

TWO MODERN GREEK TITANS OF MIND AND SPIRIT

Ἀθήνα, 6^η Φεβρουαρίου 1954.

Ἰωαννίτῃ κ. Καβαρνέ,

ὡς γράφω βιασινὰ γιὰ μὲν νύχτα
δουλεύω στὸν τράλλο, ὥστε γὰρ εἶσαν
οἱ σιαλωτοὶ αὐτῆ τῆς βδομάδας.

Ἐὰν γὰρ φιλμὸς καὶ ὅσα εὐ-
χαριστῶ πολύ. Ἐστὶν γὰρ καινολογία
χειρὸς καὶ γὰρ βλάσφημο με' τὸν
κ. Δόνα. Μὴ βιάζομαι, γὰρ νὰ
πάρω σωστὰ δουλικά καὶ ἔμπορος
φωτογραφίης. Γεύθη μου τί σαι-
τώσατε γὰρ ὅσα ὅσα ἔγραψα εἰς
Πανοσχίον.

μέ πολλή ἐπιτήρησι καὶ ἀγάπῃ:

Φίλιππος Κόντσογος

Two Modern Greek Titans
of Mind and Spirit

TWO MODERN GREEK TITANS OF MIND AND SPIRIT

The Private Correspondence of
Constantine Cavarnos and
Photios Kontoglou
(1952–1965)

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with

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and Monk Chrysostomos

**With an Introduction and a
Brief Biography of Photios Kontoglou by**
Metropolitan Chrysostomos



Etna, California

2014

Cover design, graphics, and printing set-up
by Schemamonk Father Vlasie

Text arrangement, biographical notes on translators
and editors, and Appendices by
Archimandrite Gregory

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CONTROL NUMBER

2014945477

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BOOK NUMBER

978-1-938943-01-0

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Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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Photios Kontoglou (1895–1965)



*Constantine Cavarnos (Schemamonk Father Constantine)
(1918–2011)*

Introduction

By Metropolitan Chrysostomos

The correspondence between the famous artist, iconographer, literary figure, and modern Greek cultural titan Photios Kontoglou, who died in 1965, and Constantine Cavarnos, the Greek-American philosopher, writer, translator, Byzantinist, and spiritual writer and guide, a virtual titan of Eastern Orthodox intellectuals in the West, who died in 2011, is very little known. Only occasional excerpts from their correspondence have appeared in print. The present collection of letters represents the vast bulk of that correspondence. While all of the letters in the collection were written by Kontoglou to Cavarnos, in almost every instance they make clear reference to the subjects and topics covered in the exchanges between the two, with frequent direct restatements of comments and ideas contained in the latter's letters. On that account, we feel justified in characterizing the missives presented in this volume, which span a period of nearly a decade and a half, as correspondence between the two. Professor Cavarnos dutifully and carefully preserved Photios Kontoglou's letters to him in a capacious punch hole binder, arranged by date. Each piece of correspondence was handwritten in an ornate cursive style, using ligatures common to Byzantine minuscule calligraphy. (A typical specimen from his correspondence appears after the Prolegomenary Note in this volume.) Through his longtime

A Brief Biography of Photios Kontoglou (1895–1965)

Compiled by Metropolitan Chrysostomos

The renowned Greek artist, writer, and iconographer Photios Kontoglou (Φώτιος Κόντογλου)¹ was born in Anatolia, or Asia Minor, then under the rule of the Devlet-i Âliyye-i Osmâniyye, or the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire,² on November 8, 1895.³ His birthplace was Kydonies or Ky-

¹ Photios Kontoglou often used as his pen name, instead of the name “Φώτιος,” its vernacular form: “Φώτης” (Photes [Phōtēs] or, as ioticized in the less precise modern Greek form of transliteration, Photis or Fotis).

² The Ottoman Empire covered roughly the central territory of the Byzantine Empire, which it conquered in the fifteenth century, and was the precursor of the modern Republic of Turkey, which was established in 1923.

³ With regard to the day of Kontoglou’s birth, it was probably recorded on the Old (Julian) Calendar, since the Turkish State did not adopt the New (Gregorian or Papal) Calendar until 1923. That would place his date of birth by the Gregorian reckoning on November 20, since in the 1890s the Julian Calendar was twelve days behind the Gregorian Calendar. It is likely that he simply maintained his original date of birth on the corresponding Gregorian date. This was the usual practice after the calendar reform in Turkey and in Greece, the latter having accepted it in March of 1923. There are some oral traditions, based on certain Church Feasts that Kontoglou supposedly favored, that challenge this assumption about Kontoglou’s day of birth, but they are not compelling.

The year of his birth is also a matter of some confusion and dispute, biographical and reference compendia listing it as 1895, 1896, and 1897. Since it is commonly accepted that his father died in 1896

doniai (Κυδωνίες, Κυδωνίαι), a city known in Turkish as Ayvalık, or Aïvali (Αϊβαλί), as the Greek inhabitants pronounced it, and which is located on the Aegean coast. It was part of ancient Aeolis and it is surrounded by such famous Greek and Roman cities of antiquity as Pergamon, Troy, and Assos. It lies across from, and very near, the Greek island of Lesbos. At the time of Kontoglou, Aïvali, though officially administered by Turkish authorities, was essentially a Greek city, with an estimated population of about thirty to forty thousand.

Kontoglou's parents were Nicholas (Νικόλαος) and Despoina or Despos (Δέσποινα, Δέσπωσ) Apostolelles (Αποστολέλλης),⁴ née Kontoglou. His father was a sailor about whom very little is known or has been recorded and who died a year after Photios' birth. His mother hailed from a deeply religious family that, as Kontoglou himself later wrote, boasted of a long line of pious clergy and monastics. Despoina was universally noted for her extraordinary piety. He, the last child born to the couple, had three siblings: two brothers, Ioannes (Ιωάννης, or John) and Antonios (Αντώνιος, or Anthony), and one sister, Anastasia. His maternal uncle, Archimandrite Stephanos, was the Abbot of the Monastery of St. Paraskeve, a private Church and estate belonging to the Kontoglou family, located on a peninsula near Kydoniai, which the family called the "island." His learned and venerable un-

and that at his death on July 13, 1965, hospital records show Kontoglou to have been seventy years of age, 1895 seems to be an accurate estimation of his year of birth.

⁴ Often alternatively spelled Αποστολέλης (Apostoleles) or Αποστολλέλης (Apostolleles) in various biographies and reference works.

A Prolegomenary Note on Kontoglou's Letters to Professor Cavarnos

Some three years before he met Dr. Constantine Cavarnos, Photios Kontoglou wrote a letter, in May of 1949, to the editor of the periodical *Ἑλληνισμὸς τοῦ Ἐξωτερικοῦ* (Hellenism abroad) about an article by Cavarnos, “Ὁ Κόντογλου καὶ ὁ Νεοελληνικὸς Πολιτισμὸς” (Kontoglou and modern Greek culture) that appeared in that publication.¹ I have translated it below. It expresses many of the common thoughts and interests that eventually brought these two geniuses of modern Greek and Orthodox culture into spiritual and intellectual communion of the most profound kind. As such, it is a proper exordium of sorts to their correspondence.

Metropolitan Chrysostomos



Athens, 21 May 1949

Dear Mr. Droutsas,

I got your letter today and the copies of your periodical. I took joy that there are such Christian Greeks in Europe, and indeed young ones. May God strengthen you

¹ Constantine Cavarnos, “Ὁ Κόντογλου καὶ ὁ Νεοελληνικὸς Πολιτισμὸς,” *op. cit.* (n. 5, Introduction, *supra*). See further discussion of this article in my Introduction.

and support you on your path, so as to walk “as children of light.”² I also read the article that you published about me. All the best to Mr. Cavarnos, who wrote it and who looked with such kindness on my humble work.

As regards the collaboration that you request from me, you do me great honor; but truthfully, I am not worthy and your laudations distress me. You ask of me philosophical articles, yet I write simple things, primarily religious in nature, which are not needed in your work. Philosophy is a work of sin, and from the day that Christ came to the world, it seems to be a “vain deceit.”³ From

² Ephesians 5:8.

³ Kontoglou uses the Greek words “κενή ἀπάτης,” from Colossians 2:8. One must not misunderstand Kontoglou’s comments here as anti-intellectual or as an outright dismissal of the value of philosophy. Cavarnos, in his book *Συναντήσεις με τὸν Κόντογλου*, makes it very clear that Kontoglou accepted the traditional distinction between the secular philosophy of the ancient Greeks and modern philosophical schools and the divine philosophy of the foundational elements of the Church: Scripture, the Holy Canons, the writings of the Church Fathers, etc. Like the Church Fathers, he considered the latter superior to the former. This is not to say, however, that the Church Fathers or Kontoglou deny the positive rôle of secular philosophy in forming sound human reason; it is simply to say that they naturally considered it infecund and vain if such reason did not serve to lead one to the aims and goals of divine philosophy; i.e., the spiritual restoration of humankind (*op. cit.* [Biography, *supra*], pp. 81–82).

In a similar vein, Kontoglou looked at secular, non-iconographic art, including western religious art, as belonging to the realm of the physical senses and thus unequal to iconographic art and its appeal to the spirit and to eternal values. In particular, he points out that ecclesiastical paintings in Europe, “famous for their artistic merits,” lack “the power of touching us so profoundly as the works of some unlearned and unknown Byzantine painters” (Con-

my side, I compose certain writings so that our tradition might be reinforced, so that we do not depart from it, as we are in danger of doing. For here in Greece, there have appeared all sorts of “modernists,” hollow of head and infected in heart, who want to leave nothing Greek and nothing Orthodox in our land. I have struggled against this for many years with feeble and humble means. With the help of God, I have succeeded in opening the eyes of many, and we work so as not to be westernized.⁴

A few years ago, I fought alone, wholly alone, “μόνωτατος,”⁵ as the Prophet Elias says. Fight for the Hellenic Orthodox tradition. It is our ark against which turbid waves thrash. With the spirit of Christ. With faith and with love. Philosophies and sagacious social theories are not needed. Simple and pure words are. I, too, would like to send something to you, but at this time I cannot. I am writing for the newspapers and I am painting Icons, in order to make a living. I work a great deal just to get by. Glory to God, praised be, I live with my family on the fringe, in poverty but in peace, far from ambitions and upsets, and I have had the privilege thereby of learning what the faith is to those Greeks living in a Europeanized manner and to those in environs fragrant with the aroma

stantine Cavarnos, *Byzantine Thought and Art*, *op. cit.* [Biography, *supra*], p. 78). Thus, Kontoglou showed considerable appreciation for the artistic accomplishments of secular and western religious painters, while acknowledging the deficits of their art in a spiritual sense.

⁴ Kontoglou says “γιατί νά μή φραγκέψουμε” [*sic*] or, literally, “to become Franks,” in reference to the ancient Franks, Germanic tribes that eventually consolidated under the Carolingian Empire and the would-be revival of the western part of the Roman Empire.

⁵ “Utterly alone” (III Kings 18:22).

of Orthodoxy. I will send you something by me whenever I can. When you write to Mr. Cavarnos, write him on my behalf that I thank him⁶ for his article, blessing him for the kindness that he has shown, which prompts him to see my humble works as important. I thank you for this, for I am remiss [in thanking him], and by right he can complain.

And you, Mr. Droutsas, I greet you with love. And I congratulate you and entreat Christ to give you His joy always, that you might always be blessed.

Photes Kontoglous

⁶ Kontoglou writes “τὸν φχαριστῶ” for “τὸν εὐχαριστῶ” (I thank him). Throughout this paragraph, Kontoglou writes in a self-deprecating way, with forceful imagery, sentence fragments that are simple and clear in their meaning, and then with this folksy, dialectical expression. As Cavarnos has observed, Kontoglou highly valued “simplicity, clarity, and sincerity,” and, despite his mastery of all forms of the Greek language, valued even the “semi-literate” language of writers—and especially folk poets—who showed these traits in their works (*Συναντήσεις μετὰ τὸν Κόντογλου*, *op. cit.*, p. 71). His use of stark images, yet simple language, in writing to the editor of an intellectual journal gives one insight into the subtlety and depth of Kontoglou’s personal character.

One sees this character trait in Kontoglou’s painting, too, which, in some instances, shows a deliberate starkness in bringing Iconography away from the superficiality of mere artistic execution. At the same time, in terms of artistic technique, Kontoglou was capable of producing refined paintings worthy of the Renaissance masters and abstract art that, had he pursued it, would undoubtedly have made him as famous as Picasso. In his painting, as in his writing, he turns to what one might call ironic simplicity and directness in purifying his medium in the service of conveying profound, penetrating, and eternal truths and values.

A Specimen of Kontoglou's Handwritten Letters

Ἰουλίου 7 Ἰουνίου 1957

Ἰ. Δικαιώτε Κωνσταντίνε,

Ἦχα μεγάλη χαρὰς τὸ περισοῦθιτον βιβλίον σου καὶ σὲ εὐχαριστῶ ἀπὸ καρδίας. Δι' ἐμέ, τὸν μὲν Γνωρίζω τὴν γλῶσσαν εἶναι ὅσοια εἶνε φαρμάκιον, εἶνε εὐλη κενυλισμένη.

Ἀλλὰ, φύλλομεστράντας το, ἀποδάνθισμα δεῖ εἶνε καρπὸς ἀγάπης, ἀγάπης ἀπὸ τὴν γερὰν βιβλιοκρίτην ἀπρόδοτον καὶ τὴν ἀριστοειαν τὴν πατέρα μου, καθὼς καὶ ἀπὸ ἐμέ τὸν ἀνάξιον, ὅταν τολμῶ νὰ εἰσέλθωμαι εἰς τὰ ἄλλα τὴν ἀγίαν, χωρὶς νὰ ἔχω ἐνδύμα γάρου.

Τὸ βιβλίον σου σὺν ὅλῃ εἶνε σεμνὸν ἀθῆν, σεμνὸν, ὅσον ὁ γράφας, καθαρὸν, συντομολόγον. Σὲ ἀρχαϊκῶς, ὅσοτε ἔχει καρπὸν, νὰ μὴ μεταφράσῃς καφερινὰ σελίδα.

Αἱ εὐμόνες εἶναι κατὰ διαχερμένους, ^ε
κατὰ τυωμένους, ἕως τῆς ἀναστάσεως
σὺν εἶνε τὸ κλεισὸν σφύβαρὺ, μεγαλωμένο.

Σε παρακαλῶ νὰ μὴ γράψῃς ὅσο
στοιχίζῃ, καὶ νὰ τὸ ἀγοράσῃς κάποιος φίλος
μου, σὺν θεῶ τὸ ἴδῃν.

Εὐχομαι εἰς τὸν πανάγαθον θεὸν νὰ
τὸ διαβάσῃς σφραγίσῃ, καὶ νὰ στείρῃ μετὰ σῆς
τυχῆς σου τὸν σφόδρον τῆς εὐστεως καὶ τῆς
κατὰ χριστὸν χαρᾶς. Καὶ νὰ σε ἀξιῶσιν ὁ
Κύριος, μετὰ τῶν εὐχογράτων, νὰ γράψῃς καὶ
νὰ τυωσῇς καὶ ἄλλα τυχοφειμῆ ἔργα,
σὺν νὰ ξεχερσώσῃς τυχῆς οἱ δεσποῖτες σφραγίσῃ
τῆν σωτηρίαν, εἰς δεξάν σου ἀναρχοῦ Πάτρῳς,
καὶ τοῦ Μονογενῆ υἱοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ
τοῦ Παναγίου καὶ Ζωοδοῦ καὶ χαμοφύοντος
τῆν διανοίαν τῶν πιστῶν ἀγίου Πνεύματος. Ἀμήν.

Φώτιος.

THE LETTERS (1952–1965)

Athens, 29 November 1952

Dearest Mister Constantine,

Your letter particularly moved me. We, too, often remember your sojourn here and pray that God might enlighten you and grant you health and a serene heart. I also thank you for the photographs. I will especially care for them. A certain other dear friend from America, Mr. I. Kontogiannes (Condon¹), sent me similar color photographs. His leaned towards blue. Yours towards red. It seems that a correct adjustment of the photographic device is difficult.

The thanks that you express come forth from your great gentility of character, since we were not in a position to look after you, even if we much wished to.

You would give me great joy if you would send me some of your publications, though in Greek, since, as you know, I do not read English.²

I spent two months in Rhodes, where I painted large murals for the present Metropolitan Cathedral,³ formerly the Church of St. John of the Knights Hospitaller.

Rhodes is filled with historical monuments from ev-

¹ Here Kontoglou spells the surname in Latin characters.

² In fact, he could read, though not speak, some English.

³ The Cathedral of the Annunciation.

ery epoch and nation, and its landscape, moreover, is exotic and strange.

Please remember me from time to time.

From among my own, my wife,⁴ her father,⁵ my son-in-law,⁶ my daughter,⁷ Mr. Papademetriou,⁸ Mr. Moustakes,⁹ send you their greetings. Likewise, give your parents and all of your own our greetings.

With love and esteem,
Photes Kontoglous



Athens, May 4th, 1953

Dear Friend and Brother,

I received today your letter and the photographs. I thank you very much. The publication that you sent to me, *Ο Νίκων*, is very good and will benefit those who read it with understanding. However, understanding

⁴ Maria Kontoglou, *née* Chatzekamboures (d. 1973), who, like Kontoglou, was a refugee from Kydoniai.

⁵ Athanasios Chatzekamboures.

⁶ Ioannes Martinos.

⁷ Despoina Kontoglou Martinos.

⁸ Alexandros Papademetriou (1900–1986), director of the prestigious Aster Publishing House in Athens, which in the latter half of the twentieth century produced many books of the greatest theological and spiritual significance, such as the *Φιλοκαλία*, as well as numerous works by both Kontoglou and Dr. Cavarnos.

⁹ Basileios Moustakes, Greek theologian and co-founder of the periodical *Κιβωτός* (Ark), Athens.

has diminished in our days. Glory to God that it has not disappeared entirely. The small flock¹⁰ still exists and always will exist. Thus, the *Φιλοκαλία* has been translated and is read in English.¹¹ So many souls will be benefited. But for the Orthodox Faith to become a way of life for a person, it is necessary for him to understand the religion “liturgically.” Therefore, let us entreat God not to take from us the treasure of tradition, for otherwise we will simply study His holy religion, but we will not “live, move, and have our being in it.”¹²

You, blessed one, by reason of your professorial rank, can save and help others more than we can. Apropos of you are the words of St. Ephraim the Syrian to his disciple: “May God hear you, Symeon, when you entreat Him in your prayer, and may you enter the heavenly city. From you may His Church be filled with peoples who desire salvation, like a brimming cup. Let them come to hear from you holy teachings, and may they receive from you life and the Holy Spirit, and may you save sin-

¹⁰ Cf. St. Luke 12:32.

¹¹ Kontoglou refers here to *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), an anthology of selections translated from the *Добротолюбіе* (the Russian version of the *Φιλοκαλία*) by Eugenie Kadloubovsky (1892–1965) and G. E. H. Palmer (1904–1984). This initial publication formed the basis of *The Philokalia: The Complete Text* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979–1995), currently in four volumes, but as yet incomplete, with contributions from several additional translators, including Constantine Cavarnos. A complete collection of Cavarnos’s selected translations from the *Φιλοκαλία* was made available shortly before his death in a two-volume work, also entitled *The Philokalia* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 2008–2009).

¹² Cf. Acts 17:28.

ful souls, and may you be a wise physician, sought out by all in need of healing. Like David, who vanquished the blasphemous Goliath, thus may you, too, overcome erring souls, girt with holy weaponry, which is the Holy Spirit, like a helmet on your head. And may the pillar of God be your fellow traveller. May the Master be with you, He Whose help has never been defeated in any matter by anyone.”¹³

I embrace you with a holy kiss,
Your brother, Photios

+ Whenever you can, get to know Kostis Bastias. He is fighting the good fight.¹⁴

Kostis Bastias
[address deleted]
New York¹⁵



In Athens, on December 9th, 1953

Dear Friend, Mister Kostas,

¹³ From the *Διαθήκη* (Testament) of St. Ephraim. Kontoglou is apparently quoting these excerpts from a lengthier discourse from memory, given the variations in vocabulary and certain adjustments to the modern Greek dialect. Symeon was reputed to have been a man of great learning.

¹⁴ Cf. II St. Timothy 4:7. See references to Bastias *infra*.

¹⁵ The name and address are spelled in Latin characters.

The gentility of your soul greatly moves me, that you remember a man who is so far away, so much outside today's world, and that you indeed write about him such wondrous things, which his humble works do not deserve. "For out of the abundance of the heart the tongue speaketh."¹⁶

I have a student of Byzantine Iconography from America, Demetrios Sentoukas, or Doukas,¹⁷ a graduate of the Boston Polytechnic.¹⁸ He is a bright young man and very much loves Byzantine art, having truly and deeply realized the spirit of Byzantium in its art, most rare for those involved with such things, even Greeks from Greece itself. And in his conduct he is exceptional, reverent, humble, and pious. I firmly anticipate that this young man will become the transplanter of Byzantine Iconography to the Greek churches in America¹⁹ (I mean as an American citizen and a permanent resident of the United States,

¹⁶ Cf. St. Matthew 12:34.

¹⁷ Demetrios Doukas (1927–2011), a Greek-American iconographer and a pupil of Kontoglou; one, indeed, whom Kontoglou reckoned to be among his very best students. Doukas decorated numerous Greek Orthodox Churches throughout the U.S.A., most notably St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Washington, DC, a project to which he devoted some twenty years of his life. Among the other Churches that he decorated are St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Lynn, Massachusetts, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Mobile, Alabama, the Chapel of the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, and the Greek Orthodox Church of the Archangels in Stamford, Connecticut.

¹⁸ Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Boston, Massachusetts.

¹⁹ Indeed, Doukas did indeed gain renown in the U.S. for his Iconography.

Appendix 1

Kontoglou on the Old Calendarists

Photios Kontoglou's sympathetic views of the Old Calendar movement can be found in succinct form in the following two letters, which were both quoted in an article that appeared in one of Greece's more important conservative religious periodicals, *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος* (Orthodox press).¹ In the first, dated March 1957, he writes to a friend:

I saw what struggles you are going through, and with justification, over Church matters. But do not fear. There is faith among our people. The Old Calendarists truly are the most genuine Orthodox. However, I think that there is no schism; simply a division. May the Lord make 'the rough ways smooth.'²

In the second, dated 28 April 1965, he writes the same friend:

As for the Old Calendarists, you are right about everything. But they are also split into countless parties and, as you say, all you have to do in order to be reckoned an Orthodox Christian, if not a Confessor [of the Faith], is state that you are on the Old Calendar. But be that as it may, on account of the mess that the New Calendarists have created, our stand leans toward the former.

¹ "Ὁ Φώτης Κόντογλου μέσα ἀπὸ τὶς ἐπιστολές του" (Photios Kontoglou from his letters), *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, July 1966, p. 1.

² Cf. St. Luke 3:5.

Kontoglou's first letter was written on the heels of the repose of Archbishop Spyridon (Blachos) of Athens (1873–1956), to whose disgraceful and vicious prosecutions of the Greek Old Calendarists Kontoglou was an eyewitness and of which he was acutely aware. This regrettable Primate served the Church of Greece from 1949 through 1956 and did, admittedly, do so with some positive accomplishments. He strove to improve the educational level of his clergy, to see that they received adequate remuneration (albeit from the Greek State, unlike the Old Calendarists), and to rebuild the numerous Churches that had sustained damage during the German occupation (1941–1944) and the ensuing civil war (1946–1949). He also did much to further the work of Apostolike Diakonia, the publishing arm of the Church of Greece.

But these good and impressive deeds stood in sharp contrast to the unparalleled brutality of Archbishop Spyridon's treatment of the Old Calendarists; that is, of those Orthodox Christians in Greece who refused to accept the imposition of the "Revised Julian Calendar" (in reality, an incongruous combination of the Gregorian or Papal Calendar and the Orthodox *Paschalion*) on the Church of Greece in March of 1924. The brief entry for the Archbishop in the *Θρησκευτική και Ήθική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια* (Encyclopedia of religion and ethics) states that he "dealt firmly with the Old Calendarists" — a veritable understatement.³ In fact, not long after his election, "the basement of the Archdiocese in Athens was filled with the clerical robes of the True [Old Calendarist] Orthodox

³ Vol. XI (Athens: 1967), col. 398.

clergy who were taken there, shaved and shorn, often severely beaten, and then cast out onto the street in civilian dress.”⁴

Spyridon fostered rumors about the original Old Calendarist leaders, accusing them of political motivations (which he knew to be untrue), often alluding to non-existent documentation for his charges, which were repeated by various polemicists in the public media and by careless scholars. He unfairly created an ugly image of the Old Calendarist minority that still persists in certain circles of Greek society, marginalizing and understandably radicalizing its adherents. As Bishop Ambrose notes, at the beginning of Spyridon’s archiepiscopate, “all the [Old Calendar] Churches in Athens were sealed and their holy vessels confiscated, and a few Churches in other parts of Greece were even demolished. Soon no Old Calendarist Priest could circulate undisguised, and even monks and nuns were not immune to these profane attacks.”⁵ In one egregious instance of outright violence, on the evening of Great Thursday in 1952, during the Service of the Twelve Gospels, the Athens police, at the behest of the Archdiocese, burst into a local Old Calendarist parish and forcibly dragged away the Priest, who later that night was imprisoned. Whether the Archbishop was acting out of inexplicable personal animus or for political reasons, one cannot say. The legacy of his bigoted and prejudicial actions, however, sadly overshadows the perhaps finer as-

⁴ Archbishop Chrysostomos, Bishop Ambrose, and Bishop Auxentios, *The Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece*, Fifth edition (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2009), p. 23.

⁵ *Ibid.*

pects of his character and his better deeds.

As we see from his second letter, penned in 1965, shortly before his death, Kontoglou was aware of the disarray into which the Old Calendar movement had fallen, both in terms of factionalism (which is at long last subsiding) and an attachment by some of its adherents to the superficialities of the movement, but nonetheless leaned towards it because of its traditional and genuine character. Like the revered Elder Philotheos (Zervakos), the Abbot of the famous Monastery of Longovarda (1884–1980) on the Greek island of Paros, Kontoglou sincerely hoped that the staunchly traditionalist Archbishop Chrysostomos II (Hatzestavrou) of Athens (1888–1968), who served as Primate of the Church of Greece from 1962 until 1968, would succeed in carrying out his express intention to restore the Julian (Church) Calendar to the State Church of Greece. He was prevented from doing so when the military dictatorship (the “Junta”) came to power in Greece, in April of 1967, and unlawfully removed him from office, replacing him with Archimandrite Hieronymos (Kotsones) (1905–1988), an ecumenist and modernist. As Dr. Cavarnos commented in an interview some years ago, in expectation of a change “from the top” in the Church of Greece, “Photios consoled himself and was at peace with his conscience by attending services at a church in his neighborhood that followed the Old Calendar.”⁶

⁶ Constantine Cavarnos, “Unwavering Fidelity to the Holy Tradition,” *Divine Ascent*, Vol. I, Nos. 3 & 4, pp. 33–47.

Appendix II

A Chronology of Events in Kontoglou's Life

- 1895 November 8. Photios Kontoglou is born in Aïvali (Kydoniai), Asia Minor.
- 1912 Graduates from the celebrated secondary school in Aïvali.
- 1913 Goes to Athens to study at the School of Fine Arts, where he is given advanced placement.
- 1915 Leaves Athens to study in Spain and France.
- 1920 Summer. Returns to Aïvali.
- 1920 Teaches Art History and French at the Aïvali School for Girls.
- 1921 Conscripted into military service.
- 1923 Makes a pilgrimage to Mount Athos.
- 1928 Marries Maria Chatzekamboures in Athens.
- 1931 Appointed Curator of Byzantine Icons at the esteemed Byzantine Museum of Athens.
- 1933 Appointed Professor of Art History and Painting at the American College in Athens.
- 1952 Meets Professor Constantine Cavarnos and begins a correspondence that lasts until his death.
- 1960 Awarded the Academy of Athens Prize for his two-volume guide to Iconography.
- 1963 Kontoglou, while walking with his wife in downtown Athens, is struck by an automobile and very seriously injured, along with her. His long recuperation from the accident was a prelude to var-

ious health issues that plagued him during his final several years, during which he was, nonetheless, indefatigably active.

1965 Awarded Greece's highest Commendation for Letters and the Arts by the Academy of Athens.

1965 July 13. Kontoglou reposes in his seventieth year, succumbing to an invasive infection caused by an earlier surgical procedure.

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(Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and
Modern Greek Studies, 2012)



The Evergetinos: A Complete Text (in 4 vols.)
(Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist
Orthodox Studies, 2008)

TWO MODERN GREEK TITANS OF MIND AND SPIRIT

The Private Correspondence of
Constantine Cavarnos and
Photios Kontoglou
(1952–1965)

The correspondence between the famous Greek artist, iconographer, writer, and modern Greek cultural titan Photios Kontoglou, who died in 1965, and Constantine Cavarnos, the Greek-American philosopher, writer, translator, Byzantinist, and spiritual writer and guide, a virtual titan of Eastern Orthodox intellectuals in the West, who died in 2011, is little known. Only occasional excerpts from their correspondence have appeared in print. The present collection of letters is taken from that correspondence. While all of the letters in the collection were written by Kontoglou to Cavarnos, in almost every case they make clear reference to the subjects and topics covered in the exchanges between the two, with frequent direct restatements of comments and ideas contained in the latter's letters. On that account, we feel justified in characterizing the missives presented in this volume, which span a period of nearly a decade and a half, as correspondence between the two.

From the Introduction

ISBN 978-1-938943-01-0