacraments are either performed in their entirety, or are not performed at all. Each sacrament performed is complete by virtue of the gift of God's grace inherent in it. Grace cannot be incomplete, and it is for this reason that it is impossible for a sacrament to be incomplete.

And so, in the third century, the Church yet again confirmed its teaching that heretics receive the grace of baptism only within the Church, since the grace of the sacraments can only exist within the Church. This is a general principle, and is the dogmatic foundation for any rite of reception. However, the form of the rite of reception can take different shapes, according to the bishop's discretion, and is determined by the dictates of church *oeconomia*.

In the following century, when Arianism held sway, St. Basil, in his First Canonical Epistle to Amphilochios, spoke about this general principle, as well as *oeconomia*. According to St. Basil, there are the following groups outside of the Church: heresies, schisms and self-styled assemblages. Heretics must be received by baptism, but the others can be received through Confession. But if schismatics are particularly impious, for example, the Cathari, then it would be beneficial for them to be received by baptism as well. On the other hand, if the interests of the Church require a softer approach to the question of the rite of reception, then even St. Basil considered it possible to receive heretics into the Church without requiring them to undergo true baptism (i.e. he, as today's ecumenist theologians would say, 'recognized' the baptism of heretics: 'Inasmuch, however, as it has

seemed best to some in the regions of Asia, out of economy to many, to accept their baptism, let it be accepted¹⁵).

The correctness of the form in which the sacrament was administered was also important, but not absolutely so. If the baptism of heretics and schismatics was performed in the same manner as in the Church, then it may have been permissible to forego repeating it, however, the correctness of the form of baptism in itself did not impart to heretics and schismatics the right to enter into the Church without true baptism. For this reason, the Fathers did sometimes permit the reception of heretics into the Church without the correct form of baptism, through simple Confession. The classical example of this is the canon of St. Basil that we cited above, which permitted, through *oconomia*, the reception of the Pepusians, who had been baptized in the names of Montanus and Priscilla, through simple Confession. Another example was the practice accepted in Byzantium in antiquity of receiving Latins, who had been baptized by pouring, through Confession.

And yet, here is an example of when correctness in the form of the baptism of heretics was completely rejected. The 19th rule of the First Ecumenical Council determined that, upon entering the catholic Church, the followers of Paul of Samosata were to be baptized over again, even though in his communities baptism was performed in exactly the same way as in the catholic Church. St. Athanasius the Great bore witness that during baptism they employed the Trinitarian formula (Sermon II Against the Arians, 43. PG 26, 237). There were also cases when schismatics with the proper form of baptism were baptized anew by the Church, e.g. the Cathari (Novatians), who, according to the canon of St. Basil the Great, had to be baptized.

And so, often the Councils, in their determinations, did not require repeating the baptism of heretics, but did require baptizing schismatics. This once again confirms the general church principle concerning the relevance of which form the rite of reception takes and the absolute gracelessness of heretics and schismatics alike.

Inasmuch as heretics are outside the Church, no sacraments performed by them can be considered by the Church to be valid. From this it can be seen that the Church never recognized the ordinations done by heretics.

1. Rule 68 of the Apostolic Canons forbids recognizing the ordinations performed by heretics. Zonara explains this rule as follows: 'There is no danger in repeating the ordinations done by heretics.' This is how they acted in Africa (Letter 59 of St. Cyprian of Carthage to Pope Stephen), and in Asia Minor. This rule was confirmed by the Council of Carthage in 256 A.D., 'The rectors of the devil dare to perform the eucharist... and for this reason those from among them who seem to have been ordained should be considered as simple laymen.'
2. However, in the fourth century, the Fathers of the Church seem to approach this question differently, namely, when they decided to accept Arian clergy who were returning to the Church through confession of the Orthodox faith, after anathematizing their heresy, but without repeating of the rite of ordination upon them. The decision of the Council of Alexandria of 362 A.D., which was presided over by St. Athanasius the Great,

is well known: those who in simplicity and in ignorance had received ordination from the Arians were received in their ranks, after signing the Nicene Creed and anathematizing Arianism. However, their heresiarchs were not received as clergy at all, but as laymen. As Blessed Jerome related, the Council received them in their ranks 'not because those who had once been heretics could possibly be bishops, but insofar as it could be determined that those who were being received had not been heretical in their beliefs.' (Bl. Jerome, Works [in Russian] vol. 4, p. 84). This practice reflected the general attempt on the part of the Fathers of the Church to break up the dominance of the Arians and attract as many as possible of the heretics back to the Church. However, later on, after the Council of Antioch of 379 A.D., presided over by St. Meletios of Antioch, during which the Orthodox in the East successfully aligned themselves with St. Meletios and the neo-Nicene theology of the Cappadocian Saints, the Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council, in 381 A.D., made a stricter decision: to reject the ordinations of the Arian clergy, and to receive lay people from the Arians, Macedonians and Apollinarians by anointing them with Holy Chrism alone, and not repeating their baptisms (Second Ecum. Council rule #7, Sixth Ecum. Council rule #95).

3. The ordinations of the Nestorians (former Orthodox clergy) were not accepted, but the baptisms that they had performed were not repeated (Third Ecum. Council rules 1,2,4 and 5).
4. Concerning heretics who voluntarily went into heresy and later repented, St. Athanasius the Great (Letter to Rufianus) and St. Theophilus of Alexandria (Epistle to Ammunus) ordered that they should be received as lay people, and that their former positions should be given to Orthodox clergymen. Albeit St. Athanasius softened this rule for those who fell into heresy by necessity but did not defend it; he ordered that they should be received in their ranks.
5. The Second Ecumenical Council in its rule #4 declined to accept the ordination of Maximus the Cynic and those ordained by him: 'neither was Maximus a bishop at any time, nor is he now, nor those appointed by him,' although Maximus had been ordained by legitimate bishops, and the baptisms performed by them were accepted, for those ordained by him were not re-baptized (Acts of the Ecumenical Councils [in Russian] vol. 4, p. 93).

And so, the Fathers of the Church did not recognize the ordinations performed by heretical bishops, and re-ordained heretical clergymen, but they did not repeat the baptisms that had been performed by these heretical clergymen.

In this manner, if a clergyman who had been baptized and ordained by a heretical bishop comes into the Church, his ordination is not to be accepted, but the baptisms that he performed do not necessarily need to be repeated.

In the twentieth century, the idea of '*cheirotesia*' appeared in church practice, which literally means a 'lesser laying-on-of-hands.' This word is derived from the word *cheirotithimi*, which can be found in some canonical texts.

And so, rule #8 of the First Ecumenical Council stipulates that Novatianist clergy are to be received by laying-on-of-hands. But this does not mean simple ordination since there would be no reason to ordain a Novatianist bishop to be a bishop of the catholic Church just to assign him to the position of a priest, as does the First Ecumenical Council in Nicea: *'Wherever they are the only ones found to have been ordained, whether in villages or in cities, they shall remain in the same habit (or order). But wherever there is a Bishop of the Catholic Church, where some of them [cathari] are joining it, it is obvious that, as the Bishop of the Church will keep the dignity of bishop, the one called a bishop among the so-called Cathari shall have the honor of a Priest, unless it should seem better to the Bishop that he should share in the honor of the name. But if this does not please him, he shall devise a position either of a chorepiscopus or of a priest, with the object of having him seem to be wholly in the clergy, or else there would then be two bishops in the same city.'*

Aristinus interpreted the expression χειροθετούμενους αὐτοὺς in light of the seventh rule of the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (381 A.D.), i.e. anointing with Holy Chrism. On the other hand, one could also understand this word in its literal sense as meaning either laying-on-of-hands or blessing. That was the interpretation given to this term by St. Tarasius of Constantinople at the Seventh Ecumenical Council. This is how the contemporary understanding of the word *cheirotesia* came to be, i.e. the reception of repentant heretic clergy without repeating over them the rite of ordination, but just through laying-on-of-hands.

And so, the form for the rite of reception was determined by higher church authority – either by a bishop or by a sobor of bishops in any given area. Depending upon different conditions, it could take different forms. For example, the Roman Church re-ordained Donatists, but the African Church, as the result of a severe shortage of clergy, opted to accept Donatist clergy in their ranks (Rule 79 of the Council of Carthage and interpretation of Balsamon). Blessed Augustine accepted some Donatists in their ranks, but others as laymen. In the East, Arians were re-ordained, but in the West, at the Council of Toledo of 589 A.D., eight Arian bishops were triumphantly received, together with their Metropolitan and a host of lower clergy.

Apparently, the Fathers took into consideration not only what the heretics taught, but also the objectives of the church politics of the day. Only in this way can it be explained why the councils in some cases showed the maximum of leniency in receiving into the Church heretics whose teaching differed significantly from the teaching of the catholic Church, and extreme strictness towards schismatics whose teaching differed very little from that of the Orthodox Church. Only in this way can it be explained why the decisions concerning the reception of the exact same heretics or schismatics could change from council to council, notwithstanding the great respect which conciliar decisions usually enjoyed.

And so, the theology of the entire Church is one – the theology of St. Cyprian. For this reason, there were never any conflicts between the practices of the various Churches. The fundamental element that they all had in common was not the rite of reception, but the understanding that among heretics there is no grace. This fully explains why there were so many different practices in receiving people into the Church, whether in different Churches or in the same Church at different times.

According to the Encyclical of 1935 (confirmed in 1950), believers who were involved in the new calendarist schism were received through repentance, together with confession of faith, during which they were required to denounce this innovation of the new calendarists and declare the new calendar church to be schismatic. Those who had been baptized by the modernists were to be received by anointing with Holy Chrism of Orthodox origin. Clergy were to be received through cheirotesia.”

Resolved:

To accept the report of Igumen Theophan (Areskin) with gratitude and express appreciation for the efforts he expended for the glory of the Church of God.

From ancient times, the holy Orthodox Church has received into Her canonical communion repentant heretics and schismatics through one of three sacraments – baptism, chrismation or confession, depending on the degree of separation from Orthodoxy. Following this apostolic and catholic tradition of the holy Fathers, the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church,

Resolved:

1. Recognizing that the clergy and laity of communities involved with the ecumenical movement, and belonging to the family of churches known as “world Orthodoxy,” are outside of the saving boundaries of the one true Church of Christ, and are implicated in the confession of these blasphemous heresies, to establish for them, if they desire to repent and unite themselves to the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, a special rite of reception, through which they are to be accepted into the Church.
2. Clergymen and laymen coming to the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church from the ecumenical heresy or the Sergianist schism are to be received through the sacrament of Chrismation, excepting those persons who cannot show proof that they were baptized. In the case of these latter, they are to be received by baptism. Baptism is also to be performed upon those persons who come to our Church stating that the form of baptism that they received while in their heretical communities does not correspond to canonical requirements, i.e. was not performed by triple immersion (in special cases mentioned in church rules, baptism by pouring is permissible). In questionable or unclear cases, the question of whether to receive an individual by baptism or by chrismation is to be decided by the diocesan Bishop.
3. Clergymen admitted to the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church through the sacrament of Chrismation are to be received in their ranks. They are to undergo a probationary period before they are permanently assigned. The clerical rank of clergymen who are received through the sacrament of Baptism is not recognized.
4. Clergymen joining the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church through the sacrament of Chrismation are to have cheirotesia performed upon them, including the prayer from the sacrament of Ordination: “The grace of God...,” in those cases where the said clergyman was ordained in his

former ecclesiastical community after the adoption of the present resolution. The requirement to undergo cheirotesia for those coming from the ecumenical communities of “world Orthodoxy” after the adoption of this resolution, will serve as further evidence that they have left their former communities precisely because they no longer consider them to be part of the Church.

5. Following the principle of œconomia, to consider it possible to receive clergy and lay people who wish to join our Church from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia through the sacrament of Confession.
6. As concerns receiving a bishop into the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, who formerly was outside the canonical confines of the Church, such cases are to be decided individually by a sobor of our Bishops.
7. To establish a special liturgical rite for receiving those who desire from the ecumenist and Sergianist heresies into the Church of Christ. To employ this rite when receiving clergy and lay people into the Church through the sacrament of Chrismation. In all other cases stipulated by the present resolution adopted at this Sobor, to limit the rite of reception to the sacraments of Baptism or Confession.
8. Bishops and priests of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church who dare to violate the resolutions adopted at this Sobor by making the rite of reception for clergy and lay people who wish join the Church from the ecumenistic communities (i.e. the so-called churches) of “world Orthodoxy” easier or harder, are liable to canonical punishment as the Synod of Bishops shall deem appropriate (in the case of priests) or the Sobor of Bishops (in the case of Bishops).

Heard:

The proposed rite of reception “How to receive into the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church those coming from the heresies of ecumenism and Sergianism.”

“First, let him who repenteth be carefully examined concerning his errors by the Bishop or the Priest. Then, let him explain to him why these beliefs be erroneous, and let him instruct and confirm him in the right faith. After finishing the examination and instructive discourse, let him order him to confess his sins, whichever he remembereth, from his youth up. The Priest, vested in his epitachelion and phelonion, saith:

O God our Savior, Who desireth that all men be saved and come to knowledge of the truth, accept Thy servant who now converteth from his heretical delusion, and vouchsafe unto him the seal of Divine Chrism and the communion of Thy most pure Body and Blood. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory together with Thy co-beginningless Father and Thy most Holy Spirit unto ages of ages. Amen.

Taking the holy Chrism, he anointeth him according to the order of those being baptized, making the sign of the Cross on his forehead, eyes, nostrils, lips, both ears, hands, breast, between the shoulder blades, and knees saying: The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. And after anointing him, he saith the following prayer over his head (from the rite of reception of those fallen away of Patriarch Methodios):

“Let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy.

O Lord God almighty, Who didst fill Thy disciples with the grace of Thy most Holy Spirit, and hast turned this Thy servant away from the path of delusion and hast brought him to Thy Faith, and hast vouchsafed unto him the fragrance of Thy Holy Spirit through anointing with this holy Chrism, do Thou also preserve him in Thy holiness, grant unto him to walk in accordance with Thy will, and vouchsafe unto him, and unto us, to experience the delight of Thy fearsome Mysteries: and preserving right faith in Thee, make him worthy of Thy heavenly kingdom, through the grace of Thy Christ, with Whom are due unto Thee glory, honor and worship, together with Thy most Holy and good and life-creating Spirit, both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

And taking the sponge, he wipes off the holy Chrism, and immediately: Glory: Both now: and the dismissal. And at the Divine Liturgy he imparteth unto him the communion of the Holy Mysteries."

Resolved:

To approve and adopt the proposed rite of reception "How to receive into the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church those coming from the heresies of ecumenism and Sergianism" without amendment.

Heard:

The foreword of the Synodicon read on the feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy on the first Sunday of Great Lent:

"We have received from the Church of God, that upon this day we owe yearly thanksgiving to God along with an exposition of the dogmas of piety and the overturning of the impieties of evil. Following therefore the sayings of the prophets, honoring the exhortations of the apostles, and being instructed by the histories of the Gospels, we celebrate this day of consecration. For Esaias says: 'Be consecrated to God, ye islands,' intimating the churches from the nations. The churches being not simply the edifices and the embellishments of the temples, but rather the congregation of the pious therein, and those who there serve the Divinity with hymns and doxologies. The Apostle advises the same thing, exhorting us, 'to walk in newness of life' and that the 'new creation in Christ' be renewed. So too, the oracles of the Lord prophesied our condition. 'The consecration,' they say, 'was in Jerusalem, and it was winter;' that is, either a spiritual winter because of the storms of bloody murder and tumult which the nation of the Jews raised against our common Savior, or that winter which troubles the bodily senses by making the air colder. For indeed, there came upon us a winter, not an ordinary one, but one of truly great evil, brimming over with harshness; but there blossomed forth the first season, the spring of God's grace, in which we have come together to give thanks for the harvest of good things, or as we would say from the psalms, 'Summer and spring hast Thou fashioned, be mindful of this Thy creation.' For verily, those enemies who reproached the Lord and utterly dishonored His holy worship in the holy icons, were both arrogant and high-minded in impieties, and were cast down by the God of marvels, and He leveled to the ground their insolent apostasy. Nor did He overlook the voice of those crying to Him: 'Remember, O Lord, the reproach of Thy servant which I have endured in my bosom from many nations; wherewith Thine enemies have reproached, O Lord, wherewith they have reproached the recompense of Thy Christ.' The recompense of Christ is those who have been purchased

by His death and who have believed in Him, both by the preaching of the word and by the representation in icons, whereby the redeemed know the great work of His *oeconomia* both the Cross and all His sufferings and miracles both before the Cross and after it; from which the imitation of His sufferings passes over unto the apostles and thence to the martyrs, and descending from them to the confessors and ascetics. This reproach wherewith the enemies of the Lord reproached, wherewith they reproached the recompense of His Christ, was remembered by God, Who was besought by His own compassion, and Who yielded to the prayers of His Mother, and moreover His apostles and all His saints who, with Him, were rendered of no account by the insolent defamation of the holy icons, so that even as the saints suffered in the flesh, so might they, as it were, suffer with Him the insults directed against the holy icons God then wrought later that which had been counseled today, and He subsequently brought about that which He had previously performed; previously, because after many years during which the holy icons were spurned and dishonored, He re-established true piety. But now, for a second time, after a short thirty years of harassment, He has delivered us unworthy ones from adversity, redeeming us from those who afflicted us, and establishing the free proclamation of piety, the steadfastness of the worship of icons, and this Festival which brings all of us salvation. For in the icons we see the sufferings of our Master for us – the Cross, the grave, Hades slain and pillaged – the contests of the martyrs, the crowns, that very salvation which our First Prize-giver and Contest-master and Crown-bearer wrought in the midst of the earth. This festival we celebrate today; we rejoice together and are glad with prayers and supplicatory processions, and we cry out with psalms and hymns:

What God is as great as our God? Thou art our God, who alone worketh wonders.

For Thou didst put to scorn those who slighted Thy Glory, and didst show forth as cowards and fugitives those who were audacious and impudent against the icons.

But thanksgiving unto God and the Master's trophy of victory against the adversaries is proper here; as for the contests and struggles against the iconoclasts, another discourse written more fully will declare them. Therefore, as a kind of rest after the desert sojourn, on the journey to reach the noetic Jerusalem, and not only in imitation of Moses, but also in obedience to the Divine Command, we considered it right as well as obligatory to inscribe on the hearts of our brethren, as on a pillar constructed of large fitted stones smoothed for the reception of inscriptions, both the blessings which are due to those who keep the law, and also the curses under which transgressors put themselves. Wherefore we say thus:

1. To them who confess with word, mouth, heart, and mind, and with both writing and icons the incarnate advent of God the Word: *Eternal Memory* (3)
2. To them who acknowledge in Christ one Hypostasis, with different essences, and attribute to the one Hypostasis both the created and uncreated, the visible and invisible, the passible and impassible, the circumscribable and uncircumscribable; and then who apply on the one hand, to the Divine essence uncreatedness and the like, and, on the other hand, acknowledge with word and icons that the human nature has the other at-

- tributes accompanying circumscription: *Eternal Memory* (3)
3. To them who believe and preach, that is proclaim, doctrines by means of writings and deeds by means of forms, and link them in a single proclamation, whereby the truth is affirmed in word and icon: *Eternal Memory* (3)
 4. To them who with words sanctify their lips, and their hearers by means of those words, and who both know and preach that the eyes of the beholders are similarly sanctified through them, the mind is lifted to God-knowledge, as well as by the divine temples also, the sacred vessels, and the other precious ornaments: *Eternal Memory* (3)
 5. To them who understand that the rod and the tablets, the ark and the lampstand, and the table and the censer, from aforetime depicted and prefigured the all-holy Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, and that these things prefigured her and not that she became these things; for she was born a maiden and remained a virgin after giving birth to God, and that for this reason she is represented as a maiden in the icons rather than obscurely depicted by types: *Eternal Memory* (3)
 6. To them who know and accept and believe concerning those things which the choir of the prophets saw, and narrated, that the Divinity Himself formed and imprinted these prophetic visions, and to those who hold by the venerable icons, and that fast both the written and unwritten tradition which extends from the apostles to the fathers, and. who for this cause depict and honor holy things in icons: *Eternal Memory* (3)
 7. To them who understand Moses saying, 'Take heed to yourselves, that in the day when the Lord God spoke in Horeb on the mountain, ye heard the sound of words, but ye saw no likeness,' and who know to answer correctly that if we saw anything, truly did we see it, as the son of thunder has taught us, 'that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and which our hands have touched, concerning the Word of life, to these things do we bear witness;' and again as the other disciples of the Word say, 'that we both ate with Him and. drank with Him, not only before the Passion, but even after the Passion and Resurrection;' to those therefore, who have been strengthened, by God to distinguish between the commandment in the Law and the teaching which came with Grace, and between that which was invisible in the former, but both visible and tangible in the latter, and who for this cause depict and worship in icons these visible and tangible realities: *Eternal Memory* (3)

As the prophets have seen, as the apostles have taught, as the Church has received, as the teachers have set forth in dogmas, as the whole world has understood, as Grace has shone forth, as the truth was demonstrated, as falsehood was banished, as wisdom was emboldened, as Christ has awarded; thus do we believe, thus we speak, thus we preach Christ our true God and His saints, honoring them in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in temples, and in icons, worshipping and respecting the One as God and Master, and honoring the others, and apportioning relative worship to them, because of our common Master for they are

His genuine servants. **This is the Faith of the Apostles, this is the Faith of the Fathers, this is the Faith of the Orthodox, this Faith hath established the whole world!**

We now take occasion to acclaim fraternally and with filial affection the preachers of piety unto the glory and honor of Godliness, for which they struggled, and we say: To Germanus, Tarasius, Nicephorus and Methodius who are truly high priests of God and champions and teachers of Orthodoxy: *Eternal Memory (3)*.

To Ignatius, Photios, Stephen, Anthony, and Nicholas the most holy and Orthodox patriarchs: *Eternal Memory (3)*.

All that was written or spoken against the holy Patriarchs Germanus, Tarasius, Nicephorus, and Methodius, Ignatius, Photios, Stephen, Anthony and Nicholas: *Anathema (3)*.

All that was innovated and enacted, or that after this shall be enacted, outside of Church tradition and the teaching and institution of the holy and ever-memorable Fathers: *Anathema (3)*.

To Efstymios, Theophilos, Emilianos, the ever-memorable Confessors and Archbishops: *Eternal Memory (3)*.

To Theophylactos, Peter, Michael and Joseph, the blessed Metropolitans: *Eternal Memory (3)*.

To John, Nicholas, and George, the thrice-glorious Confessors and Archbishops, and all the Bishops who were of one mind with them: *Eternal Memory (3)*.

To Theodore, the all-righteous Abbot of the Studium, to Isaacios the Wonderworker and Ioannikios the most prophetic: *Eternal Memory (3)*.

To Symeon the most righteous stylite, Hilarion, the most righteous Archimandrite and Abbot of the Monastery of the Dalmatians and Theophanes, the most righteous Abbot of the Monastery of the Great Field: *Eternal Memory (3)*.

These acclamations, like blessings of fathers, are inherited by us, their sons, who zealously emulate their piety; but likewise do the curses seize upon those paricides and disdainers of the Master's commandments. Wherefore, we in unison, since we constitute the plenitude of piety, lay upon the impious the curse which they have put upon themselves:

To them who in words accept the *oconomia* of the Incarnation of the Word of God, but will not tolerate its representation by icons, and thus in word they make a pretense of accepting, but in fact deny our salvation: *Anathema (3)*.

To them who persist in the heresy of denying icons, or rather the apostasy of denying Christ, and are not counseled by the Mosaic law to be led to their salvation, nor are they convinced to return to piety by the apostolic teachings, nor are they induced by patristic exhortations and explanations to abandon their deception, nor are they persuaded by the agreement of the Churches of God throughout the whole world, but once for all have joined themselves to the portion of the Jews and Greeks; for those things wherewith the latter directly blaspheme the prototype, the former likewise have not blushed to insult in His icon Him that is depicted therein; therefore, to them who are incorrigibly possessed by this deception, and have their ears covered towards every Divine word and spiritual teaching,

as already being putrefied members, and having cut themselves off from the common body of the Church: *Anathema* (3).

To them who consider the declarations of Divine Scripture against the idols as referring to the venerable icons of Christ our God and His saints: *Anathema* (3).

To them who knowingly have communion with those who insult and dishonor the venerable icons: *Anathema* (3).

To them who say that the Christians worship icons as if they were gods (i.e. Protestants, Baptists, Adventists, Pentecostals, improperly-called Evangelists, Charismatics, et al.): *Anathema* (3).

If anyone does not worship our Lord Jesus Christ depicted in the icons according to His humanity, let him be: *Anathema* (3).

To them who profess piety yet shamelessly, or rather impiously, introduce into the Orthodox and Catholic Church the ungodly doctrines of the Greeks concerning the souls of men, heaven and earth, and the rest of creation: *Anathema* (3).

To them who prefer the foolish so-called wisdom of the secular philosophers and follow its proponents, and who accept the metempsychosis (transmigration) of human souls or that, like the brute animals, the soul is utterly destroyed and departs into nothingness, and who thus deny the resurrection, judgment, and the final recompense for the deeds committed during life: *Anathema* (3).

To them who undertake Greek studies, not only for purposes of education, but also follow after their vain opinions, and are so thoroughly convinced of their truth and validity that they shamelessly introduce them and teach them to others, sometimes secretly and sometimes openly: *Anathema* (3).

To them who say that in the last and general resurrection men will be raised up and judged in other bodies and not in those wherewith they passed this present life, inasmuch as these were corrupted and destroyed: *Anathema* (3).

To them who accept and transmit the vain Greek teachings that there is a pre-existence of souls and teach that all things were not produced and did not come into existence out of non-being, that there is an end to the torment or a restoration again of creation and of human affairs, meaning by such teachings that the Kingdom of the Heavens is entirely perishable and fleeting, whereas the Kingdom is eternal and indissoluble as Christ our God Himself taught and delivered to us, and as we have ascertained from the entire Old and New Scripture, that the torment is unending and the Kingdom everlasting to them who by such teachings both destroy themselves and become agents of eternal condemnation to others: *Anathema* (3).

To Arius, the first to fight against God, and the leader of every heresy: *Anathema* (3).

To Paul of Samosata and Theodotion, his like-minded confidant, and to the mindless Nestorios, the evil-minded Euty chius and Sabellios: *Anathema* (3).

To them who do not worship the Cross of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ as the salvation and glory of the whole world and as that which annulled and utterly destroyed the machinations and weapons of the enemy, and thereby redeemed creation from the idols and manifested victory to the world, but hold the

Cross to be a tyrannical weapon; to such men: *Anathema* (3).

To them who do not accept that the sacrifice which is offered daily by those who have received from Christ the priestly service of the Divine Mysteries, is in fact offered to the Holy Trinity, and thereby contradict the sacred and divine fathers, Basil and Chrysostom, and other Godbearing fathers who all agree in both their words and writings: *Anathema* (3).

To them who attempt by whatever means to introduce a new controversy or teaching into the ineffable Oeconomy of our Incarnate Saviour and God, and who seek to penetrate the way wherein God the Word was united to the human substance and for what reason He deified the flesh He assumed, and who, by using dialectical terminology of nature and adoption, try to dispute about the transcendent innovation of His divine and human natures: *Anathema* (3).

To them who say that the flesh of the Lord is exalted by this union and that it transcends every honor since by this complete union it became immutably one with God, without change, without confusion, and unaltered by reason of the hypostatic union, inseparably and continuously abiding in God the Word Who assumed it, and that it is honored with a glory equal to His and worshipped with one worship and is established on the royal and divine Throne at the right hand of God the Father, and is endowed with the attributes of Divinity, while the properties of the two natures are preserved: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To them who accept and preserve the Symbol of Faith unchanged, without any addition or subtraction, as given from above by the Holy Spirit: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To them who confess that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone directly, just as the Son is begotten by the Father alone directly, as God the Word Himself said to the Apostles "When the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, [even] the Spirit of truth, Which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me.": *Eternal Memory* (3).

To them who philosophize contrary to our Lord Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, from the Son straightforwardly and directly, from the Father indirectly, and that the Son is a close source of the Spirit, but the Father is a farther one, and introduce steps and grades of cause in the simple and indivisible Trinity: *Anathema* (3).

To them who dogmatize that the Holy Spirit proceeds and receives Its being from the Father and the Son as from one origin and source, and who thereby fall into the heresy of Sabellios: *Anathema* (3).

To them who confess the Father to be the sole source of the super-essential Divinity, and who teach that the Son and the Holy Spirit have Their being from the Father straightforwardly and directly, like two flowers from one root, or two rays from one sun, or two streams from one spring, according to the divine Gregory of Nyssa: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To them who attack the divine Fathers and philosophize contrary to Photios, the most holy Patriarch, Theophylact the Bulgarian, Euthymius Zigaben, John Furnis the Abbot of Mt. Gan, Nicholas of Methoni, Mark of Ephesus, and the other leaders of piety, and who slander them by calling them destroyers of the Orthodox Faith: *Anathema* (3).

To them who offer azymes, having no yeast or salt, and thereby debase the incarnation of God the Word, and symbolically defend the heresy of Appolinarios, who opined that the Lord came to us in a kind of heavenly body, soulless and mindless (for the yeast is an image of the soul, and the salt is an image of the mind), and came out of Maria as if in a vision, and who teach that this bread is separate from the offering breads for the Saints, just as this heavenly body is not of one essence with the Saints, therefore to those who offer unleavened bread and thereby deny the incarnation of God the Word: *Anathema* (3).

To them who debase the honorable and holy Ecumenical Councils and despise the sacred and divine canons of our blessed Fathers, whom the Church of God reveres, and by whom She is led to the true worship of God: *Anathema* (3).

Again, to those who think and say that every natural power and energy of the Tri-hypostatic Godhead is created, and thereby are constrained to believe that the very essence of God is also created, since, according to the Saints, created energy evidences a created nature, whereas uncreated energy designates an uncreated nature; to these men who, in consequence, are in danger now of falling into complete atheism, who have affixed the mythology of the Greeks and the worship of creatures to the pure and spotless faith of the Christians, and who do not confess, in accord with the divinely-inspired theologies of the Saints and the pious mind of the Church, that every natural power and energy of the Tri-hypostatic Godhead is uncreated: *Anathema* (3).

Again, to those same men who think and say that the name 'Godhead' or 'Divinity' can be applied only to the essence of God, but who do not confess in accord with the divinely-inspired theologies of the Saints and the pious mind of the Church, that this appellation equally pertains to the Divine energy, and that thus one Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is by all means still professed, whether one apply the name 'Godhead' to Their essence, or to Their energy, as the divine expounders of the mysteries have instructed us: *Anathema* (3).

To them who confess the light of the Transfiguration of the Lord to be created: *Anathema* (3).

To those who confess one Tri-hypostatic and almighty God, Who is not only uncreated with respect to His essence and His Hypostases, but also with respect to His energy; to those who declare that the energy of God proceeds from His Divine essence, but proceeds inseparably, and who thus indicate by the term 'procession' the ineffable distinction between the Divine essence and energy, and by the term 'inseparably' their supernatural unity, even as the Holy Sixth Ecumenical Council proclaimed: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To those who confess that even as God is uncreated and unoriginate with respect to His essence, so is He uncreated and unoriginate with respect to His energy (unoriginate in the sense that the Divine energy is timeless); and to those who declare that God is in every way incommunicable and incomprehensible with respect to His essence, but is communicated to the worthy (Christians) with respect to His Divine and deifying energy, as the theologians of the Church profess: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To those who confess that the light which shone forth ineffably upon the mountain at the Lord's Transfiguration is unapproachable light, boundless light, an

incomprehensible effusion of the Deity's resplendence, unutterable glory, the transcendently perfect and praeter-perfect and timeless glory of the Godhead, the glory of the Son, the Kingdom of God, true and lovable beauty which encompasses the Divine and blessed nature, the glory natural to God, and the Divinity of the Father and the Spirit flashing forth in the Only-begotten Son, as our divine and God-bearing Fathers have said, Athanasios the Great and Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, and moreover John of Damascus, and who therefore maintain this supremely Divine light to be uncreated: *Eternal Memory (3)*.

To them who persecute the Church of Christ, impious apostates, who have raised their hands against sacred ministers of God, trampled upon the holy things, destroyed the temples of God, tortured our brethren and defiled our homeland, and to those who succeed them in power: *Anathema (3)*.

To heretic Theosophus, who dared to say and to teach most mindlessly that our Lord Jesus Christ did not come down from heaven and become incarnate one time only, but was incarnate many times, and to those who deny that the true Wisdom of the Father is His Only-begotten Son, and contrary to the holy Scriptures and the teachings of the holy Fathers, seek wisdom elsewhere: *Anathema (3)*.

To Freemasons, occultists, spiritualists, sorcerers and all who do not believe in the one God, but worship demons, and do not humbly submit their lives to God, but call upon demons through magic seek to divine the future: *Anathema (3)*.

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 (3)*.

**Proposed Resolution
of the Sacred Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church
"Concerning the adoption and addition of new 'Anathemas' and 'Eternal
Memories' to the Synodicon of Orthodoxy read on the feast of the Tri-
umph of Orthodoxy on the first Sunday of Great Lent."**

The Sobor of Bishops acknowledges the great harm inflicted upon the Church of Christ by the new schismatics/Sergianists, followers of Metropolitan Sergius, the former Metropolitan of Nizhegorod, from whose ranks the tyrant Stalin constituted a schismatic confederation in 1943, the so-called Moscow Patriarchate, who also tried to introduce into the Church of Christ the new calendar for the purpose of facilitating union with the impious heretics, papists, and Protestants, Meletios, the former Patriarch of Constantinople and Alexandria, Chrysostomos, the former Archbishop of Athens, and their followers, who, set up their new calendar schismatic confederation, and quickly raced to embrace the new heresy of ecumenism,

praying together with the heterodox, and even non-Christians and pagans, and have turned thousands of Orthodox Christians away from the path of salvation, and even now, under the mask of Orthodoxy, conceal the poison of this pernicious heresy, and seduce many people who are searching for God.

For this reason, submitting to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who commanded that mortal sinners, and those who have fallen into the severe illness of heresy, are to be exposed before the whole Church as heathens and publicans (Matt. 18:17), and following the example of the holy Fathers who extolled the memories of those who defended the Orthodox Faith and the Orthodox Church from the incursions of heretics and schismatics at the holy Councils, the sacred Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church deems it necessary to once again pronounce and confirm the anathemas against the pernicious heresies of Sergianism and ecumenism.

Against the heresy of Sergianism

To those who mindlessly uphold the renovationist heresy of Sergianism, and who teach that it is possible for the earthly existence of the Church of God to be grounded upon denial of the truth of Christ, and who assert that service to the atheistic authorities, and obedience to their atheistic dictates, which trample upon the sacred canons, the traditions of the holy Fathers and the divine dogmas, and seek to destroy Christianity completely can somehow save the Church of Christ, and who esteem the Antichrist and his servants and his forerunners and all of those in his service as having legitimate authority from God, and who blaspheme the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia: *Anathema (3)*.

To those who confess that not men save the Church, and that agreement with Her enemies brings Her no benefit, but that the Church saves men by the power of Christ our God, and who struggle against those who would enslave the Church of God: *Eternal Memory (3)*.

To Tikhon, the most holy Patriarch of Moscow, the Confessor, and the illustrious Martyrs and Confessors, Peter of Krutitsa, Cyril of Kazan, Agathangel of Yaroslavl, Joseph of Petrograd, Victor of Glazov, Dimitry of Gdovsk, Alexis of Voronezh, Nektary of Yaransk, Seraphim of Uglich, and to all of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Church of Russia: *Eternal Memory (3)*.

Against the heresy of ecumenism

To 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: *Anathema (3)*.

To the originators and new heresiarchs of the ecumenical heresy, Meletios of Constantinople, Chrysostom of Athens, Nikodim of Leningrad, Dimitry and Athenogoros of Constantinople, and to all of one mind with them, who with bared

head confess the heresy of ecumenism together with the other heresies of Luther and Calvin, and who audaciously rebel against piety, slandering and blaspheming our holy Fathers and the holy Councils, thereby mocking the Canons of the Church: *Anathema* (3).

To those who confess, in accordance with the pious wisdom of the holy Fathers and Councils, that the Church of Christ is as a single pure dove, which has never been divided, but forever remains whole and is unwavering, no matter how many heretics and schismatics might attack Her, who moreover are fallen away from Her in shame without having any possibility of disturbing Her, and who believe in One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, in which alone salvation may be found, and who confess that outside of the Orthodox Church there is no salvation for anyone: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To the holy Confessors of Orthodoxy, who struggled against the modernists, Chrysostomos, Bishop of Florina, Matthew, Bishop of Bresthena, Glykerios, Metropolitan of Romania: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To Philaret, Metropolitan of New York and Eastern America, the new Confessor, who fought the good fight against the heresy of ecumenism: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To Gregory of Washington, Leonty of Chile, Averky of Jordanville, Nektary of Seattle, Vitaly of Jersey City, and the other Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia who upheld Orthodoxy: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To all those who struggled for Orthodoxy by their words, writings, teachings, sufferings, and God-pleasing life as defenders and protectors thereof, the Church of Christ exclaims:

To the Orthodox Roman Emperor, the right-believing and equal of the Apostles St. Constantine and his mother, Helen: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To the right-believing and equal of the Apostles Grand Prince Vladimir, the right-believing Grand Duchess Olga, to Yaroslav, George, Andrei Bogolubsky, and the other right-believing tsars and grand princes, tsarinas and grand duchesses, and to all of the royal lineage of Russia who lie in repose: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To Germanos, Tarasios, Nicephoros, and Methodios, the ever-memorable Patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, who struggled for the sake of Orthodoxy: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To Job, Germogen, Philaret, Joseph, Joachim, Adrian and Tikhon, Patriarchs of all-Russia: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To Their Eminences Metropolitans Anthony and Anastasy, and the other Archbishops, Bishops, and all Orthodox Christians of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To those princes, boyars, Christian soldiers and all Orthodox Christians who suffered or were killed for the Orthodox Faith and the Fatherland, who died in the

true faith and piety in the hope of resurrection: *Eternal Memory* (3).

To the Orthodox Episcopate of the persecuted Russian Church: *Many Years* (3).

May the Holy Trinity glorify them. May their sufferings for righteousness, which they endured even unto death, and their podvigs and teachings be taught and upheld. Through their prayers to God, may we all become emulators of their divine lives till the end of our lives, that we may be accounted worthy of the compassions and grace of our great first Hierarch Christ our true God. Through the prayers of our all-glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, and the God-seeing Angels and all the Saints. Amen.

The Orthodox Church of Christ, triumphantly remembering those who struggled in righteousness, and presenting their examples to all of Her children, called by Christ's name, as worthy of emulation, is duty bound to praise those as well, who now by their saving faith and virtues, in preparing themselves for eternal blessedness, uphold Orthodoxy.

Resolved:

To accept the proposed text of the Synodicon, and to insert it into the order of the Thanksgiving Moleben, right after the Bishop's Prayer, at the end of the fervent ectenia following the Gospel.

The text is to be read by the deacon in a loud voice from the amvon, facing the people. During this time, the Bishop should be seated on his cathedra, and the other clergy are to stand on either side of him in the middle of the church. The deacon is to hold a large lit deacon's candle. When the anathemas are pronounced, he lowers the candle a little toward the floor, as if dashing the heresy down to the ground. When the "Many Years" are pronounced for living Bishops, the defenders of Orthodoxy, the Bishop should stand up.

Heard:

The proposal of Metropolitan Valentine to compose an epistle from the Sobor of Bishops addressed to the clergy and faithful of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

Resolved:

To delegate to the Editing Committee the task of composing an address from the Sobor of Bishops to the clergy and flock of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

Heard:

The proposed epistle of the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church to the clergy, monastics and all Orthodox Christians:

"Dearly beloved in the Lord, Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters, Christ is in our midst! The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church,

continues to confess, as it ever has, our unwavering faith in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, the Orthodox Church, founded by the Son of God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the pillar and foundation of the truth (1Tim. 3:15), and against which even the gates of hell cannot prevail (Matt. 16:18).

We bear witness that it is not possible for the Church of God to be annihilated, destroyed, or divided, for She is concurrently a divine and human organism, the Body of Christ, wherein all of us who are believers make up His Body, and the Head of this Church Body is Christ (Col. 1:18). Just as Christ cannot be divided, so also is it impossible for the Church of Christ to be divided. The only thing that is possible is that those who do not recognize Her teachings and precepts fall away from the unified Body of the Church.

In our age of universal apostasy, a most sorrowful time in human history, full of scandals and temptations, the enemy of the human race, in his never-ending battle against the Church, has raised up an enormous number of false teachings, in order to tear away entire nations from the Body of the Church of Christ.

We confess our adherence to the teaching of the Holy Church, and reject all of the various false teachings distorting Her catechism.

By the authority of the Holy Spirit of God, and in concordance with the Church's holy tradition, we condemn Sergianism, i.e. the voluntary and self-serving subjection of the Church to the service of the atheistic powers of this world, as a blasphemous heresy.

We also condemn the introduction of the new calendar into the life of the Orthodox Church, as something that leads to schism and paves the way for the acceptance of the modern innovation of the heresy of ecumenism.

Again and again, we confirm and uphold the anathema pronounced by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia against the heresy of ecumenism, and we want to make it perfectly clear that we can have no communion of any kind with those who accept this heresy:

To 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 heresy of ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, Anathema!

With sorrow, we must point out, that at the present time, all of the historical local Orthodox Churches, as they are called, have been infected with the heresy of ecumenism, and have fallen away from the Church of Christ. As a graphic example of this statement, we need only recall the joint prayers in Assisi on January 24th, 2002, at which Roman Catholics, all kinds of Protestants, Moslems, and the representatives of every imaginable religion were joined by the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch, as well as bishops and representatives of all of the other "Orthodox" churches.

Neither can we have any kind of communion with those of the so-called True Orthodox Christians who confess the impious teaching of the Greek Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, i. e. crypto-ecumenism, and have communion with his “Synod in Resistance.”

Nor can we recognize the Moscow Patriarchate, which was created by the atheistic authorities of the Soviet Union from a small group of bishops with Met. Sergius (Stragorodsky) as their leader, and infected with the heresy of ecumenism, as an Orthodox Church, and we bear witness that the Moscow Patriarchate broke off from the martyric Catacomb Church of Russia, and from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, cooperated with the godless authorities, and took an active part in the persecution of True Orthodox Christians.

The Most Blessed Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), in a letter to Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) in 1935 wrote:

“As far as you are concerned, that which separates you from us is that, in your desire to provide a secure existence for yourself, you have attempted to unite light with darkness. You have fallen into a temptation, the essence of which is spoken of in the holy Gospel. Once, the Spirit of Evil tried to tempt the Son of God Himself by enticing him with an image of easy material success, with the condition that He would adore him, the Son of Perdition. You have not followed the example of Christ, the holy martyrs and confessors, who rejected such a compromise, but have bowed down to the ancient enemy of our salvation when, for the sake of an illusory benefit, for the sake of maintaining an outward organization, you announced that the joys of the godless authorities were your joys, and that their enemies were your enemies. You have even tried to uncrown the martyrs and confessors of the past few years (yourself included, for I happen to know that at one time you also demonstrated resoluteness and landed in jail for it), stating that they endured imprisonment, exile and torture, not for the sake of Christ, but because they were counter-revolutionaries. In so doing, you have blasphemed their memory. You have trivialized their exploits, and thrown cold water upon those who, perhaps, might have themselves joined the ranks of martyrs for the Faith. You have cut yourself off from the flower and the adornment of the Russian Church. In this neither I, nor my colleagues abroad, will ever follow your lead.”

The followers of Metropolitan Sergius, in the person of the present members of the Moscow Patriarchate, not only have refused to renounce the compromises of their precursor, but rather have become entrenched in them, and continue to serve the powers that be. Neither have they renounced the traitorous declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, nor their apostate activities of the past few decades. To the contrary, they justify the adulterous union of their church with the atheists, even trying to use Church tradition to do so.

The bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate, in their attempt to represent themselves as the inheritors and rightful heirs of the martyric Russian Orthodox Church, have announced the canonization of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. This counterfeit canonization exhibits the extreme level of the craftiness and unprincipled state of the present day hierarchs of the MP, for they betray themselves when they state that they recognize those same New Martyrs and

Confessors, which Metropolitan Sergius considered to be heretics and enemies of the Church, and outright apostates from the God of Truth. The contemporary defenders and perpetuators of the deeds of Metropolitan Sergius serve moliebens before the holy relics of the same confessors, whom Metropolitan Sergius declared to be graceless schismatics and political criminals, and whom he handed over for punishment, intensifying the persecution that they endured from the atheistic authorities. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers (Matt. 23:29-33).

Governed by the good of the Church of God, we collectively endorse the standard ecclesiastical rite for receiving those who desire to unite themselves to the Orthodox Church from among the clergy and faithful of the communities of “world Orthodoxy,” first and foremost, from the Moscow Patriarchate.

We call upon you, beloved children of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, to remain loyal to the teaching of the holy Orthodox Church, and have nothing to do with the apostate churches of “world” Orthodoxy. “See then that ye walk circumspectly” (Eph. 5:15), children of the Church of God, so that ye neither are fooled nor fall away from the true path, in this evil time. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:20), as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said to His true disciples.

The Lord God has forbidden us from falling into despair, and has called us to everywhere, and at all times, work out our own salvation, so that the evil enemy will not be able to steal away our treasure and keep us from reaching our heavenly homeland. Despite the fact that “a righteous man there is no more” (Ps. 11:1), and that the number of believers today that wish to stand firmly for the truth is small, let us nevertheless rejoice that we are unswervingly on the path of confessing true Orthodoxy – the salvific teaching of the holy Fathers and of the holy councils. All we need to do is “endure to the end” (Matt. 24: 13). For, in the words of St. Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, “Even if only a small number of people shall remain true to Orthodoxy and righteousness, then even they shall be *the Church*, and the power and authority of the decrees of the Church shall live on in them, even if they shall have to endure persecution for the Faith, which will only serve for their eternal glory and the salvation of their souls. (1 Apology in defense of the holy icons, 6).

Our position, as far as the apostasy of our days is concerned, is irreconcilable. There are also various other jurisdictions of the True Orthodox Church, who are trying to preserve their own Orthodox confession unassailable. There are also others outside of the Orthodox Church, who have yet to open their hearts to His call, which He makes through His mercy, and in time, join themselves to true holy Orthodoxy. These “seven thousand” shall be His portion in the coming end times.

The false Orthodox churches, extending their hands to the powers of darkness, are fearlessly progressing along the path of self-destruction and self-extinction, blindly believing that the “name of Jesus” will save them even in their

apostasy and blasphemy, and neglecting the fearsome words of our Lord (Matt. 7: 22-23). Christians who have lost the salt of Christianity, and Orthodox who know nothing of what it really means to be Orthodox, guided by deceptive feelings into the abyss of false spirituality, will never be able to distinguish the true Faith from a counterfeit one, or Christ from the anti-Christ.

Our task must continue to be the preaching of the truth. Let us remember that the part of the “fearful and unbelieving” is fiery Gehenna (Rev. 21:8). The Lord shall deprive them, as lukewarm, of His radiant company.

Let each one of us think of himself as a warrior of Christ. Let each one of us help the next one – strengthening resolve, uplifting through hope; and let us pray for each other.

Let the Fathers of the Church be our leaders and lighthouses on this course, as well as the army of new martyrs of the Russian Church, and the zealous defenders of True Orthodoxy, St. John of San Francisco and St. Philaret of New York.

May our Lord and God Jesus Christ help all of us to acquire the spirit of truth, and preserve us from the path that leads to perdition. Amen.

Resolved:

To accept the proposed “Epistle of the Sobor of Bishops” without amendment, and to extend our gratitude to the Editing Committee.

At this, the Sobor of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church concluded its work with the singing of “It is truly meet...”

**President
of the Sobor of Bishops
of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church**

Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir
and Members of the Sobor