

Hieromonk Cassian

A SCIENTIFIC EXAMINATION  
OF THE ORTHODOX  
CHURCH CALENDAR



Edited by  
Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna  
and Hieromonk Gregory

CENTER FOR TRADITIONALIST  
ORTHODOX STUDIES

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A SCIENTIFIC EXAMINATION  
OF THE ORTHODOX  
CHURCH CALENDAR

OR

THE OLD CALENDAR  
AND SCIENCE

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with a Foreword by  
Archbishop Chrysostomos



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## FOREWORD

*by Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna*

Thirty years ago, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church made a controversial decision to adopt the Gregorian Calendar. In so doing, it precipitated a cleavage of its Faithful into two distinct camps: those who accepted the calendar “reform” became “New Calendarists,” while those who resisted this innovation became “Old Calendarists.” Refusing to toe the “official” line of the Patriarchate of Sofia, the Old Calendarists soon became ecclesiastical pariahs, compelled to obey their consciences clandestinely. Only with the advancing twilight of Communism were they able to practice their beliefs more openly. So it was that in 1993, with the Consecration of a former Assistant Professor at the University of Sofia, Bishop Photii of Triaditza, the Bulgarian Old Calendar movement was able to organize itself formally as the True (Old Calendar) Orthodox Church of Bulgaria. I consider it a singular privilege to have been one of Bishop Photii’s co-Consecrators.

The increased visibility of these Old Calendarists has drawn much attention to the fact that the “official” Orthodox Church of Bulgaria remains thoroughly contaminated with the vestiges of its infiltration and manipulation by Communism, which exploited the Church as a tool of ecumenical opportunism. Many Bulgarians have therefore begun to scrutinize the controversy surrounding the “reform” of the Old Calendar in a new light. Needless to say, the Patriarchate of Sofia finds the activities of the True Orthodox Christians extremely threatening in this regard, and it has reacted accordingly. The New Calendarist press in Bulgaria now regularly characterizes the True Orthodox Church with such scurrilous and malicious disdain that it can only be called naked defamation.

Of course, the tension between Old Calendar and New Calendar Orthodoxy is by no means an isolated or localized phe-

nomenon of the Bulgarian Church, and it certainly cannot be reduced to a trivial dispute about the “worship of thirteen days,” as New Calendarist polemics would have it. The notion that the Gregorian Calendar is a “necessary corrective” to the “astronomically defective” Julian Calendar is a pernicious *idée reçue* perpetuated, unfortunately, even by standard reference works. It is thus all too easy for New Calendarists to set up their straw man of “triskaidekemerolaty” and then knock him down with one blow as superstitiously silly. In fact, the idea that the Church Calendar—the *only* calendar with Patristic sanction in the Orthodox Church—is scientifically deficient has become so embedded in popular consciousness, that even many of its apologists concede this “fact” in their defenses of the Julian reckoning. Such a concession, however, is wholly unnecessary, for the Church Calendar actually has *greater* scientific merit than the Gregorian Calendar. Regrettably, this remains one of the “best-kept secrets” in the Orthodox world.

This is not to say that we disagree with those proponents of the Old Calendar who concentrate their argumentation on the spiritual integrity of the traditional Orthodox method of time-reckoning. Not at all; indeed, we Old Calendarists would be the first to invoke the “golden rule” of Orthodox Christian piety, so succinctly stated by Saint John Chrysostomos (†407), as the last word on the calendar controversy: “It is Tradition—seek no further.” But in our day and age, when intellectual insipidity reigns supreme and faith in all of its fullness is misconstrued as foolishness or fanaticism, a scientific examination of the Orthodox Church Calendar will only further strengthen the already strong canonical, liturgical, and historical arguments in its favor. In other words, “Old Calendarist” does *not* mean “anti-scientific.” In New Calendarist rhetoric, the “Old” in “Old Calendar” is a negative term signifying “antiquated,” “defunct,” and “regressive”; but for the Old Calendarists themselves, it is a positive term connoting, “venerable,” “classic,” and “steadfast.” True Orthodox Christianity is, in Patris-

tic parlance, the “science of sciences,” and as such, it is only the “oppositions of science falsely so called” to which it is counterposed, never genuine scientific discoveries.

Using an empirical perspective, therefore, as a springboard, Father Cassian, in his brilliant commentary on the Julian Calendar, properly places “Old Calendarism” and “New Calendarism” in their larger philosophical context, as manifestations of an epic confrontation between two mutually exclusive ecclesiologies, *viz.*, traditionalism and ecumenism (or, to be precise, *political* ecumenism). For, although certain Orthodox Churches are “Old Calendarist” in a narrow, technical sense—such as the Patriarchate of Moscow—, they are, nonetheless, wholly “New Calendarist” in a broad, theological sense. Hence, just as the calendar issue is not one of mere disputation over thirteen days, so the confrontation between the spirit of innovation which spawned the New Calendar reform is not simply one between those who follow this reform and those who reject it, but between those who, under the banner of the Church Calendar, *reject* the religious syncretism of Orthodox modernists and their wild efforts to fit into the prevailing “religious scene,” and *hold fast* to the Eucharistic, Hesychastic, and Patristic Traditions of the Church, which immutably convey to us the authentic content and experience of the Faith which Christ established, the Apostles preached, and the Fathers have preserved, to paraphrase one Church Father.

In the battle of the “Small Flock” of the Old Calendarist, or traditionalist, Faithful against the Goliath of New Calendarism, or “official” Orthodoxy—that monstrously perverse creation of the ecumenical movement in the midst of a Church which draws its authenticity, not from Popes, Patriarchates, Church organizations, or political allies, but from fidelity to the genuine Christianity bequeathed to it by the Apostles themselves—, the followers of this world, the calendar reformers and ecumenists, have derided, ridiculed, and insulted us Old Calendarists as backwards and hopelessly tenacious in holding to a “primitive” calendar.

Led, by way of superficial knowledge, away from wisdom to pride and all of its destructive ways, and enjoying the praise and spoils of a world—indeed, an ecclesiastical world—which courts influence, money, recognition, and the perquisites of human pride, they have obfuscated, by dismissing us Old Calendarists as half-wits, the real nature of our differences with them.

By cleverly demonstrating that, if, indeed, the Church Calendar were the only issue separating the Orthodox ecumenists and traditionalists, the Old Calendarists would *in fact* have science and astronomical theory on their side, Father Cassian goes on to demonstrate that the New Calendarists have, in the guise of poor science and trendy philosophical notions, actually alienated themselves from the unity of the Orthodox Church: they, who call us Old Calendarists schismatics, are themselves separated from the consensus of the Fathers, the spirit of the Church, and the salvific mystery of human transformation in Christ that is the unique gift of Orthodox Christianity to mankind. Influenced by Western thought, heterodox deviations from the Apostolic Faith, and a profound ignorance of the wisdom of the Church Fathers, as it is so manifestly evidenced in the genius of the Church Calendar, the New Calendarists—that is, the ecumenists and modernists, including, as we have said, some who follow the Old Calendar—have departed from the ethos of Orthodoxy, have heeded the lure of foreign doctrines, fallen into the pit of worldly politics, and, in the name of some contrived “official” Orthodoxy, removed themselves from that fullness of Faith which the “Small Flock” strives sedulously to preserve and to honor in “word, thought, and deed.” We are profoundly indebted to Hieromonk Cassian for his brilliant study and for his fidelity to the fullness of Church Tradition.



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*Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna  
From his “Foreword” to the book*