

## **A Response to the Breakaway Toronto Clergy**

First, we must categorically deny and reject the caricature of the church doctrine presented by Father Panagiotes Carras in his letter of June the second: "the posthumous enlightenment and salvation of heterodox and non-Christians." This is a studied deception and distortion of *Awake, Sleeper*, and of other statements of the HOCNA hierarchs. The same happened when Father Panagiotes met with all the hierarchs on March 23, 2011 and it was proven to him that words and terms attributed to Metropolitan Ephraim were never used by him. To read the summary of the March meeting, please [click here](#). Apparently Father Panagiotes has reneged on his agreement then, and the breakaway clergy of Toronto continue their tactic of distortion and false attribution. What is worse is that they continue to reject the writings of the Holy Fathers, the lives of the Saints, liturgical texts, and the authority of the Church: the Church which is the ark of the Holy Spirit, Who was sent by our Saviour "to teach us all things and to guide us into all truth and show us things to come" (cf John 14:16-27; 16:13-14).

Our Saviour never wrote any book. He delivered His doctrines to the Holy Apostles, and they wrote their blessed memoirs in the might of the Holy Spirit, which our Lord granted them after He had renewed human nature; and the Apostles delivered the living Word and Spirit to the Fathers and bishops after them. It is the Church which is the Ark and Tradition of Truth, not our own fallen reasonings. If the Church bears witness to something, it cannot be brushed aside or denied.

The sacred Martyr Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria, was a great saint of the Church and important personality of the third century. However, he expressed certain dogmatic errors. Battling against Sabellianism, he inclined to the error of the Anomeans. Father Panagiotes should have blacklisted St. Dionysius for his beliefs – if we do not misinterpret his diligent speed to break off communion with the bishops of our Synod.

How did St. Basil the Great deal with this problem? First, he emphasized that this teaching of St. Dionysius was unacceptable (Epistle 9:2), then he notes elsewhere, "So that, although this escaped the vigilance of the great Dionysius, we must by no means imitate his error. The absurdity of the position is obvious in a moment, and evident to all who are gifted with even a small share of reasoning capacity."

Dionysius of Rome and St. Athanasius the Great also defended St. Dionysius by stating that these excerpts of his writings should not be understood with an Arian meaning.

Similarly, St. Photius the Great, speaking more generally about under-

standing the words of the Saints, "But perhaps they spoke out of the necessity of attacking the madness of the pagans or of refuting another heretical opinion or of condescending to the weakness of their hearers, or out of the necessity of any one of the many other reasons that human life daily presents. If such a statement perchance escaped their lips because of one or more of the above reasons, why do you make a dogma and law of what was not spoken by them with dogmatic significance and so bring irreparable ruin upon yourself by contentiously enlisting them in your dementia?" *Mystagogia* (Migne PG 102, 352-3).

Clearly, it does not take great intelligence to prove that the declaration of June the second was hurried and thoughtless. Further examples from the Saints are added below.

Could St. Gregory the Theologian be an iconoclast? "It is an abuse to trust colors and not the hearts. They can be washed off easily. I love the depths" (EPE 9, 401). Saint Amphilocius, St. Epiphanius of Cyprus and others speak in like manner about icons. The Iconoclast Council of Hieria (754) presented like quotations from the Fathers, some spurious, but some genuine, in order to justify the rejection of the Holy Icons. If we had happened to live in the eighth century, would we have been advised to reject those Saints as Iconoclasts?

Would one of the three Theologian Saints of our Church be rejected because his words remove Metropolitan Ephraim from blame? "For one to speak of the soul and the Resurrection, of the judgment and retribution is without danger" (St. Gregory the Theologian, *Against the Eunomians*, 10). What St. Gregory declares to be without danger, the excessive zeal of the Toronto clergy finds heretical?

It is a dogma of the Church that the Virgin Mary the Theotokos gave birth without travail. Yet there are Fathers who speak of birth pangs: Saints Chrysostom, Proclus, Sophronius, *et al.* Are these Fathers then, also heretics?

Saint Neophytus the Cloistered lived in the Monastery of the Cloister in the diocese of Paphos. Bacchus, the then bishop, was a leader in the heretical false teaching that Christ's body was yet corruptible after His Resurrection, which teaching was also advocated by Michael Glycas. Saint Neophytus strongly opposed them, calling this a "novel division" and "a fiction of the mind of an evil demon." The Patriarch of Constantinople, George II Xiphilinus (1191-1198), and some other members of the Synod also favored that opinion. In spite of this, St. Neophytus did not break communion with his bishop for this reason, but left the transgressors to the judgment of God, an action which we all should follow first in the beginning stages of a supposed heresy.

Saint Neophytus wrote, "If anyone should attempt to contradict that

which has been said [by me] and to confirm with disputation his own opinion and wisdom, I will not contend with him for he most certainly has as opponent, Him Who has said, Behold I came to gather their works and words and thoughts, 'and I shall requite each according to his deeds' [Jer. 17:10]" (*Writings*, 497-98).

It should be noted that a like controversy existed in the sixth century between St. Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, and St. Eutychius, Archbishop of Constantinople, which aroused great contention between them because it was considered heretical, yet it never led to excommunication; both are Saints of the Church.

Does not St. Nectarius in his writings teach the heretical doctrine of "the atonement of divine justice"? How do the clergy of Toronto justify the Saint who teaches this heresy and do not condemn him? Is he absolved simply because he is the patron saint of their cathedral?

"Reparation to the divine justice which had been offended by the offense of the sin committed by the sinner is a requirement of justice that must be assigned together with a deep-seated disposition of the sinner to propitiate God.... Therefore, inexorable necessity requires us to hasten to appease the offended divinity" (St. Nectarius, *On the Immortality of the Soul and the Sacred Memorial Services*, Rigopoulos Editions, Thessalonica, 1973, pp. 223 and 225).

It is worthwhile to note the comments of the editor of the above edition of the Saint's writings. He underlines the fact that the problem of the judgment of virtuous men who died without knowing Christ is "a most difficult dogmatic and philosophical subject" (p. 10). He also describes this subject as a "theologoumenon" (p. 11). He also declares that the Church "has made no definite dogmatic decision" concerning those who died outside of the Church after our Lord's incarnation.

Returning to the words of the Saint, St. Nectarius in the first edition of the aforementioned work stated, the Church preaches that "the virtuous men who from Adam up to this day have died are worthy of God's mercy." The Saint in a subsequent edition changes this statement to "from Adam up to Christ" (p. 10). Yet in this later edition he states the following concerning the salvation of the unbaptized and those outside the Church:

Since those who were under the law had a portion in salvation, why should the nations who had the law written in their hearts and had fulfilled it be shut out from salvation? Is God a respecter of persons? Or perhaps He is the God only of the Jews? God forbid! Our God is a just God and Father of every tribe and race of men. If He has promised salvation to them under the Law if they should keep the Law, He shall also save those of the uncircumcision, who have kept the law written in their hearts.... Therefore, the salvation granted to the race of man

through Jesus Christ became general for all who have lived virtuously (pp. 119, 120).

It is undoubtedly clear to everyone by now that if one should imitate the tactics and "orthodox" logic of the Toronto clergy, one would begin to consider the Saints as heretics; in the passage of the centuries, the unity of the Church would have been shattered to pieces.

Saint Chrysostom states that sometimes certain matters are unknown to the Saints (for their benefit and for that of the faithful) and he presents some examples (Migne PG 62, 415- 416). On this account the Fifth Ecumenical Council declares that the Church does not anathematize those who simply use such expressions loosely or inexactly, but those who understand them erroneously. (Anathema 8)

We believe that the aforementioned examples are sufficient (along with the many adduced by Metropolitan Ephraim and by others). Other examples which we could offer have the same direction, following the general opinion of the Church Fathers. Some people might not understand or disagree with some arguments of Metropolitan Ephraim as expressed in *Awake, Sleeper*, as we and many others disagree with many of the opinions and positions of the Toronto clergy, but no one else has accused the Metropolitan or the Toronto clergy of being heretics.

All must beware of thinking that with our intellectual powers or reasonings we have plumbed the depths of the matter and its essence. Saint Neophytus warns us against such conceit. The essence of the subject is unknown and, indeed, ineffable, beyond our comprehension. It should be left in the hands of God, which, indeed, is what the Saints recommended; they who have approached theological matters with such fear and awe.

We shall also add the witness of some more recent Saints. Elder Macarius of Optina advised: "As to those people who are good and kind but are not believers, we cannot and must not judge them. The ways of the Lord are inscrutable; let us leave these good people to His judgment and to the grace of His providence. He alone knows how and why He has built the argosy of humanity, and the small boat of each one of us, such as it is."

Likewise, we refer to St. Niphon, Bishop of Constantiana: "Brothers, what is indispensable is to mourn for our sins and with repentance to ask for the mercy of God. As for the other things, they belong to His judgment and it is dangerous to concern ourselves with them. Instead it is better to weep and lament for our offenses, so that we may find mercy and be able to enjoy even one little drop of salvation. Evil days are coming, 'when no man can work.' Therefore, before they come, let us work for good that we may live eternally."

Those "inscrutable ways of the Lord" have apparently been searched out

by the Toronto clergy and they have hurried to condemn as heretics all who disagree with them.

What we have written does not abrogate the necessary vigilance for heresy and its rejection. However, all the foregoing references prove that the Saints have not been of one mind in this matter, or that their witness is not absolutely clear, and that the Church has taken no clearly defined decision or dogma except for this one point: no dogma has been pronounced, therefore there can be no heresy or excommunication from the Church if one should prefer one Saint's opinion over another's. The Church has firmly declared that no opinion in this matter is subject to excommunication; nor is it permitted to cause schism in the Church and to separate from one's canonical bishop on this account, which the Toronto clergy have done. Therefore they are in violation of the Canons and the precepts of the Fathers, notably the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Canons of the First and Second Council.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, the Toronto clergy have found themselves in the unenviable position of declaring ancient and great Fathers guilty of heresy. Many witnesses from their writings — aside from those quoted in *Awake, Sleeper* and here — prove that such teachings concerning the souls after death are not a novel doctrine of Metropolitan Ephraim, but have existed in the Church from the beginning. Furthermore, the Toronto clergy have denied incidents from the lives of the Saints — and even considered some of their lives as spurious — although they are validated by frequent references in the lives of other Saints, in the prayers and hymnology of the Church, and in the Councils themselves. Are we now to tear pages out of the *Triodion*, the *Synaxaria*, the *Menaia*, the *Octoëchos*, and other books of the Church?

The breakaway Toronto clergy left their bishop of twenty years and left the Church synod instituted by Archbishop Auxentius' synod. Their excuse of purity of Faith, as we have shown above, has no validity. It is very doubtful that their new bishops (the Synod of Kallinikos) have a purer and stronger witness of Orthodoxy against Ecumenism and modernism than we do.

Saint Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, is an Apostolic Father, an immediate disciple of the Apostles, blessed by Christ Himself, who bore witness in Antioch and finished his course of martyrdom in Rome AD 103. He constantly urged the Christians in his Epistles to maintain the unity of love in Christ, by faithful attendance and communion in the Church's true Eucharist of their bishop who was established by the Apostles. "If anyone be not within the enclosure of the altar, he lacks the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two hath so great efficacy, how much more has the prayer of the bishop and of the whole Church" (*To the Ephesians*, 5:2).

"As therefore the Lord did nothing without the Father, being united with Him, neither of Himself, nor by the Apostles, so neither do you act in any-

thing apart from the bishop and presbyters" (*To the Magnesians*, 7:1). "It is necessary, therefore, that you should act as indeed you do, in nothing without the bishop. But be subject also to the presbytery, as unto the Apostles of Jesus Christ, our Hope.... In like manner, reverence the deacons as Jesus Christ, as also the bishop, regarding him as a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the Council of God and the band of the Apostles" (*To the Trallians*, 2:1-3:1).

"Be not deceived, my brethren. If anyone follows a man that causes schism, he does not inherit God's kingdom" (*To the Philadelphians*, 3:3). "Act not in any matter in the spirit of faction, but as disciples of Christ" (8:2). "Wheresoever the bishop appears, there let the people be, even as wheresoever Christ Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church. It is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptize or to hold a love feast. But whatsoever he approves, that also is well-pleasing to God" (*To the Smyrneans*, 8:2). "He that honors the bishop is honored of God. He that does anything without the knowledge of the bishop serves the devil" (9:1).

Less than two centuries later, St. Cyprian of Carthage sets out the doctrine of the Church's unity, with its Apostolic authority and in accordance with the Divine will more fully and extensively. His agreement with St. Ignatius is complete. Saint Cyprian's *On the Unity of the Church* has become the classical expression of this doctrine.

The unity of love and obedience in Christ is that unity in the Church and its brotherhood, with the guidance found in its familial hierarchy and structure. Violating that, we find ourselves outside the sheltering grace of the Holy Spirit. That is why St. John Chrysostom declared that he would rather remain with the Church even if it erred, rather than be right outside of its communion. For he believed that God could most certainly correct the Church. He who remained without could most easily be blinded by pride in his self-righteousness.

In 2000, the Synod headed by Euthymius of Thessalonica (today, by Archbishop Macarius of Athens) approached us to join in communion. The negotiations had proceeded somewhat, but were finally halted because of their inertia in not reproaching the Synod of Chrysostom Kiouisis for Ecumenistic statements and actions as reported in the press in Greece and America. Below is an excerpt of an official synodal letter written and signed by Metropolitan Moses (then Bishop of Roslindale) as Secretary of the Synod of HOCNA. In this letter, he also states that the bishops in America "are the only canonical successors of the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians."

## February 7, 2000

The so-called unions, which you had among yourselves in Greece when you were all "united" under "Archbishop" Chrysostom Kiouisis, led only to compromises in the Faith. Over ten years ago, when we reported in our official newsletter in Athens your "Archbishop's" violations of the Orthodox Christian Faith, [*Beacon of Orthodoxy*, Sept., 1991] where were you? When your "Archbishop" referred to members of the heretical WCC as "light-like children of the Church," why did you show no concern? [*ibid.*] When you read in what was at that time your official periodical under the Synod of Chrysostom Kiouisis, the following text: "The Patriarchates uphold the Orthodox path," and "they abide in that which they received, adding neither 'one jot nor one title' to the things of our worship and, generally, to whatever pertains to the Orthodox traditional discipline" [*Voice of Orthodoxy*, Dec. 1989], why did you not demand a retraction of these irresponsible and unOrthodox statements? Therefore, let us leave aside all talk about union for the time being. Since, as you can see, we do not agree with you on certain important matters, let us allow this matter to rest for now.

Further examples of the lack of seriousness of the Kiouisis (now Kalinikos) Synod and also of the other break-offs from Archbishop Auxentius can be found in the book written by Bishop Makarios of Petra (presently Archbishop of Athens) entitled:

*1973-2003*

*30 έτη*

*Εκκλησιαστικῆς Πορείας*

*Δοκιμασία - Αιχμαλωσία - Λύτρωσις*

Please [click here](#) to read this book in its original Greek, which includes copious references and footnotes.

Also it has been translated into English and is entitled:

*1973-2003*

*Thirty Years of Ecclesiastical Developments*

*Trials, Captivity, and Deliverance*

To read the English translation, please [click here](#).

In spite of its obvious bias, if a reader can endure the tiresomely constant editorializing, an accurate historical timeline is given of the Old Calendarists' synodal turmoils.

Those who lived in Greece during those years can witness to the discouragement and demoralization suffered by the faithful over the disorders, the

backbiting, the uncanonical activities of bishops and other clergy — secret ordinations, canonical elections and decisions ignored or unilaterally or arbitrarily overturned, administration not by council or synod, but by cabal, conspiracy, illegalities of procedure, canons ignored or transgressed, the innocent condemned without a hearing or recourse — the list is endless. However, the described historical facts — not the hearsay or gossip — are clear and verifiable.

Several facts become evident: Archbishop Auxentius was deposed uncanonically, and was most shabbily treated by his fellow bishops. Most of the flock respected him and acknowledged him. Almost all the unattached monasteries that were not owned by the other bishops, continued to commemorate him, as did many priests throughout Greece until his repose, in spite of the vicious campaign of slander.

Another fact is also demonstrated: Because of the manner of their formation, none of the Old Calendar groups has any claim to canonicity over any other; they all were formed and reformed in disorder and factionalism and rebellion against their canonically established archbishop, Auxentius. Their only source of unity was their desire to overthrow him. After his repose, however, all have rehabilitated him and lifted the deposition. Many also claim to be his genuine heirs, seeking to bolster their legitimacy.

Archbishop Makarios of Athens, the author of the aforementioned work, also makes this claim; yet from 1985 to 1994, the year of blessed Auxentius' repose, Archbishop Makarios' synod made no move to join with him or work with him.

HOCNA approached Archbishop Auxentius, after our departure from ROCOR, since we had known him personally for many years. After reading the foregoing history, one can understand that we considered him a victim of unscrupulous ambition. His synod of the few bishops that remained faithful to him after his deposition — Athanasios of Larisa, Maximos of Cephalonia, Gerasimos of Boeotia, and Germanos of Aeolia — ordained more bishops later. They were Theonas of Thessaly, Ephraim of Boston, Makarios of Toronto, Gury of Kazan, and Photios of France. Later these last were raised to full membership in the Synod with a vote as Metropolitans.

Archbishop Auxentius permitted us to manage our own affairs completely and to elect our own bishops and clergy. He considered this a necessity in order to guard the Church in America from the disorders in Greece, from which he had suffered, by protecting our canonical boundaries.

After Archbishop Auxentius' righteous repose, the HOCNA Metropolitans were yet an active part of the Synod in Greece, although our local Synod managed its own affairs. Unfortunately, the Greek disorders affected the Synod in Greece, and many of the clergy and faithful departed. HOCNA assumed the locum tenency as an inheritance and a memorial of Archbishop

Auxentius, to help unite the Old Calendarists. Our labor was fruitless, so HOCNA resigned the locum tenency in order to facilitate union among the Old Calendarists for a common witness of Orthodoxy and canonical order.

Our good will and overtures for canonical order and intercommunion were received and somewhat reciprocated by the Synod of Kallinikos, but they have reverted to their customary tactics. They received breakaway clergy from HOCNA without canonical release. Furthermore, they did not even have the decency and common sense to inform us or inquire about the reasons why the clergy departed. They are continuing the tradition of uncanonical and arbitrary actions upon which their Synod is based and from which Archbishop Auxentius protected us.

The progress of the dialogue with the Kallinikos Synod to settle canonical differences and problems which had separated us has plainly halted. Although some in HOCNA were urging a speedier process "in thirty days," or "in a week," and were threatening unilateral action, we now see that such a method is not profitable, for the Kallinikos Synod has not abandoned former tactics and is continuing in their internal and external canonical disorder; so questions arise about their sincerity.

In any case, God is above and HOCNA always welcomes discussions upon a canonical basis with mutual respect to heal any rifts or wounds in the Church. First, however, the synods in Greece must put their own house in order.

As for the renegade Toronto clergy, up to a short time ago, they were vehemently opposed even to discussions with the Kallinikos Synod. Their sudden about-face has never been adequately explained. However, their uncanonical conduct and departure have no excuse. They are guilty of a schism, of forming a division in the Church, as well as of drawing the Kallinikos Synod into the sin of interfering in another province and diocese. God grant that the disorders and sins of the Greek Church not come down upon their heads, and that we be protected and kept in unity by the prayers of Archbishop Auxentius.

Holy Transfiguration Monastery  
July 14, 2011

## **Post Script**

Portions of this Response are taken from a letter written in Greek by Father Basil of Holy Transfiguration Monastery answering the Letter of Father Panagiotes Carras of June 2, posted on his website.

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<sup>1</sup> 1st-2nd Council Canon 13: The All-evil One having planted the seed of heretical

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tares in the Church of Christ, and seeing these being cut down to the roots with the sword of the Spirit, took a different course of trickery by attempting to divide the body of Christ by means of the madness of the schismatics. But, checking even this plot of his, the holy Council has decreed that henceforth if any Presbyter or Deacon, on the alleged ground that his own bishop has been condemned for certain crimes, before a conciliar or synodal hearing and investigation has been made, should dare to secede from his communion, and fail to mention his name in the sacred prayers of the liturgical services in accordance with the custom handed down in the Church, he shall be subject to prompt deposition from office and shall be stripped of every prelati honor. For anyone who has been established in the rank of Presbyter and forestalls the Metropolitan's judgment, and, judging matters before a trial has been held, insofar as lies in his power, he condemns his own father and Bishop, he is not even worthy of the honor or name of Presbyter. Those, on the other hand, who go along with him, in case any of them should be among those in holy orders, they too shall forfeit their own rights to honor, or, in case they should be monks or laymen, let them be utterly excommunicated from the church until such time as they spew upon and openly renounce all connection with the schismatics and decide to return to their own Bishop.

1st-2nd Council Canon 14: If any Bishop, on the allegation that charges of crime lie against his own Metropolitan, shall secede or apostatize from him before a conciliar or synodal verdict has been issued against him, and shall abstain from communion with him, and fail to mention his name, in accordance with consuetude, in the course of the divine mystagogy (i.e., liturgical celebration of the Eucharistic mystery), the holy Council has decreed that he shall be deposed from office, if merely by seceding from his own Metropolitan he shall create a schism. For everyone ought to know his own bounds, and neither ought a presbyter treat his own Metropolitan so.

1st-2nd Council Canon 15: The rules laid down with reference to Presbyters and Bishops and Metropolitans are still more applicable to Patriarchs. So that in case any Presbyter or Bishop or Metropolitan dares to secede or apostatize from the communion of his own Patriarch, and fails to mention the latter's name in accordance with custom duly fixed and ordained, in the divine Mystagogy, but, before a conciliar verdict has been pronounced and has passed judgment against him, creates a schism, the holy Council has decreed that this person shall be held an alien to every priestly function if only he be convicted of having committed this transgression of the law. Accordingly, these rules have been sealed and ordained as respecting those persons who under the pretext of charges against their own presidents stand aloof, and create a schism, and disrupt the unity of the Church. But as for those persons, on the other hand, who, on account of some heresy condemned by holy Councils, or Fathers, withdrawing themselves from communion with their president, who, that is to say, is preaching the heresy publicly, and teaching it bare head in church, such persons not only are not subject to any Canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from any and all communion with the one called a Bishop before any conciliar or syn-

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odal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honor which befits them among Orthodox Christians. For they have defied, not Bishops, but pseudo-bishops and pseudo-teachers; and they have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions.