

Chapter 18: Eastern Orthodoxy as Origin of Modern Sectarianism

“Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. These are spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves. They are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”¹

The average Orthodox believer of the 21st century is not well-grounded in religious matters and does not know “his religion” well enough. The Orthodox believer has the stereotype that Western Christianity is fragmented and consists of many religious currents. In contrast, the Orthodox believer considers Orthodoxy as a more united religious organization in which no disagreements or, God forbid, schisms exist. (He also ignores the fact that Orthodox churches are generally divided on a national basis).

In recent decades, the Serbian Orthodox Church has conducted a wide scale propaganda campaign against minority religious communities. The Orthodox Church labels them a source of modern sectarianism and promotes itself as “the one holy, catholic, apostolic Church” (referring to itself as ecumenical Orthodoxy). The Serbian Orthodox Church has imposed upon the people the image that there exists absolute unanimity amongst the Orthodox – along with harmonious relationships.

However, a more detailed examination of the functioning of some national Orthodox churches in the 20th century alone reveals quite a different picture. Even some events pertaining to the structure of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople during the same time period show that the Eastern Church has not been immune to the appearance of schisms. Indeed, such schism has proceeded to an extent serious enough to lead up to mutual excommunications and anathemas (curses) being pronounced by two opposing hierarchs and synods.

We will undertake further study of some particular schisms within some Orthodox churches in the 20th century. These include: the schism provoked by the introduction of the revised Julian calendar by the Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople in 1923, the schism within the Russian Orthodox Church brought about by events associated with the October Revolution of 1917, as well as some “minor” schisms having occurred within the Bulgarian and Serbian Orthodox Churches.

Schisms in the Orthodox Churches

Schism in Ecumenical Orthodoxy as a Consequence of the Implementation of the Revised “Julian” Calendar

¹ John 16:1-3.

In 1923 in Constantinople under the auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and its patriarch, Meletius Metaxasis, a pan-Orthodox congress was held. One of the aims of the congress was to reform the old Julian calendar used by the Eastern Orthodox Church. After several weeks of deliberation, the Congress unanimously adopted the calendar reform proposed by the delegation of the Serbian church and government. The new adopted calendar differed significantly from the old Julian calendar. It also was very similar to the Gregorian calendar used for centuries since 1582 by the Western Roman Catholic Church. The calendar brought fame to the Serbian astronomer and university professor Milutin Milankovic.

But before we delve into further examination of the adoption of the revised Milankovic calendar, which many compared with the Gregorian calendar introduced under Pope Gregory XIII because of their strong similarities, let us review the history of the origins of the Julian calendar.

It is well known that the Julian calendar (named after the Roman Emperor Gaius Julius Caesar and dating from the first century BC) was used by the Western Church until 1582. All the Ecumenical Councils (up to the eight century AD) recognized its full importance.

Origin of the Old (Julian) Calendar

Contrary to the categorical views of some Orthodox who attach particular importance to the Julian calendar and consider its origin from the “holy fathers” to be superior to that of the Gregorian calendar, the truth is that the Julian calendar originates from pre-Christian Egyptian civilization from the 3rd century BC. In his book *Through the Universe and the Ages*, Milutin Milankovic tells us about the origin of this calendar:

“The ancient Egyptians used in their calendar a year consisting of a constant 365 days. Experience of thousands of years showed that the calendar did not conform to the course of nature. Indeed, the flooding of the Nile, the most important annual event in their country, did not occur in the same part of the calendar until 1460 years later. This meant that for long periods of time, which they called solstices, nature outpaced the Egyptian calendar by a full year, or 365 days. Simple division indicates that the annual difference between nature and their calendar was roughly one quarter of a day. How they could adjust it, no one neither remembered nor dared to make a change. However, in 238 BC, the ninth year of the government of Ptolemy Euergetes, the Egyptian calendar was revised. That year, the priests of Egypt decided to introduce an extra day every leap year as a gift of the charitable gods. What is strange is that none of the ancient, medieval, or new century calendar literature mentions a word about it. However, in 1866, the German Egyptologist Lepsius **found a stone inscription in 3 scripts with this calendar provision. Dated from March 7, 238 BC**, this calendar provision became known as the Decree of Canopus, named after the city of Canopus, a suburb of Alexandria.”²

A little less than two centuries later, during the conquest of Egypt by Julius Caesar and the toppling of the Egyptian rulers (they were actually of Greek origin) of the Ptolemaic dynasty, Caesar became infatuated with the Egyptian princess and queen Cleopatra, who was more than 30 years younger. He invited his lover (who gave birth to a son) to visit Rome.

² Milutin Milankovic, *Through the Universe and the Ages*, 72-3. Author’s emphasis.

“So how did this calendar, which in itself probably did not come to life in Egypt, emerge? How did it get the name of the Julian calendar? To answer that, we need to know another side of history... Cleopatra’s trip to Rome was carried out with great splendor. The entire Egyptian navy, at that time the largest fleet in the world, escorted the queen’s galley... The queen was escorted by several scientists from the Museum of Alexandria, including the astronomer Sosigen... Caesar devoted the last years of his life to reforming the offices of the Roman state which had suffered after many civil wars. Also, the calendar was a mess; Caesar sought to implement a permanent reform. Rome itself had no one sufficiently versed in astronomy; the Romans were ignorant when it came to the major sciences. Such joy arose when Caesar learned that Sosigen accompanied Cleopatra; to him Caesar entrusted the calendar reform. Sosigen implemented the calendar identical to that of the Decree of Canopus. Every fourth year in the Julian calendar was a leap year. The seventh month was named in honor of Julius Caesar. Later, the eighth month was named in honor of Augustus. **The Christian churches later adopted the Julian calendar. As we have seen, its origin is Rome via Cleopatra.**”³

So clearly, the old Julian calendar has no special sacred qualities. This calendar did not originate with Christ and the apostles. Rather, the old Julian calendar was the product of the thought and genius of the ancient, pagan astronomers of Alexandria, Egypt.

Of course, the church used this old calendar to establish its traditional religious holidays because there was no other option until the appearance of the new Gregorian calendar. However, over the course of centuries, more people began to realize that the Julian calendar had its problems and became more inaccurate in its readings. The reform of the Julian calendar during the reign of Pope Gregory XIII and gradually adopted throughout Western Europe was first led by Aloysius Lilius:

“And with the Gregorian calendar, every fourth year is a leap year (just as in the Julian calendar it counted the fourth year without a remainder), with the exception of secular years. Secular years are those which last two digits are zeroes. In the Gregorian calendar, the leap years are counted only if their digits could be divided by four without a remainder, otherwise they are considered ordinary years. For that reason, the Gregorian calendar in the span of four hundred years would have 3 fewer leap years than the Julian. Thus, the average length of its years is shorter. With its 365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes, and 12 seconds, the Gregorian year is closer to the tropical year than the average year of the Julian calendar. This provision created a second difference in the Christian calendars of the Julian and the Gregorian. The two calendars were different from each other by thirteen days.”⁴

Even though the Gregorian calendar was “correct” while the Julian calendar was “off” over the centuries, Eastern Christianity did not accept the Gregorian calendar. The East rejected all innovations not spawned by the official sources of the Orthodox Church, regardless of whether it was common superstition or a new scientific discovery or achievement.

³ *Ibid.*, 73-6. Author’s emphasis.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 85.

Milankovic discusses the relationship of the Orthodox Church to scientific research throughout the Dark Ages. (Perhaps this passage explains why we call this period of history “Dark Ages”.)

“When Constantine the Great in 330 established Constantinople as the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire, he called it the new Rome and made Christianity the state religion. He put to death the Greek Gods and made Greek science extinct. If it were not for the Arabs, who preserved portions of Greek scholarship, we would have lost everything of Alexandrian culture. **For over eleven centuries, Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Yet during that whole time, it had not given science one hundredth of what Alexandria contributed in just two centuries.** But when Sultan Mohammed II the Conqueror entered Constantinople on May 30, 1453, he struck the Hagia Sophia with his fist and the horse trotted with its hooves. The seeds of Greek genius, which had laid barren on this ground for a thousand years, were scattered across Western Europe. From them, a revival of arts and sciences was born... Eventually, this would lead to the further development of astronomy that had begun in Alexandria: Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler.”⁵

For the reason of such a negative attitude toward science, it is no wonder that the churches of the East did not adopt the more accurate Gregorian calendar. One reason, naturally, was because the new calendar emerged from the Latins, whom the Eastern Orthodox considered as heretics and schismatics (sectarians).

Here are the reasons why Rome chose to reform the Julian calendar and the East’s reaction of anathema to the reform. Alexey Judin in his book *Orthodoxy and Catholicism: Signs of the Times* explains:

“This is precisely the problem of the radical reform of the computation of time in the Christian world. The year was 1582. The Pope at that time was Gregory XIII, after whom the Gregorian calendar would be named. The Julian (named after the pagan emperor Julius) and the Gregorian calendars were based on quite different principles. The Julian calendar was oriented toward the solar year, which corresponds to the time of one whole rotation of the Earth around the Sun. The Gregorian calendar was based on tropical or sun years, conditional astronomical lengths oriented toward the rhythms of the earth. These calendars are truly incomparable; the solar year is longer than the tropical year by 25 minutes and 14 seconds. Over 25,765 years, the tropical Gregorian calendar would differ from the Julian calendar by a whole year.

The calendar reform of Pope Gregory XIII envisioned a spring equinox, which in the sixteenth century fell on March 11, to be closer to the original computation of Passover, which the Church in ancient times associated with March 21. Thus, the calendar should be reduced by 10 days. The year of 1582, when Pope Gregory XIII proposed the calendar reform, had 365 days. Later, the whole Western world adopted the Gregorian calendar... However, the calendar reform led to an escalation in ideological tension between the Western and Eastern churches. **The local Council of Constantinople in**

⁵ *Ibid.*, 84. Author’s emphasis.

1583, attended by the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria, refused to adopt the Gregorian calendar and pronounced a curse (anathema) on Rome. The Orthodox Church observed this anathema practically until 1923, when Constantinople took the initiative to hold a local synod and decided to adopt a new calendar proposed by the Yugoslav astronomer Milutin Milankovic.”⁶

The Mount Athos monks of Esphigmenou explain the reasons for this anathema:

“First things first. When heretical Rome introduced the new calendar in 1582, with the intent to impose it upon the Orthodox, the current Patriarch of Constantinople, Jeremiah, convened a council and condemned the calendar. The text of his anathema read:

‘From old Rome have come certain persons who learned there to wear Latin habits. The worst of it is how, from being Romans of Rumelia bred and born, they not only have changed their faith, but they even wage War upon the Orthodox dogmas and truths of the Eastern Church which have been delivered to us by Christ and the divine Apostles and the Holy Councils (or Synods) of the Holy Fathers. Therefore, cutting off these persons as rotten members, we command

That whosoever does not follow the customs of the Church as the Seven Holy Ecumenical Councils decreed, *and the Menologion which they well decreed that we should follow*, but **in opposition to all this wishes to follow the new Paschalion and Menologion of the atheist astronomers of the Pope**, and wishes to overturn and destroy the dogmas and customs of the Church which have been handed down by the Fathers, **let him be anathema** and outside the Church of Christ and the assembly 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 mediocrity be with all of you: amen.

Done in the year of the God-man 1583 (MDLXXX-III), year of induction 12. November
20.

(Signed) Jeremiah of Constantinople
Sylvester of Alexandria
Sophronius of Jerusalem

In the presence of the rest of the prelates at the Council.”⁷

⁶⁶ See: Roman Miz, *Christianity on the Edge of the Third Millennium; Translated from Ukrainian* (Novi Sad 2000). Author’s emphasis.

⁷ *The Kiss of Judas*, 32-3. Author’s emphasis. [Translator’s note: see <http://genuineorthodoxchurch.com/Sigillion1583.htm> citing *The Rudder of the Orthodox Catholic Church – Compiled by Saints Nicodemos and Agapios*, 13-5.]

However, in spite of the anathema against the new calendar, as well as 8 other anathemas issued by various synods in 1583, 1587, 1593, 1722, 1756, 1848, 1895, and 1904,⁸ the Ecumenical Patriarch Meletius convened a pan-Orthodox Congress in 1923. His intent was to reform the outdated and inaccurate Julian calendar.

Adoption of the Calendar of Milutin Milankovic

Also invited to this conference in Istanbul was a delegation from the Serbian Orthodox Church. After receiving a letter from the Ministry of Religion, Milankovic was contacted by the ministry's office and received the following information:

“I rushed off to the Ministry. There a deputy minister announced important news: the Ecumenical Patriarch, the highest official in the Orthodox Church, was to convene on the first of May in Constantinople a Congress of all Orthodox churches. The main agenda of the meeting would consist of reforming our old Julian calendar. Our church received such a call and was informed by the Royal Government. They decided to send to the congress as our representative a scientist, that is, me... ‘As an historian,’ added the Minister, ‘I am quite familiar with the whole history of the calendar. I recognize that astronomy has a major contribution to make to this discussion. That is why I advised the Royal Government to send you to the Congress as its representative. Our Orthodox Church has agreed to our choice, and our government has agreed to the church's own representative. He will speak on church matters, and you, Professor, are recognized authority in the matter of calendar reform.’”⁹

Milankovic, the only “layman” present at the Church Congress in Constantinople, accompanied with a Metropolitan representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Congress began on May, and its work lasted over a month. The topics discussed at the Congress, including the problem of the calendar, are discussed by our distinguished astronomer:

“Even the first session of the Congress, and more so our unofficial meetings and discussions, showed the undivided opinion of all participants that the difference of 13 days between the Gregorian and Julian calendars must be removed. Our calendar is so far behind the solar calendar, so we should move our calendar forward.

In the first meeting there was no disagreement about the issue. However, often contradictory views as to what should be done existed. Some advocated the first decision should be to delay decision on the Julian calendar, which would be apart from the Gregorian calendar until the year 2100. Others believed the Gregorian calendar should be fully adopted.

It quickly became obvious that neither of these two options were practical. Eliminating the 13 days not in the Julian calendar and conforming it to the Gregorian calendar was not feasible for the timing of the Julian holidays would not correspond to that of the Gregorian. We realized that the rules for determining the timing of Christian holidays

⁸ *Ibid.*, 32-3.

⁹ Milankovic, 63-4.

differed under each calendar system. If we applied the same rules in the Julian calendar as in the Gregorian calendar, de facto we would have to accept the Gregorian calendar.

Such a decision would have been unacceptable to the two largest Orthodox Churches, the Russian and Serbian Churches. Neither would it have accounted for the advances of science adopted in the Gregorian calendar reform. These advances are huge. Suffice it to say that at the time of the reform, **the science of astrophysics, the most objective solution, did not yet exist.**"¹⁰

After Milankovic's labor to overcome the problems of the calendar and events leading up to and during the Congress, the moment finally arrived when the Serbian delegation was supposed to present its proposal for calendar reform:

"Yesterday the main session of the Congress took place. I gave a speech at the session which adopted our proposal for calendar reform... The main provisions of the calendar reform included this:

The new calendar will lead to similar dates as the Gregorian calendar. Every year divisible by four will be a leap year, with the exception of the secular year, which would only be counted as a leap year if the number ends in 100 and can be divided by 9 and yields a remainder of 2 or 6.

This new rule of intercalation, which regulates the counting of leap years, results in the average length of the calendar year to be 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 48 seconds. **This new approach comes closest to approximating the solar year; if at all possible, it achieves what the other calendars could not accomplish.** But it comes with this proviso. We learn that the next secular years coinciding with those of the Gregorian calendar occur only in the years 2000, 2400, 2800, and so forth. Let us see which of the secular leap years will be in our new calendar. Obviously, the years 2000, 2400, 2900, and so forth would be included. Dropping the last 2 zeroes and dividing 20, 24, and 29 by 9 would yield the remainders 2, 6, and 2. That means the first discrepancy in the Christian calendars would occur only in 2800, or 877 years from now.

In principle, **proper astronomy** formulates our calendar to be more accurate and more in line with the Gregorian calendar.

In terms of calculating the lunar months, it was decided by His Holiness **to apply precise astronomical methods for resolving it. Thus, their decision on the calendar issues could not have been more optimal.** The leadership of the calendar committee of the Congress entrusted me with the issue."¹¹

Expressing his great appreciation for the successful completion of the work of the calendar reform, the Ecumenical Patriarch sent Milutin Milankovic the following letter:

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 86. Author's emphasis.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 92. Author's emphasis.

“Meletius, by the grace of God Archbishop of Constantinople – the New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch:

To the Highly Esteemed Lord Professor, child of the God loving us in our humility, grace and peace from our God be upon You Highly Educated One.

Since Our Ecumenical and Holy Synod arrived at the decision during the Pan-Orthodox Congress to adopt the new calendar, which is now being implemented in the Most Holy Orthodox Churches, the Holy Synod makes a special note of commendation to You Highly Educated One for your most dear cooperation in the preparation of the Pan-Orthodox Congress to arrive at its decision. **This decision happily and completely resolved one of the major tasks of the Pan-Orthodox Congress, namely the most important calendar question.**

In addition, **with the unanimous consent of the Synod**, I willingly give you this letter of special praise and gratitude to You Highly Educated One for your enlightenment and beneficial cooperation.

Also, in addition to sending our paternal greetings and blessings, we pray to God that He grant you all the best. May His blessing abide with you, Highly Educated One.”¹²

However, although many delegations of the Orthodox Churches, including the Serbian, attended the Pan-Orthodox Congress and unanimously adopted the calendar reform proposed by the esteemed astronomer and college professor, in spite of the personal gratitude of the Ecumenical Patriarch (along with the warm congratulations of representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church¹³), there arose various small and large groups of dissenters, even entire churches, against the calendar reform.

Although Milankovic had developed the most accurate calendar and despite the probable fact that not even the Lord God Himself would not have opposed it – since from an earthly perspective, Milankovic based his calendar on the most accurate knowledge of astrophysics that God had established – the Orthodox began an outcry against the abandonment of the ancient “patristic” calendar and the compromise with the “heretical” calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. Discontent, and quite intense at that, was manifested during the session of the Congress itself, when the raging mob (Orthodox by religion), led by the Turkish police, demanded the toppling of the Ecumenical Patriarch. Milankovic retells the events up to the end of the Congress as related by the Serbian Metropolitan:

“The Metropolitan personally told me his story. He had just left the Patriarchate when in front of the main gate appeared a strange mob. **Around two hundred local Greeks, insanely drunk sailors and other hastily gathered rabble.** The mob burst in, or more accurately was escorted inside, by fifty Turkey policemen. Bursting through the gate violently and blocking all the doors which served as exits, the mob broke into the main stairway, pillaged, and wrecked everything that came in its path. In this method, the mob

¹² *Ibid.*, 97. Author’s emphasis.

¹³ See *Ibid.*, 93.

reached the main hall where the participants of the Congress were assembling. In short order, all the ecclesiastical dignitaries were cowering in the corner of the hall, while the other parts were occupied by the rabble, who in their dirty bare feet climbed all over the marble tables, silk chairs, and sofas. All the doors and windows were covered by Turkish policemen. **The air was filled with their stench, and the savage uproar rolled on.**

Little by little, the shouts of the crowd became discernible. The crowd demanded that Meletius IV resign his honor and position as Ecumenical Patriarch right on the spot. Now all the participants of the Congress realized that the mob, under the protection and orders of the Turkish police, had come to forcibly overthrow the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Meletius IV arose from his chair, held one hand over his mouth, and gestured with the other that he wanted to speak. There was silence. In a clear and firm voice, he spoke to the crowd and stated that he did not recognize them as legitimate representatives of his flock¹⁴ and that he refused to abdicate his position, no matter what would happen. The Patriarch's words evoked uproar from the mob. Showers of curses and threats came upon him. He was pale, but he stood with his head erect and responded to each salvo, 'I am the Patriarch!'

The mob then moved in, seized the brave Patriarch and a few bishops who defended him, and beat them up. They dragged them down the main stairway to the right of the gate where Gregory V was hanged earlier in history. Those who remained in the hall could not see what was happening. They could only hear insane shouting, threats, and curses. In the midst of the storm, they heard the weary voice of the Head of the Eastern Church.

Everyone suddenly became quiet. Fear and ominous foreboding struck the participants of the Congress, but this quickly turned to joy and delight when French soldiers opened the door into the hall. One alert monk called them on the telephone, and the French arrived just in time to save the Patriarch from the hands of the frantic mob... Shortly afterwards, the Patriarch with all the bishops who had faithfully followed him appeared in the hall. There was no end to the rejoicing. Many cried with excitement.

The Metropolitan himself was somewhat beaten down. While he protected the Patriarch with his body, the mobs tore up his robes, and some unknown person stole his wallet with its contents from his hand.

Thus, the intervention of the French army prevented the dissolution of the Congress. The Congress met one more day and finished its work. **The participants of the Congress in Constantinople signed all the agreements.** After a solemn church service, the Congress dissolved.”¹⁵

The Adoption of the Revised Calendar and Schism in the Greek Orthodox Church

¹⁴ This way of addressing the crowd shows that they were Orthodox “believers”.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 95-7. Author's emphasis.

After the adoption of Milankovic's calendar by the Pan-Orthodox Congress in Constantinople in 1923 and its introduction into the liturgical life of the Greek Orthodox Church in 1924, all kinds of negative reactions came to the surface. The introduction of this calendar caused great disagreement across the Orthodox world, for not every Eastern Orthodox patriarchy had participated in the Congress. Alexey Judin tells us about the strained relations between the supporters and opponents of the revised calendar:

“The new calendar, called the New Julian or revised Gregorian calendar, which based on the Gregorian solar calendar calculates the length of the tropical year, is identical until the year 2800 and was considered a temporary modification of the Western calendar. **Yet this calendar reform fomented great dissent in the Orthodox world.** At the Pan-Orthodox Congress of 1923, there were no representatives from the Jerusalem, Russian, Bulgarian, and Serbian Churches,¹⁶ which hardened their opposition...¹⁷ Schisms within those churches that adopted the revised calendar did not take long to develop. One example is the Greek (Hellenic) Church where its ‘calendar schism’ occurred in 1935, 11 years after the adoption of the revised calendar.”¹⁸

Here is the reaction to the implementation of the revised calendar which was mandated by some archbishop, and which is described in the book *The Kiss of Judas* published by the brotherhood of the Monastery of Esphigmenou – it tells us about the “schismatic” Greek old calendar church:

“Just a year later, Metaxakis convened the Congress in Constantinople, where he announced the introduction of the new (papal) calendar. From that year forward, in fact, he in practice began the implementation of an ecumenical policy. **At that Congress, the Patriarchy did not have its official delegation, such that from a formal perspective, this Congress lacked legitimacy.** Simply put, it was utterly discredited. Here are some of the reactions to this Congress. For example, in his ‘Memorandum to the Holy Synod of Greece (June 14, 1929)’, Irenaeus, Metropolitan of Kasandria wrote that the Congress was not ‘Pan-Orthodox’ but rather ‘Anti-Orthodox’. Even the Archbishop of Athens himself, who introduced the new calendar a year later in Greece, admitted: ‘Unfortunately, the Eastern patriarchs who had refused to participate in the Congress rejected all its decisions. If the Congress had confined itself only to the question of the calendar, it probably would not have caused such an outcry.’”¹⁹

“The first local Orthodox Church to follow the Patriarchate of Constantinople into the ecumenical snare was the Greek Orthodox Church. As Meletius Metaxakis was to Constantinople, so the Archbishop of Athens, Chrysostom Papadopoulos, was to Greece. One of the later leaders of the True Orthodox Church of Greece, German Dimitriadski,

¹⁶ Yet the passages quoted earlier from Milutin Milankovic showed that representatives from the Russian and Serbian churches were present and assented to the calendar reform. Only later was this reform rejected by the churches and peoples in these countries.

¹⁷ The revised calendar was adopted in the liturgy of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the 1920's and by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in 1968. (Source: *Kiss of Judas*, 36.)

¹⁸ *Christianity on the Verge of the Third Millennium*, 42. Author's emphasis.

¹⁹ *Kiss of Judas*, 32. Author's emphasis.

called Metaxakis ‘the Luther of the Orthodox Church’. We believe the same could be said for Papadopoulos.”²⁰

‘The new calendar was introduced at a rapid pace into the Greek church in 1924. The decision was made on March 10 and officially announced on March 24. The new calendar was imposed upon the Greek Church at the bidding of the minority of the Greek hierarchy, almost as if it were a **schismatic issue**, which it truly was. That this was the case was affirmed by a Commission consisting of the top lawyers and seminary teachers in the State University who investigated the issue of the calendar. One of the Commission members was His Grace the Archbishop of Athens, a professor of church history at the State University. Here is the Commission’s verdict on the calendar: ‘Although every Orthodox Church is autonomous in its internal administration, the Orthodox Churches are, nonetheless, bound to each other by means of dogmatic, synodic decisions and rules, and **none of them can be separated as a peculiar Orthodox Church nor can accept a church calendar without being considered schismatic in relation to the other churches.**’”²¹

“Since his Beatitude the Archbishop of Athens has by his own signature declared himself to be a Schismatic, what need do we have of witnesses to demonstrate that he and the hierarchs who think like him have become Schismatics, in that they have split the unity of Orthodoxy through the calendar innovation and divided the Ecclesiastical and ethnic soul of the Greek Orthodox People?”²²

“Let us see how other contemporary archbishops of other Orthodox churches viewed this predatory act.

The famous Metropolitan of the Russian Church Abroad, Anthony (Khrapovitski) dubbed the calendar reform ‘a crazy and stupid act by Masons and Papists.’

Patriarch Photius of Alexandria wrote (to Chrysostom Papadopoulos, Archbishop of Athens): ‘Great pain and shock resulted from your statement regarding the issue that, without any true grounding or dogmatic or practical reasons, you rejected the brotherly advice and persistent calls of four apostolic thrones for the sake of *calendar reform*. Before you looms the threat of disintegration of the entire people of the Orthodox Church. Thus, I propose to convene a Council in order to investigate the issue.’ When Chrysostom rejected the idea of convening a Council, Photius again refused to accept the innovation.

Vladimir Moss, in his well-documented book, informs us – a fact that is important for us Serbs to take note – of the exact source from which it had come. **Specifically, the saint and Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic** in 1939 during the council in Hilandar **refused to**

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 35. Author’s emphasis.

²² *Ibid.* See also Vladimir Moss, *New Zion in Babylon: The Orthodox Church in the Twentieth Century, Part 3*, (Vladimir Moss: 2008) 92 on

http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com/downloads/92_NEW_ZION_IN_BABYLON_PART_3.pdf

conduct liturgy with the Greeks at the Vatoped Monastery and said that the Greeks and the Slavs are of different types... During this council, Bishop Nikolai (Velimirovic) of Okhrid fiercely defended the Orthodox calendar, saying that the Congress of 1923 (in Constantinople) which approved the new calendar had created a **schism**.”²³

Today, more than 50% of national Orthodox churches observe Milankovic’s revised calendar (which some, as we have seen, deliberately mislabeled as “papist”). Radomir Popovic, professor of Orthodox theology at the University of Belgrade, elaborates:

“With regard to the calendar and its application, the unity of the modern Christian world has been shattered. Unfortunately, the first time occurred within the body of the Orthodox Christian Church in the early 20th century. This took place in 1923 when the Patriarchate of Constantinople, in an illegal accord reached at the Congress in Constantinople, introduced a new calendar. Similarly, some churches even today in the Orthodox world maintain the Julian calendar and the Julian dating of Easter: Jerusalem, Russian, Serbian, Georgian, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and Mount Athos. Other churches recognize the Gregorian calendar but hold to the Julian dating of Easter: Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Romanian, Bulgarian, Greece, Cyprus, and autonomous churches under the leadership of Constantinople. The Finnish Orthodox Church has fully adopted the Gregorian calendar and its dating of Easter.”²⁴

Although the Serbian Orthodox Church (still) observes the Julian calendar, the zealot-monks criticize her for the open statements by some priests and even Patriarch Pavle himself that express their belief that the Gregorian calendar is more accurate than the Julian calendar – and that over time the Gregorian calendar might be introduced in churches that have up to now not adopted it.

In an interview with *Orthodoxy* (issue 910), Dr. Radomir Popovic says that the issue of the calendar is not an essential question for the preservation of the Orthodox faith. Though he himself is committed to the retention of the old calendar in the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Archpriest states that the Serbian Orthodox Church **will never forbid** (nor strictly enforce) **the introduction of a modern, accurate, astronomically-based way for computing time** (e.g., the revised calendar):

²³ *Ibid.*, 35-6. Author’s emphasis.

²⁴ *Orthodoxy, News of the Serbian Patriarchate*, issue 910, February 15, 2005, 12.

The monks of Hilandar – old calendarists (from Esphigmenou) along with their brothers from other old calendar “schismatic” churches consider the following churches to be under the revised calendar (contra Radomir Popovic) Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Romanian, Bulgarian, Georgian, Cypriot, Greek, Polish, Slovak, Albanian, Finnish, and Serbian, even though some of these churches still adhere to the old Julian calendar. Specifically, the brotherhood of Esphigmenou believes that all “old calendar” churches that have liturgical and Eucharistic fellowship with new calendar Orthodox churches commit the sin of heresy and ecumenism – violations of the canons of the holy fathers. The monks of Esphigmenou consider such churches to have deprived themselves of the blessing of the Holy Spirit and committed apostasy “from the true Orthodox Church”, which, in their opinion, the Lord established and blessed.

“What is most important to us is to keep the faith, to preserve Christian doctrine which gives meaning to everything, including every calendar, **whether it is Julian or some other version.**”²⁵

This, we would consider, liberal stance by the Serbian Orthodox church that permits a potential change in the calendar is one that is fiercely criticized by the old calendarists of Hilandar. Here is the response from the zealots about the Serbian Church’s openness to accepting the “papal calendar”:

“As a consequence of his (Ecumenical Patriarch Meletius) initiative in 1924, the official Greek Church introduced this new Gregorian (papal) calendar, which led to schism and the rebellion of faithful people and loyal clergy, who logically, faithfully, and courageously have defended the patristic calendar up to the present day. This un-Orthodox and lawless example of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Greek officials would be followed by many other local churches, **such that the situation today is that officially only the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate observe the old Julian calendar...** Note that here we use the term ‘officially’. The reason is that the Serbian Orthodox Church observes the old calendar as a mere formality. It is only a matter of days when the new papal calendar will be introduced into practice. Today’s opinion and attitude of the patriarchs and bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church is that the Serbian people are ‘vulgar and theologically illiterate’ and as such are ‘unprepared’ to accept the calendar... Explaining his deadly theory for the need of the introduction of a new papal calendar, Patriarch Pavle stated that in 24,000 years due to lags relative to the astronomical calendar, the observance of Easter (Passover) as a moveable holiday falls after the autumnal equinox, which is impermissible under the rules and canons that govern when we are to celebrate the holiest of holidays. Although the Patriarch concludes that perhaps 24,000 years from now that neither planet earth nor the human race will exist ‘which is not generally important at this time,’ **he concludes that the new calendarists are correct. He claims the introduction of the revised calendar** (which is also astronomically flawed, but apparently with fewer mistakes) **would correct this future error.** Thus, the patriarch concludes that the old calendarists who preserve the original calendar approved by God, the Saints, and the Church Fathers are schismatics.”²⁶

Another even more interesting point to note is that the monks of the monastery of Esphigmenou on the Holy Mount Athos have “waged war” for years with the Ecumenical Patriarchy of Constantinople and its patriarchs – including those under their spiritual authority. The monks of Esphigmenou have labeled all the previous Ecumenical Patriarchs, beginning with Meletius Metaxakis through Athenagoras (who committed “the notorious crime” in 1965 to remove the curse of anathema with the Western Church in the accompaniment of Pope Paul VI), Dmitri, and Bartholomew, with rude names such as “false patriarchs”, “arch-heretics”, and others.

“The monks of **Esphigmenou united with the Greek Old Calendarist Church which still adheres to the Julian calendar** (the Greek Orthodox Church experienced schism

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13. Author’s emphasis.

²⁶ *Kiss of Judas*, 130-1. Author’s emphasis.

over its adoption of the Gregorian Calendar in 1923). The Church's nearly two million believers support and assist the monks of Esphigmenou, as they are called on the Holy Mountain. The zealots of Esphigmenou severed all contact with Bartholomew, the current Patriarch of Constantinople, because of his 'heresy of ecumenism'. On the Holy Mountain, they never pray in the liturgy for him, the proper Bishop of Constantinople, nor do they cite him in the canons. **Instead, they recognize Archbishop Chrysostom of the Greek Old Calendarist Church as their head.** The monks demand that the Ecumenical Patriarch 'return to the Julian Calendar, terminate any dialogue with heretics, withdraw from the World Council of Churches, so that he might renounce all of the anti-Orthodox behaviors of him and his predecessors, fight against all heretics, and cease all fellowship with churches that have fallen into heresy.'"²⁷

On several occasions, Constantinople has ordered these monks to vacate the monastery, including threats of forced expulsion with the assistance of the Greek army and police. However, despite the special intervention and repeated orders from the Patriarchy of Constantinople as well as the Greek Arch-diocese to evict them from the monastery, these solid Orthodox monks continue to steadfastly resist all temptation. Here is how *The Weekly Telegraph* in February 2003 describes the relationship between the aforementioned churches and the official authorities of Greece, citing the words of one of the local monks:

“During the last few days, during the siege of Esphigmenou, Greek police arrested and deported 25 brothers, zealots whom they hunted down like animals on Mount Athos. In the port of the monastery of Hilandar, 25 police occupied it and controlled the situation. What happened at Mount Athos is a disgrace,’ said Father Serafim in an interview with the Weekly Telegraph. He was one of the zealots at the time of the siege found outside the walls of the monastery.”²⁸

“The police intervention ensued during the peak of the conflict between the zealots with the Ecumenical and Greek Patriarchs. After decades of opposition by the zealots against the ecumenical movement in the Orthodox Church, the conflict is on the brink of a tragic epilogue. Patriarchs Bartholomew and Chrysostom decided to expel the zealots from Mount Athos and deport them from Greece. They requested help from the police... Greek SWAT police equipped with special gear for mountain climbing ascended the high rocks on the Aegean Sea. From a cave converted into a monastic cell in the southern part of the Athos peninsula, the police bound with ropes four monks they had captured in a boat and treated them harshly at times and without regard for their health. These monks are Russians, members of the order of zealots, none of whom have violated any Greek laws. The monks came under fire by the police due to their traditional religious affiliation, as they consider themselves to be the last guardians of Orthodoxy...”²⁹

²⁷ *Daily Newspaper Today*, Tuesday, January 28, 2003, 16. Author's emphasis.

²⁸ *Weekly Telegraph*, Issue 354; February 5, 2003, 10.

²⁹ *Ibid.* The persecution of Old Calendarists is not a recent phenomenon. In fact, it has occurred for more than half a century. In his book *Ecumenism and the Time of Apostasy*, Hieromonk Sava Janjic describes the persecution of Orthodox Old Calendarist believers by the official Greek Orthodox Church: “Metropolitan Chrysostom (the leader of the Greek Old Calendarists at that time – author's note) spent the last few years suffering from persecution along with many members of the movement. (Priests were imprisoned and shaved. Churches were desecrated and vandalized. Sacred religious objects were stolen. Nuns were raped. One priest in Patra died from his injuries. **The**

“Even the 117 zealots from the Monastery of Esphigmenou, at the very entrance to the Holy Mountain, barricaded themselves inside the walls – with explosives! The Zealots, which some consider to be Orthodox fundamentalists, ringed themselves and their monastery with dozens of kilograms of explosive material. They make loud announcements to those outside of the walls – a battalion of Greek special SWAT forces. The monks state their goal – the preservation of the true Orthodox faith – and are ready to die for it!”³⁰

That the situation concerning schism in Greece is not isolated to this one group is borne by the testimony to the fact that in Greece there exist not just one, but several “sectarian” Old Calendarist Churches that have nothing in common:

“In modern Greece there exist several Old Style Synods – particular church groups that not only have no relations with one another, but each of them considers itself the sole legitimate representative of ‘the True Greek Orthodox Church.’”³¹

persecutions were initiated under Spyridion, at that time the Archbishop of Athens in 1949.)” 68. Author’s emphasis.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Roman Miz, *Christianity on the Verge of the Third Millennium*, 42.

Here is some more information on the origin of the Old Calendarist movement in Greece quoted from the book by Hieromonk Sava Janjic: “The Old Calendarist movement in the beginning (1924-1935) had arisen spontaneously. After the introduction of the new calendar, the number of believers who remained faithful to the Julian calendar was very small. However, among them were several famous church historians who enjoyed the support of Fotius, the Patriarch of Alexandria. During the first six months of the movement, not one single cleric joined it. The miraculous vision in the heavens of the Holy Cross on September 14-15, 1925 (according to the Julian calendar) during the feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross over a small church in a suburb of Athens was the reason that a great number of believers became Old Calendarists. The Cross appeared in the sky around midnight and for an entire hour, believers and policemen sent to stop the prayer meeting gazed at it. However, the greatest credit for spreading the movement belongs to the zealot monks of Mount Athos, who settled on the Greek land, edified believers, and founded underground churches and monasteries... However, the movement did not lack a hierarchy. A critical moment occurred in 1935 when 11 bishops announced their conversion to the Old Calendarists. However, after a series of coercive measures by the state Church, only three remained. Among them was **the Metropolitan Chrysostom of Florina** who became the leader of the movement... However, very early on in the movement, **one extreme wing under Bishop Matthew** separated from the Synod of Metropolitan Chrysostom in 1937. The followers of Matthew rejected the canonical ordination of clergy in the state Church and denied as graceless the sacraments of the official Church... After the death of Metropolitan Chrysostom in 1955, the Old Calendarist Church remained without a bishop. Then the Russian Church Abroad (ROCOR) came to help with several of its bishops, who, admittedly without the blessing of the Synod, ordained new bishops. The ROCOR conducted this ordination in 1969 and published much liturgical work with the Old Calendarists. Two years later, the synod of the ROCOR corrected the uncanonical status of the bishops ordained by Bishop Matthew. In the period between the 1970’s and the 1990’s, the Greek Old Calendarist fellowship endured **great trials of mutual distrust, the organization of new synods, schism, and disintegration**. During this period, unfortunately the stance of the radical faction called the ‘Mathewites’ prevailed. They negated the gracious efficacy of the state Church and the members of the ROCOR who had given them apostolic succession. Somewhat more moderate, but still holding a negative attitude toward the efficacy of grace in the New Calendarist Churches, was **the Archbishop Auxentios**, who succeeded Chrysostom P. **A third group** formed in **1985 under Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili and Giovanni of Sardinia** remained true to its original position that the sacraments of the Greek Church were not without grace, but that its spiritual body was deeply wounded by the heresy of ecumenism and modernism.” 68-69. Author’s emphasis.

On the other hand, the zealot monks of Mount Athos allege that modern Ecumenical Orthodoxy has slipped into deep crisis as a result of fellowship with non-Orthodox confessions. Hieromonk Sava Janjic and Artemije Radosavljevic, Bishop of Rashko-Prizren, blame the Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarchate for leading the church into apostasy. Here is their opinion of the Ecumenical Patriarch and the response by Bishop Artemije to the admonition and warning of Patriarch Bartholomew and the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church:

“Let us examine the view of the canonical and dogmatic validity of the Ecumenical Patriarchy and its Patriarch Bartholomew exalted among our church leaders. Hieromonk Sava in a blessed commentary in his book states:

‘According to Canon 1 of the First Ecumenical Council, any bishop linked with heresy should be anathematized. The current Patriarch of Constantinople, as well as his two predecessors, never denied that all religions apart from the Orthodox Church are heresy. Indeed, they call the representatives of such religions ‘brothers in Christ’. And not only that, but their attitudes give implicit consent to the wrong confession of Christian faith.’

His answer is simply – heresy.

Now let us examine what the Bishop Artemije presented in his open letter to the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The reason for this letter stems from the accusation of Patriarch Bartholomew that the activities of Bishop Artemije are damaging the reputation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and that he should cease from them ‘to maintain the canonical order of the Orthodox Church.’

Let us read Bishop Artemije’s response to the Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

‘... The first set of accusations against me alleging that my ‘words and actions are damaging the reputation of the Ecumenical Patriarchy’ have absolutely no truth to them, nor can they be supported by any evidence. On the contrary, ample evidence demands that ‘the order and traditions of the Orthodox Church’ should be upheld by him (i.e., Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew), but instead he tramples upon all the Holy Canons and traditions of the Church by carrying out his ecumenical and expansionist goals. Thus, it is disturbing that he has the audacity to reprimand someone else from deviating from adhering to the canonical tradition.

I know, Your Holiness, that neither our Synod nor any other in the world today is able or willing to uphold the Holy Canons and the church order of the holy fathers, let alone condemn those who deserve it (including many in our Serbian Orthodox Church). But yet our Synod and others in the world judge and condemn those who, by adhering to the Holy Canons and traditions of the Orthodox Church, raise their voices in defense of the Orthodox Faith and critique in an irenic manner (let the facts be stated) of those who have long violated the boundaries set by our Fathers. But so be it. Our God, the merciful Judge, lives, sees everything, and knows full well that His judgment will be just. It is a tragedy that many who follow the path of compromise and praying together with the excommunicated and anathematized will lead to everlasting condemnation many

innocent souls for whom Christ was crucified. In the circumstances in which I live and to the best of my ability, I labor to be a faithful follower and to guard the Holy Canons of the Fathers by bearing witness to the evangelical Truth so that there might be no unity between light and darkness, Christ and Baal. Yet my testimony as published in *Holy Prince Lazar* is perceived and exploited as ‘harming the reputation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.’ **Here I will bear witness: There is no one in the world that could harm the reputation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate so much as Patriarch Bartholomew himself and the members of his Hierarchy in their ecumenical efforts and declarations which are infamous all over the world.**”³²

Bishop Artemije’s testimony (dating from 1996) reveals that the leadership of the modern Serbian Orthodox Church lacks the will and the strength to defend the ancient canons and teachings of the holy fathers (let every sincere Orthodox believer in Serbia read and remember these words well!). The Serbian Orthodox Church (as alleged by the monks from Esphigmenou) is moving along the road to apostasy from the centuries-old Orthodoxy and slowly merging with Roman Catholicism and other “heretics” within the global ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches. Let us now move on to another division within the Orthodox world that occurred in the twentieth century. This schism occurred within the Russian Orthodox Church.

Schism in the Russian Orthodox Church and Founding of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR)

Roughly at the same time as the schism in the Greek Orthodox Church over the new calendar, a schism also occurred within the Russian Orthodox Church. The reason for the schism had nothing to do with the calendar issue. Rather, the split was motivated by the overthrow of the throne of the Romanov dynasty in Russia and the seizure of power by the Communists – the Bolsheviks. During the October Revolution of 1917, the head of the Russian church was Patriarch Tikhon. The Bolshevik revolutionaries were struggling to gain power and began to calculate which areas of the old regime needed to be purged. The main two pillars of the old regime were the imperial family and the Russian Orthodox Church. Tsar Nicholas II was murdered in 1918. That same year in January, the leading high priest of the Russian Church, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev, also perished. His murder foreshadowed the fate of other dignitaries of the Church.

Due to the great persecution of the church hierarchy, many of the leaders fled Russia to save themselves from being imprisoned. After the death of Patriarch Tikhon (who anathematized the Bolsheviks and their “Satanic power” and urged the faithful to reject any alliance with the Communists), the Bolsheviks continued to apply pressure on church leaders to make concessions into the 1920’s. However, neither the caretaker of the patriarchal throne, Metropolitan Peter Polyanski (Kruticki), nor his deputy, Archbishop Serafim Uglichki, submitted to Bolshevik power. They knew that the church could not function properly if it became subordinate to the secular authorities. Archbishop Serafim and other leaders concluded that the only solution was to decentralize the church and “descend into the catacombs” (e.g., turn to illegal activity).

³² *Kiss of Judas*, 119-20. Author’s emphasis.

However, a large number of bishops who were persecuted and desired to remain in their positions chose to collaborate with the atheist government:

“At the end of 1926, 117 bishops were sent into exile. The administration of the church was completely disrupted. The caretaker of the throne was Metropolitan Sergius, and the second-in-command was Metropolitan Peter Kruticki. Quite suddenly in March 1927, Sergius was released. The reason immediately became clear. The Bolsheviks found their Judas. Metropolitan Sergius acquiesced to the conditions of the Bolsheviks. He convened a Synod in Moscow which was attended only by the former reformer-heretics. On July 29, 1927, they issued the infamous Declaration that recognized the Soviets as the legitimate government of Russia.”³³

Here is the reaction of the bishops in prison and living in exile to the opening of relations between the Russian Church led by Metropolitan Sergius and his Synod with the Communists on the other side:

“The declaration of Metropolitan Sergius and his act of betrayal was unanimously condemned by all the leaders, both those imprisoned in exile and abroad. Thus, Metropolitan Peter Kruticki, the potential replacement to Sergius, once he heard of this Declaration, urged the bishops to renounce Metropolitan Sergius and to cease mentioning his name in worship services.”³⁴

Bishops in the diaspora led by Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitski considered the Russian Church (in Russia) to become “graceless” because of its deviation from the canon. In other words, they considered the Russian Church as no longer possessing the presence of the Holy Spirit. This meant that the Russian Church was heretical and was no longer able to lead people to salvation. Such a belief was shared not only by Metropolitan Anthony but also by Metropolitan Iosif of St. Petersburg, founder of the “Russian Catacomb Churches” (the illegal underground churches). They ascribed their apostolic succession to derive from Patriarch Tikhon.

After the dispersion of the Russian bishops and priests in various Western countries, where Communism did not hold power, in the town of Sremski Karlovtsi in Serbia, the Russian Church Abroad (meaning “outside the borders of Russia”) was established under the leadership of Metropolitan Khrapovitski. This other Russian Church openly opposed the Communists and severed all official ties with the Moscow Patriarchate. The Russian Church Abroad considered Moscow as a “false church” based on the foundation of the “Sergian” heresy.

The headquarters of this church were established, and still remain, in Canada. After Metropolitan Anthony, other church heads included Metropolitans Anastasy, Filaret, and the current elderly Metropolitan Vitaly. In recent times, the Russian Church Abroad has experienced an internal schism. One faction led by Archbishop Lavra began to move closer to the Moscow Patriarchate in a desire to reunite with it. Strongly opposing this faction, Metropolitan Vitaly, the legitimate leader of the Russian Church Abroad, broke away from the

³³ *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

“ecumenists” and founded his own synod. His group maintains the previous policy of refusing to recognize the “graceless” Orthodox churches that participate in the global ecumenical movement, including the World Council of Churches.³⁵

In his commentary in the newspaper *Orthodoxy* on the efforts of the Moscow Patriarchate to merge with the “Pro-ecumenical” wing of the Russian Church Abroad led by Lavrov, Alexey II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, attempted to downplay the conflict between the two churches:

“All believers are well aware that division in the Church of Christ is like a cancerous growth in a healthy body. The Russian Church offers the best way to overcome this tribulation, which has shaken us since the times of the Tsars... This is why the term ‘schism’ is not applicable to the relationship of Moscow with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. No one has created a rival synod. Only in accordance with the decree of Tikhon, at that time the Patriarch of Moscow, was there established a temporary autonomous exarchate for the Russian diaspora. Fortunately, the political and personal wounds are well behind us, and it is time for us to reunite with our native brothers and clergy who minister to a major group of Russian immigrants.”³⁶

However, as we saw earlier, despite the potential merger of the official Russian Orthodox Church with the “schismatic” synod of Lavrov, schism still exists. The newly formed Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile, headed by Metropolitan Vitaly, refused to unit with the official Russian church. Metropolitan Vitaly still considers himself and his synod to hold the exclusive right of church hierarchy as conveyed by apostolic succession through Patriarch Tikhon and his successors.

On the other hand, today’s official Russian Orthodox Church (that is, the one anathematized as the “Sergianistic” Church), which the Metropolitan Vitaliy and his predecessors consider as “without grace”, considers itself as “canonical” and “with effectual grace” while it views other “schismatic” churches as “without grace”. Recognizing that in Ukraine there exist schisms among Orthodox believers, Patriarch Alexey comments in the interview previously cited:

“All sons and daughters of the Russian Orthodox Church are continually disturbed by the church schism in Ukraine. Thus, [the schism arises] in the first place not out of strictly spiritual or liturgical issues, but rather political and ethnic factors. One part of the population of Ukraine has historical ties to Poland, another to Russia, and other parts to other nations. This division is reflected in the image of religious behavior, which some politicians and journalists portray as a clash of doctrine between the Roman Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox. In the function as an alleged ‘stabilizer’ thus arose **the self-proclaimed and canonically illegitimate Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate of Kiev**. In so doing, notice how far they go in their ambition of **schism**, desiring at any cost to establish their own Patriarch!”³⁷

³⁵ See *The Kiss of Judas*, 46-9 and 194-7.

³⁶ *Orthodoxy, News of the Serbian Patriarchate*, Issue 910, February 15, 2005, 10.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Author’s emphasis.

And here is what Roman Miz, Greek Orthodox priest from Serbia and by nationality a Ukrainian, states about the number of Orthodox churches that operate in the Ukraine (some of which are “canonical” while others are not). In addition to naming the three largest Orthodox churches in Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), the “schismatic” Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate), and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, Miz also names others that the Patriarch of Moscow had neglected to mention:

“Besides these three, there function in Ukraine six other Orthodox churches: the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Ancient Orthodox Church, the Independent Orthodox Fellowship, the Apocalyptic Orthodox Church, and the Greek Orthodox parish. But that is not all. Additionally, there exist three other churches: the Russian Orthodox Church of Old Believers (Bilokrinic hierarchy), the Russian Orthodox Church of Old Believers (without priests), and the True Orthodox Church.”³⁸

Let us leave the Orthodox Russians to come to a peaceful consensus as to whom the apostolic succession truly belongs and who does and does not possess the holy canons. Let us move on to the next section of this chapter to say a few words about the schisms in the Bulgarian and Serbian Orthodox Churches.

Schism in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church

Other schisms besides those in the Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches with bitter animosity between the two opposing Synods took place. The schism in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church is a relatively recent phenomenon. Namely, in the 1990’s in Bulgaria there arose two Orthodox Synods, one the so-called “canonical” church led by Patriarch Maxim and a second “schismatic” group under the leadership of Patriarch Pimen.

At this juncture, we should recall the fact that in a time of schism, the “canonical” church rejects the other group as lacking “effectual grace” in the hierarchy of the schismatic group. Conversely, the schismatics also reject the legitimacy of the church from which they had separated.

However, at the end of the twentieth century, the Bulgarian Church experienced an easing in tensions and schism. The Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coast writes about the “healing” of the schism in early 1998:

“With great joy, the Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coast received news that the Pan-Orthodox Council in Sofia healed the schism that had taken place over the entire previous decade in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. This cancerous wound had posed a threat not only to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and people, but it also threatened to spread to other local Churches... **The Bulgarian hierarchy, which until yesterday was torn by schism, was not really a hierarchy until it finally received recognition by the Pan-Orthodox Council.** At the same time, the Orthodox Patriarch was excommunicated and clearly made to understand that his actions in leadership were conducted with a

³⁸ Miz, 4.

sectarian spirit and conducted outside the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Church – his position was **illegitimate, unlawful, and void**. That also applied to the recognition of non-canonical church groups in Italy as under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as well as interference in the internal order of the Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Coast and the Serbian Orthodox Church through the ‘ordination’ of ‘bishop’ Miras Dedeic, a former priest expelled with anathema from the Great Church of Constantinople. The healing of the cancerous schism not only helped the Bulgarian Church, but also removed the growths and wounds of the evil and vicious tumors that threatened to infect other Orthodox churches in different areas.”³⁹

However, despite the “healing of the schism” proclaimed by the Metropolitan, the schism reappeared after a short time. This time, the schism arose from a group of clergy from the official church led by “Patriarch” Inokentije. The events of July 2004 reveal that the official church was supported by the government on this occasion to resolve the “schism” with the help of the police. *The Evening News* of July 23, 2004 describes how the followers of the schismatic Patriarch were prevented from exercising their religious duties:

“Bulgarian media reported that coordinated actions of the police forces evicted followers of the ‘Alternative Patriarch’ Inokentije from nearly 250 churches across Bulgaria. Some churches were sealed up, while others were turned over to representatives of the official Synod of Patriarch Maxim. In a few situations, police resorted to force to overcome resistance and arrested several of the most ardent supporters of the ‘Alternative Patriarch.’”⁴⁰

By all accounts, the Bulgarian state and church will need quite some time to shake off the impact of the previously described unpleasant events. Especially due to the reason, that still remains, that in Bulgaria exists the “schismatic” Old Calendar movement which though it lacks recognition by the official church and other “canonical” churches, yet it maintains relations with Old Calendar movements in other countries. This movement poses strong resistance to the official church hierarchy. Hieromonk Sava Janjic in his book in 1995 describes the circumstances of schism in the Orthodox Churches:

“This is the current situation. Against all the organized ecumenical operations of Constantinople and other national Orthodox churches, as well as the growing papal appetite of Patriarch Bartholomew, **an international traditionalist front of resistance has arisen. Current members include: the Russian Church Abroad, the Old Calendar Church of Metropolitan Cyprian, the Romanian Old Calendar Church, and the Bulgarian Old Calendar Church under the bishop Fotius.** All of these churches are interrelated in liturgical fellowship and adhere to a unique ecclesiastical position. In addition, though not in official canonical relations, they maintain relations with a large number of national churches opposed to ecumenism, especially the Patriarchy of Jerusalem under Diodorus.”⁴¹

³⁹ *Orthodoxy: News of the Serbian Patriarchy*, Issue 759, November 1, 1998, 1. Author’s emphasis.

⁴⁰ *Evening News*, July 23, 2004, 13.

⁴¹ Sava Janjic, *Ecumenism and the Time of Apostasy*, 69. Emphasis from Janjic.

Schisms in the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC)

Neither was the Serbian Orthodox Church spared of schism in the 20th century which has continued into the 21st century (although few Serbs realize this). Schism is evidenced by the events in North America that have also impacted the situation on the Balkan Peninsula. Specifically, in the realm of the SOC in the last half of the 20th century, three schisms took place: the so-called “American schism”, then the Macedonian Orthodox Church, and finally the formation of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church.

Regarding the two former schisms, Protodeacon L. Rankovic in his book comments:

“After the war, within the Serbian Orthodox Church occurred two ‘extremely unpleasant’ events, which left their ‘harmful effects’ in the life of the church. The first event of the Church occurred in the territory of the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, where the church declared itself autonomous and called itself the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The second event was the so-called ‘church schism in America’. Otherwise, in the previous history of the Serbian Orthodox Church ‘there was never recognized any form of schism.’ At the Clergy and People’s Synod in Okhrid in October 1958, they announced the ‘restored Archbishopric of Okhrid’. Also they appointed as ‘the Archbishop of Okhrid and Metropolitan of Macedonia’ the Bishop Dositej of Toplichki. The charter for the Macedonian Orthodox Church was issued. The only tie to the Serbian Church, as they had agreed at that time, was supposed to be the face of a common Patriarch, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Since 1967, the church in Macedonia has separated completely. Though the church attests to its independence, it is not accepted in the Orthodox world.”⁴²

According to Metropolitan Amfilohije whom was cited earlier in this chapter, as well as many other references, Orthodoxy teaches that the clerical activities of “schismatic” churches have no salvific grace. This leads us to the conclusion that the majority of the Macedonian people, despite being devoted to the Orthodox faith, are distant from Christ and salvation because their church lacks canonicity. Affirming this conclusion is Alexey II, Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church in commenting on the establishment of the autocephalous Macedonian church:

“It is not possible merely to stay on the sideline in a situation where **millions of Orthodox believers in the heart of Europe are outside of canonical fellowship and the saving graces of the holy Sacraments.**”⁴³

Let us examine more closely the reasons leading up to schism in the Orthodox world and depriving of “salvation” from a large number of people, despite their affiliation and confession of the Orthodox faith.

⁴² Ljubomir Rankovic, *The Life of the Serbian Church*, (Valjevo, 1989) 128.

⁴³ *Orthodoxy*, Issue 910, 11. Author’s emphasis.

The Founding of the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC)

The national Orthodox church of the Macedonian people proclaimed its own autonomy and independence from the Serbian Orthodox Church in the second half of the twentieth century. Today, other canonical Orthodox Churches do not give official recognition to this church with regard to its canonicity as an independent (autocephalous) church. According to the thinking of “officially recognized” canonical churches, this breakaway Macedonian church is considered “heretical and schismatic” in which the Holy Spirit neither dwells nor works. For example, the Russian Orthodox Church does not respect the Macedonian Church’s right to existence, but rather views it as a product of schism within the Serbian Church that was left unresolved. In the previously cited interview, Russian Patriarch Aleksey II comments on the unresolved situation of the Macedonian Church:

“The Russian Orthodox Church is very concerned about the situation in Macedonia, which is somewhat reminiscent of the situation in Ukraine. We as a canonical Orthodox church do not maintain relations with the illegitimate so-called Macedonian Church and firmly stand on the position of the necessity of peaceful reconciliation with the Serbian Orthodox Church... Grounded in such canonical fellowship, we respect the decisions of Councils and the Synods of local Churches. **We condemn all sectarians** for they work turmoil and **fall under the condemnation** of canonical Churches.”⁴⁴

So we can see that the schismatic MOC falls under the condemnation of canonical churches. However, this very church also receives condemnation from other schismatic churches also under the condemnation of canonical churches. The schism within the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church and the formation of the MOC is also condemned by the Old Calendarist zealots of Mount Athos:

“**Three dark dates in the most recent history of the Serbian church:** September 13, 1958, when German was given the staff and vestments of the patriarchs, **June 17, 1959, when the schismatic Macedonian Church was officially recognized**, and May 11, 1963, when Proto. Stefan Lastavica was ordained as bishop of the Middle Eastern American-Canadian Eparchy.”⁴⁵

This quotation informs us that the Serbian Orthodox Church during the reign of Patriarch German gave official recognition to the independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, which the zealots consider as “one of the darkest dates in the recent history” of the Serbian Church. As we familiarize ourselves with the independence of the MOC in the twentieth century, we will conclude that the current relationship between some of the Orthodox churches truly has nothing to do with the Bible or the Holy Spirit, but rather stems from confusion and interference in one another’s affairs. Before we do that, though, let us go back further into history to examine the developments regarding the original founding of the Archbishopric of Ohrid and its relationship to neighboring Orthodox churches.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Author’s emphasis.

⁴⁵ *The Kiss of Judas*, 58. Author’s emphasis.

Indeed, the history will reveal to us that once upon a time, 10 centuries ago, the Serbian Orthodox Church of the people at that time faced a similar situation with the church in Macedonia. In the same “canonized” way, these churches were also separated just as the Serbian and Macedonian churches are today.

The Formation and Development of the Archbishopric of Okhrid

The establishment of the national church of the Macedonian Slavic people is closely tied to the founding of the Macedonian state in the Balkans. This church is called the Archbishopric of Okhrid (for a time, it was a Patriarchate). Even through occasions of minor and major problems, including falling under different political jurisdictions leading up to its eventual abolition, the church has been able to survive up to today. Jonas Misevski comments on the historical origin and path of this church:

“After the death of the Bulgarian king Peter in 969, the Macedonian Slavs took advantage of the internal crises in the country by forming an uprising and creating an independent state. Samuil became the head of the new state in 1000 and was crowned by the Pope. His state expanded quite aggressively. By the beginning of the eleventh century, his empire included Macedonia, Thessalonica, Epirus, Albania, **the Serbian lands of Bosnia and Srem**, and Bulgaria on the Danube. Samuil first set up his capital in Prespa and later moved it to Okhrid.

After the formation of the state, King Samuil began to form its own church, which in history became known as the Archbishopric of Okhrid or the Patriarchate of Okhrid. The formation of the new church was greatly facilitated by Kliment and Nahum who were very active in the spiritual and cultural education spheres.

The state created by Samuil on Macedonian soil lasted fifty years. During the time of its emergence and independence, the birth of the ethnicity of the Macedonian Slavs took place.

After the fall of Samuil’s kingdom in 1018, the Byzantines ruled the land but did not abolish the Patriarchate of Okhrid. They did reduce it to the level of an Archbishopric and subordinated its interests to Byzantium. **The Archbishopric of Okhrid consisted of 31 eparchies** in modern-day Macedonia, Epirus, Thessalonica, Bulgaria, **Serbia**, and Albania. All these countries were part of the Byzantine Empire. Thus, Okhrid emerged as an important religious center for the majority of nations on the Balkan Peninsula.”⁴⁶

After its founding, the Archbishopric experienced separation and autonomy. It granted independence to several other bishoprics (Serbian, Bulgarian) as national churches. Okhrid maintained its autonomy for all of eight centuries. Then, in 1767 Okhrid lost its independence and fell under the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (thanks to an accord between the Ecumenical Patriarch Samuil and Turkish Sultan Mustafa III).

⁴⁶ *Religion and Friendship: a Collection of Texts*, (Belgrade, 1988) 393-4. Author’s emphasis.

One hundred years later, the deal was annulled by the decision of the Turkish Sultan on February 28, 1870 to establish a separate Bulgarian exarchate on the territory of Macedonia. The Macedonian Orthodox people now had the freedom to choose to belong to a church either of Slavic origin (Bulgaria) or of Greek origin (Constantinople).

Although the majority of Macedonians had initially chosen to align with the Bulgarian church, they soon realized that the intentions of the Bulgarians were no different than those of Constantinople. Specifically, the aims of both churches were directed toward depriving the Macedonians of their national identity and imposing upon them their own culture. They offered the Macedonians the grim prospects either of becoming Greeks or Bulgarians.

From another direction, the Serbian church which possessed religious as well as cultural and social ambitions attempted to co-opt the Macedonians into its sphere of influence as the Ottoman Empire was decaying (in fact, the Serbs considered the Macedonians as “Southern Serbs”):

“Amidst the two churches that were already present [in Macedonia], there also emerged the cultural influence of the Serbian church, manifested by its efforts to appoint Serbs as bishops of the country’s eparchies. Serbs replaced Greek bishops in Prizren, Skopje, and Debar. The eparchies were then proclaimed to belong to the Serbian church rather than the Greeks. Thus, in political tensions stemmed not only from the presence of Roman Catholics and Protestants, but also from three different Orthodox churches.”⁴⁷

After the Balkan Wars of 1912-3, the territory of Macedonia was divided into three parts by Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece. Each of the three national Orthodox churches of these countries occupying Macedonia carried out persecution against the clergy of other sister Orthodox churches. Native Macedonians condemned the efforts of the Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks to eradicate their national identity. Here is the situation that emerged after the First World War, after the establishment of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and its impact on the identity of the Orthodox Church in Macedonia:

“The Serbian Church of 1918 in the new Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes also arose out of a merger into one unified church organization, for the territory of the Kingdom included three autocephalous churches: the Archbishopric of Belgrade and the Serbian Metropolitan with five eparchies, the Montenegro-Littoral Archbishopric and Metropolitan with three eparchies and the Karlovac Metropolitan with seven eparchies, then the church in Bosnia-Herzegovina with four eparchies, and **the Macedonian church with six eparchies, which by canonical law belonged to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Diplomatic negotiations between representatives of the Kingdom and Constantinople resulted in an accord. The state would pay Constantinople 1,500,000 million gold francs in exchange for the six Macedonian eparchies.** A royal edict called for the unification of all Orthodox churches in the Kingdom.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 395.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 396. Author’s emphasis.

So we observe that the Orthodoxy Eparchy in Macedonia under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was “purchased” on the account of the Orthodox Church in Serbia (after the establishment of the Kingdom it was called by its current name: the Serbian Orthodox Church), which itself had obtained independence from the Patriarchy of Constantinople 40 years previously.⁴⁹

During the Second World War, Joseph, the Metropolitan of Skopje, Vikentije, Bishop of Zletovsko-Strumica, and all priests refusing to pledge allegiance to the Occupation Forces were exiled to Serbia. The territory of Macedonia was divided by the Germans, Italians, and Bulgarians. The eastern part of Macedonia was annexed to Bulgaria, and its inhabitants were considered Bulgarians. According to author Jonas Misevski, Bulgarian Orthodox priests, who by ethnicity were Albanians, collaborated with the Fascist network and worked toward stripping the Macedonians of their national identity.

However, during the war on October 11, 1943, the General Headquarters of the People’s Liberation Army of Macedonia formed a religious wing tasked with organizing religious life in liberated areas. Another significant date occurred in October 1944 when in the village of Vranovci was organized a base for “the Preparatory Committee for the Organization of Church Life in Macedonia.” These wings of religious formation and later the Initiative Board were the first steps toward the creation of an independent Macedonian Orthodox Church.

Contrary to the official views of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Initiative Board convened its First Clergy and People’s Synod in Skopje on March 4, 1945. The unanimous decision of 300 delegates gave new birth to the Archbishopric of Ohrid and the creation of an independent Macedonian Orthodox Church.

A little while after this Assembly, the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church convened a conference of bishops in Belgrade on March 12. This conference concluded that the decision of the National Assembly of the Church in Skopje would have led to the violent shattering of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

After his return to the motherland in 1946, Patriarch Gavrilo Dozic refused to make any concessions in issuing approval for the establishment of an independent Macedonian Orthodox Church. He along with the entire Synod vigorously demanded the return of Serbian bishops led by the Metropolitan Iosif to Macedonia. Still, this did not happen because the return of the Serbian hierarchs was prevented by the new Communist government in conjunction with the Macedonian clergy. (It should be noted that a number of priests belonged to the Communist party.⁵⁰)

The “Initiative Board” working toward the establishment of an autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church attempted several times to contact officials of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Board repeatedly redefined its views, even to the extent of greatly limiting its requests for a

⁴⁹ The Orthodox Church in Serbia obtained its autonomy in September 1831 and became autocephalous (completely independent) on October 20, 1879 when the Patriarchate of Constantinople issued a Tomos of Autocephaly to the church in Serbia. See *Holy Prince Lazar*, Issue 1-2 (37-8), (Prizren 2002) 161.

⁵⁰ See *Holy Prince Lazar*, Issue 1-2 (37-8), (Prizren 2002) 163.

national church “with limited autonomy and personal union and recognition of the Serbian Patriarch as the head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.”⁵¹

On May 27, 1957, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church accepted this proposal. Subsequently, the Second Clergy and People’s Synod in Okhrid took place on October 4-6, 1958. All 219 delegates at the Synod unanimously voted to reconstitute the Archbishopric of Okhrid and the creation of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. They elected as Archbishop of Okhrid and Macedonia the Bishop Dositej of Toplicka, previously the vicar bishop under the Serbian Patriarch German. They also appointed bishops for the eparchies of Prespansk-Bitoljck and Zletovsko-Strumicka as well as voting on the charter of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

In the Church of St. Mina in Skopje on October 12, 1958, Bishop Dositej of Toplicka was inaugurated as Archbishop of Okhrid and Metropolitan of Skopje and Macedonia. However, in addition to the enthronement of the Archbishop (who already had a canonical position of leadership), another issue arose with regard to the ordaining of the other two Bishops of the newly formed Macedonian Orthodox Church. Not one other Orthodox bishop, not in Yugoslavia nor from abroad, was willing to work with Archbishop Dositej in laying hands on the new bishops of the autonomous Macedonian Orthodox Church. The idea even arose (according to the canons of the Orthodox Church regarding ordaining with laying of the hands, a new bishop must be confirmed by at least 3 other bishops, per Canon 4 of the First Ecumenical Council) that the other bishops could be ordained through liturgy led by Dositej himself. This idea posited that Dositej, in order to complete the process, could lay hands on the heads of the new bishops along and hold the hands (holy relics) of some dead saints (who when they were alive were bishops).⁵²

However, after the Holy Assembly of Hierarchs in June 1959, the Serbian Orthodox Church officially recognized the existence of the autonomous Macedonian Orthodox Church and nullified the provision of the Charter of the Serbian Orthodox Church that extended to the territory of Macedonia. One of the Macedonian bishops, the Bishop of Prespa-Strumicka, was ordained on July 19, 1959 by Serbian Patriarch German, Nikanor the Bishop of Bachka, and Dositej, the Archbishop of Macedonia.⁵³

Although relations with the Macedonian Orthodox Church in the beginning were normal as the official Serbian Orthodox Church accepted reality, later the situation became more complicated. Macedonian author Jonas Misevski explains:

“During 1961, relations rapidly began to change and turned cold. The leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church, despite the decision of 1959, still remained aloof from the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The decision [to officially recognize the Macedonian Orthodox Church] was never published in the ‘Official Gazette of the Serbian Orthodox Church’, nor was it reported to the Patriarch of Constantinople. Neither did the leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church present the Macedonian Orthodox Church to other Orthodox churches in the world. Then, there was visible opposition to the Macedonian church in terms of challenging the normative acts issued by the Clergy and

⁵¹ *Religion and Friendship: A Collection of Texts*, (Belgrade 1988).

⁵² See *Holy Prince Lazar*, Issue 1-2 (37-8), (Prizren 2002) 175.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 175.

People's Synod, primarily the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church. The Serbian church attempted to demote the Macedonian church by treating it as a metropolis within the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Archbishop as Metropolitan of Skopje. On May 23, 1966, the Holy Synod of Bishops attempted to strip the Macedonian Orthodox Church of its independence and success after 8 years of autonomy. They attempted to subjugate the church to the authority of the Serbian Orthodox Church by altering the Constitution of the Church.

Because of the intensified efforts of the Serbian Orthodox Church to deny the accord made in 1959, the Fifth Assembly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church on December 5, 1966 sent a written appeal to the Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church to grant autocephalous status to the Macedonian church which had met all canonical and legal requirements. However, the Synod of Bishops denied the request and instead announced their intention to take appropriate sanctions if the Macedonians were to declare independence.

Considering that the Church's proclamation of independence was done properly despite the opposition of the Serbian Orthodox Church and bearing in mind the practice of other Orthodox churches, the Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church on June 18, 1967 in Okhrid officially proclaimed the autocephaly of the Church. At that time, the Third Clergy and People's Assembly took place in Okhrid. This supreme church body upheld the decision of the Synod."⁵⁴

After declaring the independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and its "uncanonical" secession from the so-called "Mother Church", the Serbian Orthodox Church declared it to be a schismatic organization whose hierarchy fell out of liturgical and canonical communion. According to current officials and theologians of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Macedonian Church is under anathema, in spite of the fact that it adheres to the exact same beliefs held by other Orthodox churches.

Reflective of this perspective on the spiritual condition of the Macedonian Orthodox Church is Dr. Dimso Peric, Orthodox theologian and professor of the Faculty of Law in Belgrade. Particularly noteworthy is the priest's assertion that the Serbian Orthodox Church views Macedonia, formerly a Yugoslavian Republic, but currently an independent nation with international recognition, as South Serbia. He reflects the ethnic hatred and religious bigotry held by some of our people towards our southern neighbors:

"The modern Serbian Orthodox Church gave the widest degree of autonomy to Macedonia. Indeed, the Macedonians received the greatest privilege of autonomy in history, but they abused the privilege. Thus they condemned themselves to failure. They and those who abet them fall under the condemnation of the Holy Apostles, Ecumenical Councils, Local Councils, and holy Fathers. These leaders who participated in Councils exhorted the Church to remain One, Holy, Ecumenical, and Apostolic. Out of greed and with the assistance of the state authorities, the Macedonian hierarchy has violated this. The Church canons require their removal and expulsion from the Church. They fall

⁵⁴ *Religions and Friendship*, (Belgrade 1988) 398-9.

under the condemnation of the Lord Jesus Christ as they have torn up His bride (the Church of Christ). They have discarded apostolic succession nor do they have legitimate bishops. The Church consists of bishops, clergy, and believers. If it lacks any of these three components, it is not the Church of Christ. They have no bishops or clergy because they have forfeited apostolic succession. In what way, then, can they be considered as Church?... **Only recently did South Serbia (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) become its own state.** It should remember this fact... This little Orthodox nation that dwells in this region cannot stand alone. Their so-called Macedonian Orthodox Church has forfeited the blessings of Mother Church.⁵⁵ **What is without blessing is also under anathema.**”⁵⁶

Indeed, the theologians canonically recognized by the Serbian Orthodox Church probably have a point when they claim that the Macedonian church acted in an unauthorized manner by proclaiming its independence, because it did not act consistently within all the canons of the Orthodox Church. However, there is a more pertinent issue than simply why the “Mother Church” does not recognize and bless the Macedonian Church. What if the Serbian Orthodox Church simply normalized relations with the Macedonian Church? Doing this would aid in the “salvation of souls” of several hundred thousand Orthodox believers in Macedonia, who through no fault of their own find themselves under the auspices of a church that is “non-canonical”, “lacking effectual grace”, and “cursed”. Otherwise, according to the Serbian Orthodox Church, these Macedonian believers have no salvation!

Moreover, does not the “removal of blessing” on the part of the Serbian Orthodox Church represent an unexpected development, for the Macedonians share the identical beliefs as other Orthodox churches around the world?

On the other hand, the double-mindedness of the Orthodox Church in Serbia (e.g. the Serbian Orthodox Church) demands us to review its own past history. From the time of Saint Sava, the Serbian Orthodox Church itself obtained the designation of “Archbishopric” in a “non-canonical” way! Cedomir Marjanovic, author of *A History of the Serbian Church* supports this assertion that the declaration of independence by the Serbian Church under Saint Sava indeed deviated from the “sacred Orthodox canons”:

“Through his edict in 1018, Emperor Basil II had transferred to Patriarch Jovan, Archbishop of Ohkrud, the city of Ras. **Thus, Sava in ordinary circumstances should have obeyed Okhrud as his Archbishopric since the Church there was**

⁵⁵ Apparently desiring the “portions of blessing” to be accorded to the so-called “South Serbs”, the Serbian Orthodox Church, in spite of the existence of the official church structure in Macedonia, appointed its own “canonical” Archbishop of Ohkrud and Metropolitan of Skopje in the person of His Holiness Jovan (otherwise a citizen of Macedonia). This bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church, probably because of his open condemnation in the same spirit that the Autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church ought to submit to the leadership of Serbia (by implication, the Macedonian church is under anathema, Macedonians are in reality Serbs, the Macedonian Church is a schismatic organization, et al), engaged in insulting the religious and national sentiment of hundreds of thousands of citizens. Jovan was sentenced in July 2005 to prison for two and a half years. He was convicted (apparently with solid evidence) of fomenting ethnic hatred and religious intolerance. He served his sentence in the Idrizovo Prison in Skopje. (*Courier*, a daily newspaper, July 27, 2005, 5.)

⁵⁶ *Holy Prince Lazar*, Issue 1-2 (37-8), (Prizren 2002) 176-7. Author’s emphasis.

autocephalous. But Sava knew that the Archbishopric of Okhrid was subordinate to Constantinople and that Constantinople appointed the Archbishop of Okhrid. For these political reasons, Sava realized that even if he were to gain approval from Okhrid, he would still need to gain confirmation from the Church of Constantinople as well. **For all these reasons, Sava bypassed Okhrid and went to Nicea.**

But Sava's behavior insulted Demetrius Chomatianus, the current Archbishop of Okhrid, who lodged a protest. The protest resulted in **the expulsion of Jovan, Bishop of Prizren, and the installation of Sava as the new bishop.**"⁵⁷

The conflict between the Serbian and Macedonian Orthodox Churches has not abated. Instead of mutual respect and tolerance between these two "like-minded" Churches, heaps of mutual accusations and anathematizing continue in a downpour. This behavior is not in harmony with the teaching of Holy Scripture, which does not recognize any such "canonical rules" that prevail within Ecumenical Orthodoxy. However, the emergence of the so-called "Macedonian schism" in the Serbian Orthodox Church partially gave rise to the formation of another schism, this time in America. Let us examine this next schism.

American Schism in the Serbian Orthodox Church

Several main reasons explain the schism that occurred within the Serbian Orthodox Church as relating to the church in the motherland with the eparchy on the American continent.

According to Dr. Mirka Mirkovic, Bishop Dionisije Milivojevic who led the American-Canadian Eparchy, associated with extremist right wing Serbian emigrants (sympathizers of the Chetnik partisans during World War Two). Bishop Dionisije carried out verbal attacks on the Serbian Orthodox Church and accused the church in his motherland of indulging and collaborating with the Communist government in Yugoslavia. Dr. Mirkovic also alleges that the recognition of the independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church by the leadership of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its "betrayal of the Serbian people" was a key factor for the American eparchy's separation from canonical unity with the church in Yugoslavia.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Cedomir Marjanovic, *A History of the Serbian Church*, (Belgrade 2001) 67. Author's emphasis.

It would be quite interesting to describe briefly the events leading up to the elevation of the Serbian church to the rank of Patriarchate and the non-canonical proclamation of the Serbian church by the Archbishop. Specifically, the emperor Stefan Dusan (the Mighty) declared the Serbian Church as a Patriarchate. After the significant expansion of the Serbian state and the conquest of many lands (from the Sava and Danube in the North to the Aegean Sea in the South), the Serbian king wished to crown himself with the imperial crown. But, according to Byzantine tradition, no one except the Patriarch Archbishop had the right to crown the king's head. On Easter, April 9, 1346, a church council gathered in Skopje and proclaimed the Serbian church as patriarchate. Serbian Archbishop Joanicije was proclaimed as Patriarch immediately. The following week, April 16, 1346, Dusan received formal coronation as Emperor. (After this proclamation as Patriarchate, the Serbian church fell under the anathema of the Patriarchate of Constantinople from 1352 to 1375.) See: *Life of the Serbian Church*, 77-9 and *Religion and Friendship: A Collection of Texts* (Belgrade, 1988) 340-1.

⁵⁸ *Religion and Friendship*, (Belgrade 1988) 330-1.

From another angle, the monks of Esphigmenou on Mount Athos cite an article from an Orthodox chronicle published in America that takes a different point of view on the reasons leading to schism in the Serbian Orthodox Church:

“The admission of Bishop Dionisije and the American-Canadian Eparchy into the World Council of Churches in 1958 caused an unprecedented scandal among the higher authorities of the Serbian Orthodox Church, even in the Synod in Belgrade: ‘It is recognized in Belgrade that the willful and lawless conduct of the American-Canadian Ecumenical Eparchy at the request of Bishop Dionisije was received by the laity and the Patriarchate with great dismay and considered as a wanton and illegal act. The Senior Leadership of the Church has taken the appropriate measures for holding Bishop Dionisije accountable for his arbitrary and anti-canonical conduct. The people view this situation of the concordat as the most severe betrayal of faith, church, and nation.’ So Dionisije had become a partaker in the heresy of ecumenism even before it infected the church in Yugoslavia. The Church Synod continued official relations with Bishop Dionisije until 1964, when the very Synod suspended him. Only then did Dionisije realize that he was enslaved to the Synod in Belgrade. Thus, he broke off relations with Belgrade and manufactured a schism not because he wanted to preserve the purity of Orthodoxy, but rather because he wanted to preserve the bishop’s throne for himself.”⁵⁹

Also regarding Bishop Dionisije and other priests of the Serbian Orthodox Church in America are some excerpts from the Orthodox chronicle *Missionary* issue 5-6, Chicago, USA, 1958, on page 27 that include some disappointing details:

“The following facts might serve to form an evaluation of the character of Bishop Dionisije: ‘However, Bishop Dionisije deals in the trading and merchandizing of everything out of sentimentality and humanity even to the extent that he has an entire organization devoted to such a task. He hunts down and attacks individuals and even entire organizations. Bishop Dionisije is known to appear at formal events and forums without any of the external features of a bishop. His image is that of a high priest, but he clearly reveals himself to be a Tito. The priests do not lack money and comfortable places to live, but they work at night and conduct liturgy and preach to the people during the day.’”⁶⁰

Vladimir Mayevski writes in an article (published in the May-June 1958 edition of the *Troitski-Svetosavski Missionary*, number 3, Jordanville, USA) that Serbian Bishop Dionisije was a bitter rival of Bishop Nikolai Velimirovic during his stay in the United States. (This rivalry lasted all the way up to Nikolai’s mysterious death in the monastery of the Russian Church Abroad.) This excerpt from *The Kiss of Judas* is taken from writings by Vladimir Mayevski and Hieromonk Arsenije Tosovic and pertains to the life and death of Bishop Nikolai in America, as well as his relationship with leaders of the Serbian Orthodox Church at the time.

⁵⁹ *The Kiss of Judas*, 330-1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 330.

The first example is the text where Arsenije Tosovic explains the attitude of the so-called Serbian Orthodox Church in America, that is, how Father Dionisije had no kind sympathies toward Bishop Nikolai and, in fact, held a significant dose of animosity and hostility:

“The exodus from the enslaved motherland brought a large number of anti-Communist Serbian immigrants to America. One positive outcome in this otherwise bleak tragedy was the arrival of Bishop Nikolai. **Yet his mere presence in the midst of the local priests, and most of all Bishop Dionisije, provoked among them a great sense of bitter jealousy and malice.** Bishop Nikolai lived his first year in the US in the Serbian monastery of St. Sava in Libertyville (IL). But Nikolai was forced to leave the monastery and to find refuge in the sister Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. The circumstances regarding the death of Bishop Nikolai are found in an editorial in the Serbian magazine *Troicki-Svetosavski Missionary*:

‘When the body of Bishop Nikolai was hoisted into a hearse at the Serbian Church in New York and the nation said goodbye to its beloved Grandfather – then controversy among pious Serbs in the surrounding areas arose. Why was Bishop Nikolai forced to leave the Serbian monastery of St. Sava in Libertyville? **And here is one of the main culprits cited for Bishop Nikolai’s departure: the abbot and his harsh treatment of Nikolai. The abbot took up the practice of coming beneath the window of the Father’s room and started to yell and scream loudly:** ‘How long will this man sit here? How long will this man sow hatred and strife among us?’

Surely, the next logical question must be whether in an institution such as a monastery that a monk alone is permitted to express his feelings of hatred arbitrarily, or else does this reflect an expression of the collective attitude of the monastery toward Father Nikolai?’”⁶¹

That this animosity, most likely spurred by Bishop Dionisije and shared in some church circles against Bishop Nikolai, eventually contributed to the rather mysterious death of Nikolai is opined by Vladimir Mayevski in an article written two years after the death of Bishop Nikolai:

“And now with heavy heart, I move on to the most delicate part of our recollections. During the last years of the life of Bishop Nikolai, one Serb, a new immigrant, arrived at the monastery. The Bishop was not particularly pleased with him and sent him away from the monastery because he did not trust him. And so this man was absent with us for more than a year – when he suddenly reappeared at our place in the winter during a bitter snowstorm on the eve of the sudden death of the Bishop – Saturday, March 17, 1956. Because of the large snowfall and the inability to use a car, the Bishop had moved into the seminary building closer to the monastery and temple for a few days... Around 10 in the evening, the seminarians witnessed how the Serb entered the Bishop’s bedroom. After 11 PM, they saw the Serb with a coffee cup go into the bathroom for some water. He told them he was fetching some black coffee for the Bishop. The seminarians were quite surprised to hear that the Father wanted to stay up so late to drink coffee, which was

⁶¹ *The Kiss of Judas*, 329. Author’s emphasis.

forbidden by his doctor... How and why the Serb left the Father, no one had seen. This is the final memory of the last hours of Father Nikolai.

On the next day, Sunday, March 18, all the seminarians with the Abbot and singers traveled to a distant parish on a missionary trip. Bishop Nikolai was scheduled to conduct the liturgy in the monastery temple. At the appointed time, the bell in the temple rang as the attendees prepared to welcome the Bishop. But he did not show up. Then the Abbot Father Basil went to the seminary and knocked on the door of the Father's cell. There was no answer. The Abbot returned to the monastery and was informed by the warden to wait for the Bishop. And only after 15-20 minutes, the telephone rang: **the Serbian Bishop of the Eparchy, who previously had never taken any interest in Bishop Nikolai's health, suddenly called to inquire of his health.** Everyone at the monastery was shocked, for they knew that he had never shown any previous interest. The warden and I spoke and decided to go to the seminary. He knocked on the door, but there was no answer. Then he forced the door open. **The picture he saw was of the Bishop in his sleeping gown lying on the floor beside his bed with his feet pointed toward the door and head toward the window. The warden rushed and tried to sit the Bishop upright, but he immediately realized he was dead.** He found a small wound on the head of the Bishop and a rosary given to him by Russian nuns in his hand... The body of Father Nikolai was transferred to a bed and the first parastosi was conducted. **We also informed** the Metropolitan in New York **and Bishop Dionisije in Libertyville**, as well as the Serbian parish in Lackawanna, NY and others. We awaited the Serb's arrival. The Bishop's body was transferred after the great snowstorm into the monastery temple and was adorned in robes.

The evening started with the arrival of the Serbs and the coffin of the Bishop. A dispute ensued concerning where to bury the body. Here at the Russian monastery in line with the desire of the Bishop or at the Serbian monastery in Libertyville... **Early in the morning on the second day, Bishop Dionisije himself came, which from the very first moment surprised everyone at the monastery and seminary. In the presence of the monks and seminarians who had returned, Bishop Dionisije in reflecting on the end of the deceased Bishop Nikolai exclaimed: 'During his life, he bothered me very much... and after death, he brought me to the path of disaster.'**

Then several Serbs who accompanied Bishop Dionisije ran to the rooms where Bishop Nikolai had resided (in our home and seminary) and subjected them to utter desolation: they ripped open the suitcases and boxes and grabbed anything they particularly liked in hand. They were particularly interested in written letters and annotations of the Bishop. They loaded their plunder into their car and drove off. Other Serbs attempted to prevent this illegal ransacking and in the absence of the American government authorities shouted arguments and even condemned Father Dionisije for his rudeness... But it was all in vain.

When I arrived, **the rooms where Bishop Nikolai had resided portrayed an unprecedented scene of devastation: everything was dumped on the floor, including hundreds of letters, papers, boxes, etc. Such an image I had never before seen in my**

life! And the saddest thing was that they did this for the memory and legacy of one of the greatest Orthodox leaders of the Church, one of the theological giants of doctrine...”⁶²

As we have read, even before creating schism within the Orthodox Church, Bishop Dionisije, by the authors’ account, never demonstrated any level of “spirituality” and conducted his work in many areas. In the end, after Bishop Dionisije declared the autonomy of the American-Canadian Eparchy, the Bishop was removed of his episcopal rank in 1964 by the Holy Synod of Belgrade. A year earlier, his eparchy was divided into three parts (e.g. three new eparchies). However, even after these developments, the situation did not calm down, and tensions remained. Here is an excerpt written by a Serbian priest about the time of Patriarch German more than 20 years after the incident in 1989:

“The second ‘American’ schism occurred in 1963 when the Bishop opposed the division of his American Canadian Eparchy. The situation today is identical to that more than a decade ago, as described by theologian Justin Popovic: ‘On this occasion, the Orthodox brethren in America, both clergy and laity, **divided and split into two opposing camps**, which from then to now still have not reconciled...’

The conflict has not been resolved. Two years ago, a group of Serbian intellectuals sent a letter to ‘German, Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Holy Assembly, and the Holy Synod’.

The intellectuals expressed ‘their deep concern’ about the rift that ‘like a living cancer has spread to Western Europe and Australia’ and appeal to their wisdom to find ‘the path of reconciliation... between the divided and quarreling brothers of St. Sava.’ The letter calls upon the Church to ‘review and change the decisions that led to the schism.’ For ‘the right to a wrong decision belongs to everyone in the church, but no one has the right to schism, because there is no right to commit sin.’

At the start of 1989, Patriarch German gave an interview about the ‘American Schism’: ‘As for the problem of the Church split in America, there was never any anathema. Rather, it pertained to church order. We hope that there will be a sea of peace and unity, which would be a great joy for our Church and Orthodoxy at large.’”⁶³

After reviewing the most interesting details of recent Orthodox schisms, let us now turn to the examination of actual Orthodox sects that have arisen in the last several hundred years.

Sects Hatched in the Wings of Orthodoxy

Besides the many schisms which have occurred within ecumenical Orthodoxy, the most recent and notable of which we have described already in this chapter, the so-called “holy, catholic, and apostolic” church has given birth to a number of very bizarre sects. If we were to measure these

⁶² *The Kiss of Judas*, 327-8. Author’s emphasis.

⁶³ Lyubomir Rankovic, *Life of the Serbian Church*, (Valjevo, 1989) 130. Author’s emphasis.

sects by their deviation from the norm, they greatly exceed the degree of weirdness of sects spawned from other religions (especially from Protestantism).

This author is convinced that the following information will shock many Orthodox believers in Serbia. They are used to hearing or reading about the horrible acts of Satanists or other occult groups and then are maliciously attributed to minority religious communities of Protestant origin. In no small way does Eastern Orthodoxy lag behind the churches of the West in terms of producing sects. Indeed, if some of the sects of Orthodoxy were to operate on the territory of Serbia, it would be truly dangerous, as this chapter will demonstrate.

In his extensive book *A Scientific Justification of Religions, Church, and Sects*, Orthodox author Lazar Milin spends the bulk of his work toward addressing the “problem” of the activity and teaching of minority religious communities originating from western culture. Yet, Milin condescends to inform his readers a bit about the sects that emerged out of Russian Orthodox soil:

“However, Protestantism is not the exclusive source of sectarianism. This is confirmed by the fact that sects existed long before Protestantism. Sects on the fringes of the Roman Catholic Church existed, **as they have also existed even among Orthodox. Convincing proof is found in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church which abounded with various sects.**

The Russian Church after Patriarch Nikon, who revised translation errors in the Slavonic liturgical books according to Greek liturgical texts, experienced the schismatic phenomenon called ‘**Old Rites Believers**’ or ‘**Old Believers**’. This schism and others spawned many sects. We shall mention them briefly so that we might understand how many goes astray when he separates himself from the Church.

The schismatic group of ‘Old Believers’ is split into two branches: **Popovtsi** and **Bezpopovtsi**. The former group recognized and submitted to clergy. The second group rejected the authority of priests, undoubtedly under the influence of Protestantism, and considered all members to be priests.

The **Popovtsi** divided into eight different branches, often because of very slight, almost comical, issues. The **Aushkovtsi**, for example, opposed church heritage! The **Chernobyltsi** opposed the shaving of beards and refused to carry passports and official government documents.

The **Bezpopovtsi** enjoyed a wider variety of sects, even some that were quite radical. The **Fedoseyevtsi** opposed marriage. **Stranitsi** or **Spelevtsi** wandered from forest to forest and the wilderness in an effort to flee the government authorities, because they considered any work for the government to be of service to Antichrist. The **Pastukhovtsi** eschewed bridges made of stone, money, and travel documents. The **Samokreshchentsi** baptized themselves. **The Akulinovtsi practiced sexual immorality. The Stefanovtsi were simply horrible. They rejected marriage and cast newborn infants to the animals as a sacrifice of peace.** The **Srednyatsi** considered Wednesday as the first day

of the week! The **Chislentsi**, however, considered Thursday to be the Lord's Day and sin as a first step toward salvation!

The **Xlysti**, or 'God's People' as they called themselves, believed that God the Father descended from Heaven in 1645 and became a man in the person of the peasant Danilo Filipovic and God the Son came in 1649 in the person of Ivan Suslov. The final way 'appeared' in the special Tsar Peter III who was expelled from the throne and strangled, but the Xlysti believed that he was in hiding somewhere and would come again to judge sinners. **The Skoptsi taught that Christ demanded His disciples to castrate themselves and for women to amputate their breasts in order to inherit the kingdom of God.** Their prophet Andrey Selivanov was 'Christ incarnate' and the female peasant Akulina was the incarnate 'Mother of God'. **Napoleonovtsi** believed that God became human in the person of Napoleon, who came to punish the world, especially Russia. Among the **Molokani** arose two sects: the **Sabbatarians** and the **Communists (Christians)**. The **Joanites** or **Johnites** took their name from the famous priest John Sergeyev of Kronstadt, whose truly holy life brought him renown as a living saint. They declared John to be the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in spite of the very energetic protests of Father John. The Joanites remained firm in their conviction. Christ was at the door!

In addition to these eight sects, there were others directly spawned from teachings of various Protestant groups. Such groups included the Shtundists, Pashkovtsi, Skakuni (similar to Quakers), Mennonites, Baptists, and others.

As is undoubtedly clear, not only did sects abound in Protestantism. **They also flourished in Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, in the ancient church.**"⁶⁴

With regard to the first schism mentioned by Milin driven by church reform under Patriarch Nikon that led to several sects arising from Orthodoxy, the issues were by no means trivial. Many Russians supported by the lower ranks of clergy rejected Nikon's revisions of the holy books. They considered the Russian Empire and Orthodox Church to be God's representatives on earth. At the time, Czarist Russia, unlike Greece which had already been conquered by Islamic leaders, was the only independent Orthodox empire. In their view, Russia's independence depended on the guaranty of God's benevolence because of the infallibility of previous church teaching. These Russians considered the revision of their liturgical books to conform more closely to those of the Greek church as apostasy. They pointed as evidence to God's anger having been revealed in the vanquishing of the Greek church, thus implying their inferior spiritual state relative to the Russians.

Priests, monks, and laity who remained loyal to the old rites (which, among other things, retained the two-fingered sign of the cross, not the later revision of three fingers) strongly resisted the introduction of the new rites. Indeed, even up to the beginning of the twentieth century, over 10 million Old Believers were living in Russia.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Lazar Milin, *Church and Sects*, 53-5. Author's emphasis.

⁶⁵ See: Roman Miz, *The First Russian Church Schism*, (Novi Sad, 1998) 5. Author's emphasis.

However, the resistance offered by the “Old Believers” was more than fanatical and could be compared to the activity that defines modern satanic cults and sects. Specifically, during the peak of the conflict with the official church and government officials in the seventeenth century and afterwards, there were frequent suicides, self-immolations, and armed conflicts led by a national army of armed monks, whose own monasteries proved to be very reliable fortresses. Roman Miz, Greek Catholic priest in Novi Sad, describes these phenomena based on his extensive research:

“People seeking the Kingdom of God who saw it departing their own land decided to leave their country themselves. **Entire villages gathered in church buildings, locked themselves inside, nailed the doors shut, set fire to the building during liturgy, and burned everything up.** The State and Church made great efforts and somehow succeeded in curbing this phenomenon. Yet they could not entirely eradicate it, for there were still cases large and small of self-immolation, including some special cases. The last recorded incident of self-immolation in Russia occurred in 1896.”⁶⁶

“The first recorded acts of self-immolation occurred from 1676 to 1683 in the village of Pozhehansk where 1,920 people took their own lives. **By the start of the 1690’s, no fewer than 20,000 people** (up to the decree of 1685, no more than 3,800 people, more incidents occurred afterward) burned themselves. Further incidents took place throughout the eighteenth century. One incident involved the self-immolation of 2,700 people. **Besides self-immolation, people committed suicide through intentional drowning, starvation, and self-burial.** Suicide among schismatics extended into the nineteenth century. In the year 1820, some peasant named Yushkin killed himself. In 1827, his son Ivan Yushkin along with 35 other peasants **killed themselves.** In Olenesk region, 15 people burned themselves alive in 1860. In 1897 they discovered underground graves in the walls of Ternovo of fanatics. Kovalyov, **who had buried them alive,** regretted that he was unable to bury himself.”⁶⁷

“On the Solovetski Islands was an abbot named Nicanor, a retired archmandrite of the Savin Monastery, then the treasurer Geronti, and cell hermit Azariah. The monks had abundant reserves of food, 90 guns, and 900 tons of gunpowder. The monastery was fortified with thick walls. The defenders fought fanatically. The siege of the monastery lasted 7 years. Throughout this period, there were 3 different commanders of the Imperial Army. The monastery finally fell in 1676 after a monk Feokist betrayed them and showed the Imperial Army a secret passage.”⁶⁸

“Old Rites Believers” really had little choice. If they wanted to preserve their faith yet simultaneously overcome the official church leadership, they would also be forced to confront the opposition of the Czarist government against whom they had no strength. And no matter what they taught, the law of April 7, 1685 mandated the burning of unrepentant “Old Believers” at the stake.⁶⁹ Thus, the “Old Believers” chose to burn themselves alive rather than to submit to torture by the state authorities.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 14. Author’s emphasis.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 69-70. Author’s emphasis.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

Moreover, a fact which saddens us, the admission by Orthodox believers that the fringes of their churches gave birth in the recent and distant past to a number of sects, some of which cannot possibly even compare with contemporary Protestant religious fellowships (for example, the “Stefanovitsi” who threw their babies to the wild beasts, etc.) is reflected in contemporary literature dealing with this issue.

We gain additional information on modern Orthodox sects from the book *The New Sectarianism*. Russian theoretician, author, and philosopher Mikhail Epstein deals with a variety of strange religious movements similar to those introduced by Milin earlier. Many of these sects are indigenous, originally spawned in Russia. A great many of such sects originated in the decade of the 1960’s of the twentieth century, or a mere 50 years ago.⁷⁰ Here is what Epstein writes in his preface to define “new sectarianism”:

“Which sects are discussed in this book? The names themselves sound exotic: ‘Blood Worshipers’, ‘Red Hordes’, ‘People of the Ark’, ‘Householders’, ‘Sinners’, ‘Kind Believers’, and others. However, in this there is nothing surprising. The names of these old sects also sound very unusual: among the multitude of similarities and themes, we find ‘Child Bearers’ and ‘Non-child Bearers’, ‘Deaf People’ and ‘Those who Sing Off Key’, ‘Fugitives’ (‘Those in Hiding’), ‘Shakers’, ‘Flagellators’ (‘Christ’), ‘People of the Hole’, ‘People who Do Not Pray’, ‘People Going Nowhere’, and others.”⁷¹

Epstein divides these sects which still exist today into several groups: religious sects that address daily living, religious-barbarian sects, religious sects that relate to national issues, religious-atheistic sects, religious-eschatological sects, and religious-literary sects.

Let us read some excerpts from the author about each of these groups (with the exception of the literary sects). Among religious sects pertaining to daily living, we have “Food Saints”, “Housewives”, and “Creators of Things”:

“**Food Saints**’ bless the very act of cooking food and conduct worship methods in the systems of using different food products. ‘Food Saints’ consider every area of food and drink as being filled with sacred meaning and incorporated into ritual, elements which change depending on concrete dietary regimes... ‘Food Saints’ claim that it was through food that the most important events of the religious history of mankind occurred:

‘Sin came through food – from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Redemption comes through food – from the wooden cross, blood, and flesh of Christ. The temptations of Satan that deceived Adam: eat and you will not die – were fulfilled in the Son of God, whose flesh we eat and whose blood we drink.’”⁷²

“**Housewives**’ – A religious-cultural order that professes the values of home care and creative ways to expand it. The order of ‘Housewives’, as they sometimes appear in Western Europe, are spread throughout many countries in the world, but the experience

⁷⁰ See Mikhail Epstein, *The New Sectarianism*, (Aurora: Novi Sad, 2001) 20-1.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 21. See also <http://philosophy.ru/library/epstein/02/ns.gibaidulina.html>

⁷² *Ibid.*, 37, 40. Author’s emphasis.

of their Russian brethren is considered particularly noteworthy to the extent that they have been forced to stand out and preserve their way of life in an era of homelessness... The home is exemplified in the essays of the 'Housewives' as ideally organized, a spiritual home, sealed for the owner and those who produce his inner world."⁷³

"Creators of Things' is a union of followers and preparers of things. They preach an attitude of 'discipleship' regarding the world of handy objects and its special meaning for the human spirit. They use different names for themselves: 'Sages of Things', 'Lovers of Things', 'Sainthood of Things', 'Creation of Things'... 'Creators of Things' spend all their time in the preparation of home and 'handy' things, in order to truly become like God, who was the Creator of all things – they want to live 'not in a stranger's, but in their own created world'... [A fifth unstated group] conduct special rituals 'to sanctify things', in prayer giving worship to them and giving in them qualities in the image and likeness of God."⁷⁴

In addition to these seemingly naïve and relatively harmless sects, there exist other sects that when one examines their teachings, one must conclude that such sects bring about various forms of mental illness to their members. Among the religious-barbarian sects, "Fools" seem to embody this characteristic the most, per Mikhail Epstein:

"Fools' are one of the most popular sects with a teaching that is well known, even if it is not very well studied. We present excerpts from the array of the most reliable sources:

'Fools' are the holy fools of our time, only that their lunacy does not consist of violating generally accepted rules of behavior, but rather blessed, illogical acts to them, to the extent that these rules themselves are already turned upside down by an ignorant society... In contrast to civically minded people, 'Fools' don't protest, don't put aside, nor do they fight, **but they find deep down in their soul foolishness – they live out foolishness** through rules laid down by fools. The system is so cruel and without humanity, that only foolishness gives it some degree of warmth something even distantly akin to humanity... Who are 'Fools' and how do they differ from fools? They are fools by intent and deliberately play the role of the fool, since in general they are not fools from birth."⁷⁵

But besides these, perhaps likeable, fools, Orthodoxy in Russia has spawned many other more dangerous sects. Their rituals resemble those of the Satanic cults. The following excerpt describes one of these sects classified under "Religious-National" and labeled "Blood Worshipers":

"This form of sectarianism today **presents the greatest danger to our society**. In it are preserved the very worst superstitions which exalt one nation at the expense of another and proclaim it to be "God's conqueror". They call upon other peoples to accept their faith or else be exterminated as "infidels" or "those of inferior birth"... It is symptomatic

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 46-7. Author's emphasis.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 53. Author's emphasis.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 65. Author's emphasis.

that in the literature of these sectarians, these nations (or national collectives) contain within themselves much paganism that is. **cruel, terrifying, and bloody ‘Blood Saints’**, for example, honor their motherland not so that it would develop and give the world great children: officers and writers, geniuses of science and art – but rather so **that it would feed itself with much blood**, and ‘where there is blood, there is holiness.’ It leads to the dark conclusion that the saints of our land were those who shed the most blood in her – despots and monsters of past centuries.”⁷⁶

“**‘Blood Saints’ or ‘Blood Worshipers’**. The closest characterization of this movement can be found in the rite of devotion to places renowned for the bountiful shedding of blood – major battles, mass burials. From typical ritualistic practice of giving honor to the dead, blood worship from the very beginning distinguished itself in its keenest interest not to the individual merits of the dead people, but rather to the very place of their burial. Where more blood is shed, that place is deemed the more holy... Many followers consider the deciding sign of an act of **blood worship** to be the making of oaths (vows) in the place of bloodshed (this applies not only to the place of burial, but also to sites of battles, executions, shootings, martyrdoms). The essence of the oath is loyalty to the memory of the dead and readiness to shed blood on their behalf. The majority of followers, however, view as the resolute sign of blood worship to be the shedding of their own blood⁷⁷, fulfilling the vow or even substituting as its utterance. Uniting a drop of one’s own blood to the sea of blood shed by others – in and of itself it signifies ‘to be born with humanity having found peace in the grave.’”⁷⁸

Judging by their writings, “Blood Worshipers” believe that Adam, the first man, was created from the earth which was soaked in the blood of God. (Presumably, they base this error on the meaning of the word “Adam” in the Hebrew language, which literally could mean “red earth”. Thus, “Blood Worshipers” picture the earth in a red color.) For this reason, they believe that every “Blood Worshiper” must follow God’s example in soaking the earth with his own blood. According to their teachings, most of the Christian world long ago departed from Christ because they “avoid suffering and the shedding of blood”. “Blood Worshipers” believe that Christians of the first century “not only drank the blood of Christ during the Eucharist, but they watered the earth with their blood, following the example of Christ, who came to the rocky earth cursed by God in order to water and soften it with his blood, in order that wheat and not tares would grow from the earth, indeed the seeds of the Kingdom of Heaven.”⁷⁹

After describing the religious-national sects, Epstein turns to the religious-atheistic sects, including “Godless Athenians”, “Believers in Goodness”, and “Sinners”. It will be quite useful

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 76. Author’s emphasis.

⁷⁷ Epstein quotes a passage from the sectarian literature that sums up the attitude of “Blood Worshipers”: “Do only corpses sleep in the earth? No, souls also are buried in it, along with the blood they feed the earth, giving spirit to her seeds and young plants. Can’t you feel the heavenly steam, gushing high above Rus? This blood falls upon us on every step, on every corner of the earth... The eternally thirsting earth, with fattened, puckered up lips... Who will carry near the lip of his birth mother his living cup boiling above? Pucker up to her, praise the earth that feeds you... You are afraid even of the appearance of blood, preferring that it would remain inside your living organs, rather than pouring it out from your chosen vessel.” 81-2.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 79-80. Author’s emphasis.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

to examine their characteristics. It will become crystal-clear that these sects derived from Orthodoxy profess an ideology full of more godlessness and rebellion than any form of Protestantism existing in our nation:

“**Godless Athenians**’ – In contrast to atheists who demand that man take the place of the non-existent God, ‘Athenians’ call people to act as if God existed, although in reality God does not exist. In this they see the highest form of human evolution: casting aside faith in God, continuing to live a godly life, working good and truth on the earth, not expecting any heavenly blessing... ‘Live as if God existed and calls upon you to have compassion – and live as if there is no God and no one will reward you for good works. God demands from you everything and does not promise anything. Most of all, you will die soon, and you will never resurrect. This is the essence of adversity. There is no one next to you, not in Heaven, not in eternity. You are alone... This is what it means to attain maturity: **being without God as if you were with God.** This is true maturity.”⁸⁰

“**Believers in Goodness**’ believe only in the power of goodness, or, as they would describe it, the weakness of goodness. ‘**There is no goodness** in heaven or on earth, not in the sea, **not in God**, not in angels, nor in animals. **Man alone**, suffering and being conscious of his suffering, has been **able to work out in himself the understanding of good.**”⁸¹

“**Helpers**’ define their task to help in everything taking place in the world. A fire is burning – they throw in a dry branch so that the fire does not go out. A flying seed from a tree falls upon a rock – they pick it up and throw it onto fertile soil so that it can grow. In the bloom of spring, you can often see them near kids’ playgrounds, sidewalks, around heaps of snow, puddles – anything they can do to help spring come more quickly.”⁸²

“**Sinners**’ – This movement, Christian in its source [having started in the decade of 1860’s], even went to the extent of going against Christ, who took the stance that He would not sin with sinners – even though he associated with tax collectors and prostitutes, He did not follow them all the way into their darkness. The Russian thirst for universal fairness went to the extreme that to be among sinners and not to sin, to empathize with those who are fallen without partaking in their sin oneself was considered as betrayal to human brotherhood.”⁸³

The end of this examination of sects spawned by Russian Orthodoxy will look at some interesting ones. These sects fall under the category of “religious-eschatological sects”. Some of the more famous examples include “People of the Ark”, “Exiles” (“Garbage Men”), “Believers of Nothing” (“Saints of Nothing”), and “Glass Makers” (“Glass Men”). Let us examine the first two groups:

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 105. Author’s emphasis.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 111. Author’s emphasis.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 116. Author’s emphasis.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 118-9. Author’s emphasis.

“**People of the Ark**’ – They also call themselves ‘Seekers of the Ark’, ‘Builders of the Ark’, or simply ‘Noahites’ after the righteous man of the Bible who saved himself from the Flood... They call their homes ‘arks’ that sail along the seas of modern civilization, a place of salvation of the righteous, the Church of the Last Covenant.”⁸⁴

“‘Exiles’ (alternative name: ‘Garbage men’) – apocalyptic sect close to ‘Athenianism’. For them, rejection of God is the main sign and ‘call’ of the end times... ‘Exiles’, as a rule, settle on the very edge of inhabited places, such that people call them ‘Edge Livers’; their homes typically are on the edge of the village. But in every other sense they also live ‘on the edge’: they assign holy meaning to the most disgusting objects, the basest activities, even physiological discharges. Before going to defecate, they pray, and in the end they thank God, and for the whole duration they send out prayers as they believe they are doing a holy deed, thanks to the one who forms their bodies once again from the dirt and separates them from uncleanness.”⁸⁵

In addition to visiting other places of human discharge (toilets), “Exiles” believe garbage dumps and bins actually are altars upon which the Holy Spirit descends:

“In general, the most unclean things evoke from ‘Exiles’ the greatest reverence. Some consider as their ‘relic’ a dust rag, others – a tissue, as a sacrificial towel that takes away uncleanness in order to clean the inner organs or outer appearance. Other things that evoke a similar prayerful mood include **all kinds of dumps, disposals, and garbage bins are revered as sacrificial places** that take away uncleanness for the sake of cleaning of other places.”⁸⁶

Here is a citation from the “theological” work *Regarding the Sacrificial Meaning of Garbage*:

“All filth became unclean for the purpose of cleaning you. **All kinds of garbage, rot, disgusting thing – it is a sacrifice brought for you. Ask the Lord that He would accept this sacrifice** and would not cast you into the garbage dump, the fiery Gehenna.”⁸⁷

Epstein informs us that the “Exiles” (“Garbage Men”) try to work continuously in piles of rotting garbage in order to prepare for the end of history. They view “trash as the smoke on the altar of sacrifice flowing up to God’s Spirit.”⁸⁸ By the nature of their business, “Garbage Men” are mostly scavengers, garbage collectors, janitors, sewage workers, and aides to paralyzed patients. Among the few “Exiles” who live in the West are those who work as shoe shiners “who put

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 133. Author’s emphasis.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 137-8. Author’s emphasis. Here is an excerpt from one of the books of the cult of ‘Exiles’, *A Theology of Defecation* by the author M.N. and cited by Epstein: “**Defecation is the most holy of our earthly callings, so much as it cleans us from inner dirt.** All forms of inner cleaning, including the washing of the body in various religious rites is only a preparatory step for the sacrament of defecation, which turns our inner self inside and out and cleans out filth. Is it not true that the Lord will come to excrete us out of sin, soften the stomachs of our lives?... **Ask God, when you go to relieve yourself**, so that your defecation is the prayer of our body, it is the cry of our stomach for salvation. And may your life cry out: **Lord, help, Lord, I am weak. Clean out the burden of my stomach!**” (138-9. Author’s emphasis.)

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 139-40. Author’s emphasis.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 140. Author’s emphasis.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

themselves in the obligation of worshiping in the dust, as the daily burden of humanity submits himself to dust.”⁸⁹

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated numerous examples of the emergence of schisms and sects in ecumenical Orthodoxy. Although Orthodox author Lazar Milin attempts to paint sectarianism as an exclusively Protestant phenomenon by citing several examples that have broken away from Western Christianity,⁹⁰ he glosses over the litany of monstrous and bizarre examples of the kinds of sects founded in Orthodox Russia. It is true that a large number of sects coming from the West have twisted theology regarding man’s salvation or the second coming of Christ. (Sects such as the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses offer great misinterpretations.) However, Orthodox sects in their “theology” rarely ever deal with these issues.

As we have seen, some Orthodox practiced, and still practice, fornication (Akulinovtsi), casting their infants to wild beasts (Stefanovtsi), and castrating men and cutting off women’s breasts “in the name of Christ” (Skoptsi). Other sects worship the most common objects (Creators of Things), practice insane behavior (Fools), pay homage to sites of bloodshed, including the ritual of shedding one’s own blood on the site (Blood Worshipers), and venerate garbage dumps and bins – like some place which “exudes the Spirit of the Lord” (Exiles or Garbage Men).

All this to say that there does exist a big difference between the sects sprouting up among Protestants on one side versus those sects among the Orthodox on the other side. The sects holding great “superiority” in terms of the extremity of their “heresy” must belong to the Orthodox sects.

I truly hope that the knowledge of the existence of discord among Orthodox Christians throughout the globe as reflected in the emergence of numerous schisms and sects will help my readers to properly evaluate the truth about the Orthodox claim to be the “one holy apostolic Church”.

It is quite clear that all the documentation just cited negates this claim of the Orthodox Church.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹⁰ Milin attempts to cite probably the most extreme examples that he could find of the conduct of a sect in the West: “What insanities lurk among the foolish sectarians! Let us take a few recent historical examples of sectarianism. Johann Bokhold, a tailor from Leyden and one of the leaders of the Anabaptists, introduced polygamy and married 17 women. He taught his followers that Christ would soon arrive with His millennial kingdom. Eva Bultar in Hesse founded a sect that lived in perversion under a religious guise like the Nikolaitans. What can we say about the English sect of New Israel led by Johanna Sautkot, whom they considered as a new messiah? Let us remember the Swiss cult founded by Margaret Peter in 1823 that crucified her “for the salvation of many souls.” Let us also mention the Calvinist Jacobina Maurer, who in 1974 established her sect “The Chosen Ones” and presented herself as a reincarnated Christ. Her worshipers waged a war to exterminate all those who did not join their sect until the Brazilian authorities put down the conflict. Is it wise for the Adventists to listen to Miller twice and in vain await Christ’s alleged return to the earth? Is it wise when Jehovah’s Witnesses allow a man to die who otherwise would have lived had he accepted blood transfusions because the Jehovah’s Witnesses forbid transfusion?” Milin, *Church and Sects*, 356-7.

The truth of my assertion here will be affirmed in the next chapter, which examines the forewarning of Christ: “Beware of false prophets”.