

THE CALENDAR QUESTION AND THE PROPOSED COMMON CELEBRATION OF PASCHA BY THE ORTHODOX AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

*By Protopresbyter Anthony B. Gavalas**

The question of the change in the Church's Festal Calendar is not of general interest. Even among those concerned with religious matters, only a few are familiar with the reasons why the State (or "official") Church of Greece changed the calendar and accepted that of Pope Gregory XIII, under the deceptive appellation of the "Corrected Julian Calendar."

Among those who have even the vaguest idea about this question, if one asks them why the change came about, they will answer that the Julian (Old) Calendar is faulty and loses days, and that, had the change not been implemented, why, in a short time we would have been celebrating the Feast of our Savior's Nativity in the summer! (It seems that such individuals have been influenced by Christmas cards, in which snow is presented as an indispensable element in the celebration of the Nativity, forgetting that our Orthodox brothers in Australia observe the Feast in the midst of the December heat, without this spoiling the celebration.) [We might also note, here, that the divergence between the Julian and Gregorian Calendars will increase by only three days through the twenty-fourth century and that, in fact, 24,000 years will have to elapse before the Nativity Feast will actually fall in the summer according to the Old Calendar—*Editor's note.*]

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A few, more "learned" persons, when a discussion of the calendar change arises, come up with obscure notions about astrological theories. But do not persist in your questions, for you will find that these same opinionated astronomers (who feign knowledge) do not even know the names of the planets in our solar system!

Others, again, think that the calendar change is something that occurred in the past; an old dispute which is no longer of interest, except to the hard-headed "Old Calendarists"; and that this issue is irrelevant to the "canonical" life of the Church.

All of these individuals are greatly deluded. The calendar question has

not been resolved. Not even those who implemented it in 1924, and brought about such confusion—even they have not yet accomplished their ultimate goal of reform.

First, in order to understand how important this issue is, we should remember that the so-called “Old” (in reality, “CHURCH”) Calendar and the *Paschalion*, or the formula for calculating the date of Pascha, were established by a decision and decree of the First Œcumenical Synod in 325 A.D. Present at this Synod were St. Constantine the Great, St. Nicholas, St. Spyridon, St. Athanasios—three hundred eighteen Holy Fathers in total. They were aware, even then, that there were deficiencies in the Julian Calendar, but they considered harmony among the Orthodox as a whole, and the expression of their unity in the Festal Calendar (the immovable Feasts) and the *Paschalion*, as well as the avoidance of concelebration with the heterodox, more important than astronomical exactitude.

This unity came to be broken, after thirteen hundred years, by the heretical Pope Gregory and his own calendar, the Gregorian Calendar, which he tried to impose on the Orthodox Church also. However, the Orthodox Patriarchs of that time reacted against this innovation in Pan-Orthodox Councils convened in 1583, 1587, and 1593. These Councils found it insufficient simply to condemn the Papal Calendar; rather, they also imposed an anathema on any who accepted it. These pronouncements have never been rescinded and continue to remain in force. The Papist Calendar and the Papal *Paschalion*, including all those who accept them, remain under the anathema of these Holy Councils, as well as under the anathema of the Seventh Œcumenical Synod, which condemned anyone who violates Holy Tradition, whether in written or unwritten form.

Everyone should be aware of the *true* reasons for the change in the Festal Calendar in 1924. It was based neither on fears of a summertime Nativity Feast nor on astrological misgivings—no! The reason for this change, which has occasioned such misfortune and division among the Orthodox people, which brought about a schism between traditionalist and modernist Orthodox, is to be found in the history of the greatest betrayal of the Orthodox people in the twentieth century: in the betrayal of ecumenism.

Let us learn of this in the very writings of these traitors: in the infamous Encyclical of 1920, which was issued by the Œcumenical Patriarchate “To the Churches of Christ Everywhere.” This Encyclical is noteworthy, since for the first time the various kinds of heresy and their offshoots are addressed as “Churches of Christ.” And by whom? By the Hierarchs of our venerable Œcumenical Patriarchate!

This Encyclical lays the groundwork for the union of all of the “churches,” irrespective of what each one believes, and is the founding charter for the betrayal that is ecumenism. This Encyclical enumerates the measures that

must be taken to accomplish the much-desired (*for them*) union of the “churches.” And what is the first measure to which the Encyclical makes reference? Behold:

“The adoption of a uniform calendar for the celebration of the great Feasts by all of the churches at the same time” (John Karmiris, *Dogmatic and Creedal Monuments* [in Greek], Vol. II, pp. 958-959).

Did you read that carefully? Read it again. There is no reference to a loss of days. Nothing about a summertime Nativity Feast. Nothing about astronomical or chronological defects. The ENTIRE matter of the calendar change was, and is, that of the perfidious betrayal of the Orthodox people into the jaws of the beast of ecumenism! All of the other excuses put forth are for the naïve, for the simple-minded, who are thought incapable of grasping the “splendor” of the Masonically-inspired ecumenical movement.

This step, that is, the calendar change, was delayed until the right time for its implementation. When? In 1924. In the midst of the confusion and uproar of the widespread devastation of Asia Minor, in the chaotic course of population exchanges, and during the dictatorship of Plastiras-Gonatas! Truly, these wolf-shepherds, mercenaries of ecumenism, gave life to the old Greek proverb, “The wolf rejoices in tumult” [or, as the English aphorism expresses this same idea, “Make your move when times are troubled”—*Editor’s note*].

But their plan remains half-accomplished. Their charter dictates that *all* of the great Feasts should be celebrated by all Christians at the same time. They succeeded only in the imposition of the Festal Calendar of the Pope. And though they wanted then to impose the Papal *Paschalion*, they did not accomplish this, except in Romania, for two years, which years, however, were stained by blood—the blood of the Orthodox who protested against this innovation. It was adopted by the Church of Finland for “pastoral reasons”; but most modernists are compelled to follow the *CHURCH* (Old) Calendar for the entire cycle of the *Triodion* (Great Lent) and the *Pentecostarion*. In other words, they follow two calendars!

This is why we wrote in the beginning of this article that the calendar question has not been resolved. There remains the thorn in the side of the executors of the provisions of the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920: the imposition of a new *Paschalion*, to complete their work!

For years, now, they have been debating how to realize this much-desired objective. They are aware of the consequences of the change in the Festal Calendar and do not want to create, in addition to Old Calendarists, “Old Paschalists”! Not that they pity the flock! It is simply that they do not wish to appear politically inept to their arch-Masonic masters.

And so it is that every so often we hear or read about the need to reform the *Paschalion*, especially when Orthodox Pascha is very late in comparison

to Western Easter. The question has been a matter of “serious debate” on the agendas of the preconciliar gatherings held in preparation for the convocation of a so-called “Eighth Ecumenical Council.”

And a number of solutions have been suggested. Indeed, some have suggested the adoption of the “corrected” Western calculation for Pascha, which does not take into consideration the date of the Jewish Passover. Others, more cunning, exploiting the weakness of the many Orthodox who, unfortunately, have “lost their *Paschalia*” [a Greek idiom; that is, have “lost their way” or “become befuddled”—*Editor’s note*] and live out the year without taking into account the natural rhythm of the ecclesiastical cycle, have proposed another solution: “A permanent, appointed Sunday, either in April or May, which will also be acceptable to the heterodox!”

This solution, for many reasons, will appeal to worldly-minded “Christians,” but is equally a violation of Orthodox Tradition and the dictates of the First Ecumenical Synod.

Brothers, conservative (pious) New Calendarists, I ask you: “What will you do in view of this new betrayal...?”

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