

# **ON THE NAME OF GOD**

*Against the Name-worshipping Heresy of Fr. A. Bulatovich and  
Fr. G. Lourié*

*Vladimir Moss*

© Vladimir Moss, 2007

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.....	4
PART I: THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ORTHODOX TEACHING.....	9
1. Names and Knowledge.....	10
2. The Nameable and the Unnameable.....	14
3. Names, Energies and Hypostases.....	19
4. The Name of Jesus .....	23
PART II: THE MAIN ARGUMENTS OF THE NAME-WORSHIPPERS.....	25
5. Name-worshipping and Eunomianism(I).....	26
6. Name-worshipping and Eunomianism (II).....	33
7. Name-worshipping and Pantheism .....	38
8. Name-worshipping and the Sacraments .....	44
9. Name-worshipping and Icons .....	50
10. Name-worshipping and the Jesus Prayer.....	58
Conclusions.....	67
APPENDIX: THE DECREES ON NAME-WORSHIPPING .....	75

*“And holy is His name”. The name of God is said to be holy, not because it contains in its syllables any special virtue, but because in whatsoever way we contemplate God, we see Him pure and holy.*

St. Basil the Great, On Psalm 32.

*Whatever is called “God” in the full and proper sense is God and whatever He is in His nature is a true name for Him – granted that real truth is contained in realities, not in names.*

St. Gregory the Theologian, Oration 29, 13.

*There is only one name for expressing the Divine nature – the wonder which seizes us when we think of God.*

St. Gregory of Nyssa, On the Song of Songs, 12.

*There was a time when God had no name, and there will be a time when he will have no name.*

St. Isaac the Syrian, Unpublished Chapters on Knowledge, III,1, syr e7,  
Bodleian.

*Remember, the power is not in the word, not in the name, but in Christ Himself, Who is named.*

St. Barsanuphius of Optina.<sup>1</sup>

*The Divinity **rests on** the Name of God.*

Archbishop Theophan of Poltava.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> In Priest Paul Florensky, *Perepiska s M.A. Novoselovym (Correspondence with M.A. Novoselov)*, Tomsk, 1998, p. 206 (in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> In Vladimir Lossky, letter of January 6/19, 1937, in Polischuk, E.S. (ed.), *Imiaslavie. Antologia (Name-worshipping. An Anthology)*, Moscow, 2002, p. 518 (in Russian).

## HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there arose among the Russian monks of Mount Athos the heresy of name-worshipping (called *imyaslavie* in Russian by its proponents and *imyabozhie* by the Orthodox), which consists in the belief that the Name of God is not only holy and filled with the grace of God, but is holy *in and of itself*, being *God Himself*. Its beginning may be dated to the publication, in 1907, by the Athonite Schema-monk Hilarion, of a book on the Jesus prayer entitled *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*. This book was at first well-received and passed the spiritual censor; but later some incautious expressions in it that seem to claim that the name of God *is* God elicited criticism. Soon monastic opinion in Russia was polarised between those who, like the monks of the Kiev Caves Lavra, approved of the book and the identification of the name of God with God Himself, and those, like the monks of the Pochaev Lavra and the Optina Desert, who rejected it.

The heresy was condemned by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1912 (Charter No. 8522 of Patriarch Joachim III to Mount Athos, dated September 12) and 1913 (Charter No. 758 of Patriarch German V to Mount Athos, dated February 15), and by the Russian Holy Synod in 1913 (Epistle of May 18, and Decree of August 27, No. 7644). In 1913 Patriarch Gregory of Antioch also condemned it.

The Greek Athonite monks also condemned the heresy. Thus the Russian-speaking Elder Kallinikos of Katounakia wrote a memorandum to both the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Holy Synod, in which, as Archimandrite Cherubim writes, “he demonstrated the unsoundness of the views of the Name-worshippers, who, according to his apt characterization, ‘have abandoned the head and are worshipping the cap (*skouphia*)’.” The Tsar and the Russian Holy Synod sent their congratulations and decorations to the holy elder (they are preserved to this day in the Kalyve of St. Gerasimus).<sup>3</sup>

However, in 1914 the leading heretics, including Hieroschemamonk Anthony (Bulatovich), author of *An Apology of Faith in the Name of God and the Name of Jesus* (1913), were justified by a decision of the Moscow Diocesan Court, which declared: “... The Synodal Office has found that in the confessions of faith in God and in the Name of God coming from the named monks, in the words, ‘I repeat that in naming the Name of God and the Name of Jesus as God and God Himself, I reject both the veneration of the Name of God as His Essence, and the veneration of the Name of God separately from God Himself as some kind of special Divinity, as well as any deification of the very letters and sounds and any chance thoughts about God’ – there is

---

<sup>3</sup> Archimandrite Cherubim, *Contemporary Ascetics of Mount Athos*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1992, vol. I, pp. 210, 211.

contained information allowing us to conclude that in them there is no basis for leaving the Orthodox Church for the sake of the teaching on the Names of God.' (decree № 1443 of May 8, 1914)".

Of course, this decree did not constitute a "justification" of the name-worshippers' teaching, especially in view of the fact that *on the same day* the Office, led by Metropolitan Macarius, affirmed that name-worshipping – "*the new false-teachings on the names of God proclaimed by Schema-Monk Hilarion and Anthony Bulatovich*" – was a heresy (decree № 1442 of May 8, 1914). Moreover, in rejecting "any deification of the very letters and sounds and any chance thoughts about God", Bulatovich was obliged also to renounce his words in the *Apology*: "Every mental representation of a named property of God is the Name of God [and therefore, according to the name-worshippers, God Himself]", "the contemplation of His name is God Himself", "the conscious naming of God is God Himself", "Every idea about God is God Himself", "we call the very idea of God – God".

But did he in fact repent?

Unfortunately, the repentance of the name-worshippers turned out to be fictional. Bulatovich did not repent, but concealed his heresy behind ambiguous words and phrases. Thus on May 18, 1914, in a letter to Metropolitan Macarius, Bulatovich thanked him for his "justification", and nobly deigned to declare that he was now ready to return into communion with the Orthodox Church (!). And he added: "Concerning the Name of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, we, in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Fathers, confessed and confess the Divinity and the Divine Power of the Name of the Lord, but we do not raise this teaching to the level of a dogma, for it has not yet been formulated and dogmatised in council, but we expect that at the forthcoming Council it will be formulated and dogmatised. Therefore we, in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Fathers, in the words of the ever-memorable Father John of Kronstadt said and say that the Name of God is God Himself, and the Name of the Lord Jesus is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, understanding this not in the sense of a deification of the created name, but understanding it spiritually, in the sense of the inseparability of the God-revealed Truth, Which is the Action of the Divinity."

These words of Bulatovich show that he was not sincere in his signature below the *Confession of Faith in God and in the Name of God*, but deceived Metropolitan Macarius (who was probably under pressure from the Over-Procurator Sabler, who was in turn under pressure from the fervent name-worshipper Gregory Rasputin<sup>4</sup>). "Mixing truth with unrighteousness"

---

<sup>4</sup> As Vladimir Gubanov writes, "the illiterate G.E. Rasputin interceded for the heretical name-worshippers and even tried to incite the empress to attack the fighters against the heresy of name-worshipping." (*Tsar Nicholas II and the New Martyrs*, St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 770 (in Russian)).

(Romans 1.18), Bulatovich mixed Orthodoxy with heresy. Thus Orthodoxy recognises that there is a “Divine Power” dwelling in, or resting on the name of Jesus, but does *not* recognise that it *is* “Divinity”. Again, Orthodoxy recognises that in prayer the name of God is indeed inseparable from God, but it does not *confuse* the two, as does Bulatovich. For while a shadow is inseparable from the body that casts it, this is not to say that the shadow *is* the body.

The Most Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church accepted that Bulatovich and his fellow-heretics had not really repented, so they set aside decree № 1442 of the Moscow Synodal Office, and confirmed the sentences against the name-worshippers (decree № 4136 of May 10-24, 1914), which confirmation was again confirmed by decree № 2670 of March 10, 1916. “In this decree of the Most Holy Synod,” wrote the future Hieromartyr Basil (Zelentsov), Bishop of Priluki, “we find a confirmation of the basic rule that the name-worshippers must be received into ecclesiastical communion and admitted to the sacraments of the Church only on the unfailing condition that they reject the false teaching of name-worshipping and witness to their faithfulness to the dogmas and teaching of the Church and to their obedience to Church authority”.

It was planned to discuss the question of name-worshipping at the Local Council of the Russian Church in 1917-18, and a commission was created under the presidency of the great theologian, Archbishop Theophan of Poltava. But the red terror cut short the Council, and the question was not discussed.

However, on October 8/21, 1918, Patriarch Tikhon and the Most Holy Synod declared: “The Most Holy Synod does not change its former judgement on the error itself [of name-worshipping]... and has in no way changed its general rule, according to which the name-worshippers, as having been condemned by the Church authorities, can be received into Church communion... only after they have renounced name-worshipping and have declared their submission to the Holy Church... The petition of Hieroschemamonk Anthony to allow him to serve is to be recognised as not worthy of being satisfied so long as he continues to disobey Church authority and spread his musings which have been condemned by the Church hierarchy to the harm of the Church”.

After this decision, Anthony Bulatovich, broke communion for the second time with the Russian Church. Shortly thereafter, in 1919, he was killed by robbers...

Patriarch Tikhon returned to the subject of the name-worshipping heresy in his Nativity Epistle of February 19, 1921<sup>5</sup>: “In these high days, when the Church is celebrating the Nativity of the God-Man, Who brought the peace and goodwill of God the Father to earth, I consider it appropriate to remind you in brief of the Athonite imyaslavtsi (name-glorifiers) and give you certain instructions on how to treat these monks. It can be seen, that the Holy Synod in its definition of April 22-25 1914, number 3479, was indulgent to the spiritual mood and to the way of thinking of the Athonite monks, who have a poor knowledge of theology as expounded in books and of the forms of paper work, and allowed them, instead of the previously required signing by the imyabozhniki (name-worshippers) of a denial of their false teaching, to substitute for this a written testimony (a promise on oath) of their Orthodox faith, with the kissing of the Holy Cross and the Gospel. They promised exactly to follow the Orthodox Church and obey the God-established hierarchy, believing exactly as the Holy Church teaches, neither adding anything from themselves, nor taking anything away. In particular in regard to the glorification of the name of God, they promised not to consider His name the essence of God, nor to separate it from God, not to venerate it as a separate Deity, nor to worship the letters and sounds and occasional thoughts about God. The Holy Synod decided to admit into Church those who believed in this way and declared their willingness to obey the Church authorities, and to allow their priests to serve. But, in rendering its indulgence, the Holy Synod did not change its former opinion of the very error contained in the writings of Anthony Bulatovich and his followers, whom the Synod decided to pass over for the consideration of the All-Russian Holy Council, upon which depends the resolution of the whole issue in essence”.

Some of the name-worshippers consider the patriarch’s last phrase to indicate that the matter is still unresolved, and that the name-worshippers remain uncondemned. But the patriarch explicitly states that “the Holy Synod did *not* change its former opinion of the very error contained in the writings of Anthony Bulatovich”. “And so,” writes Fr. Peter Andrievsky, “the former judgement of the Synod on name-worshipping as a heresy, which is laid out in the ‘Epistle’ of the Synod of May 18, 1913, as also the later Synodal Decrees of 1914 and 1916, remain in full force to the present day.”

“Moreover,” he continues, “we must not forget that the heresy of name-worshipping did not at all arise in the Russian Orthodox Church, but in the Constantinopolitan, to the judgement of which all Athonite monks belong canonically. In the Constantinopolitan Church, it would seem, the name-worshippers should have sought their vindication. Archbishop Nikon writes to Fr. Bulatovich: ‘... You, Fr. Anthony, have long ago been called to his court

---

<sup>5</sup>Its existence appears to have been discovered by V. Kapitanchuk, “Name-Glorifying”, *Tsar’-Kolokol (The Tsar Bell)*, 1990. №№ 6,7; reproduced in Polischuk, *op. cit.*, p. 512, and Priest Peter Andrievsky, “The Heresy of Name-Worshipping in the Past and the Present”, [http://www.moskvam.ru/blessed\\_fire/05\\_2000/andr.htm](http://www.moskvam.ru/blessed_fire/05_2000/andr.htm) (in Russian).

by his Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch; in a conversation with me he personally asked: will you appear at this canonical court? I could say nothing in reply to this question. So, instead of writing apologies for your heresy, instead of leading after you – and out of the Church – crowds of monks who blindly believe you in disobedience to Church authority, should you not first of all fulfill your duty before the First Hierarchy of the Constantinopolitan Church, to which you, according to the Church canons, belong? Go to Tsargrad [Constantinople] and cleanse yourself, if you consider yourself in the right, at the court of your Church, and only then enter into polemics and reproach me and those hierarchs who agree with me – our Holy Synod and all those who accept the teaching on the name of God expounded in the “Epistle” of the Synod’ (*My Diaries*, p. 170).”<sup>6</sup>

In spite of the condemnations of the name-worshipping heresy by both the Constantinopolitan and Russian Churches, the name-worshipping movement did not die out; it survived in the Caucasus and South Russian region (where the Tsar had transported the rebellious monks); and the sophianists Florensky and Bulgakov also confessed (a different variant of) name-worshipping in the inter-war period. In modern times the heresy has enjoyed a revival in intellectualist circles in Russia, especially in the works of Hieromonk Gregory (Lourié) of St. Petersburg, who supports the heretical views of Bulatovich, considers Bulatovich himself to be a saint, and those who oppose his ideas, including several hieromartyrs of the Russian Church, to be “enemies of the Name”!

This article represents a critique of the name-worshipping heresy in the context of an attempt to delineate the Orthodox teaching on the name of God.

---

<sup>6</sup> Andrievsky, *op. cit.*

**PART I: THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ORTHODOX  
TEACHING**

## 1. Names and Knowledge

The act of naming is the very first recorded act of the first-created man in Genesis. Thus we read that “out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof” (2.19).

St. Ephraim the Syrian writes: “The words ‘He brought them to Adam’ show the wisdom of Adam... It is not impossible for a man to discover a few names and keep them in his memory. But it surpasses the power of human nature, and is difficult for him, to discover in a single hour thousands of names and not to give the last of those named the names of the first... This is the work of God, and if it was done by man, it was given him by God.”<sup>7</sup> For, as St. Ambrose of Milan writes, “God granted to you the power of being able to discern by the application of sober logic the species of each and every in order that you may be induced to form a judgement on all of them. God called them all to your attention, so that you might realise that your mind is superior to all of them.”<sup>8</sup>

What was this language that Adam used in naming the animals, and where did it come from? Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow writes: “The original language existed before the creation of the woman, and, like the gift of tongues in the Apostles, did not require much time or effort for its composition and formation. Man received this together with his existence; perhaps he perfected his knowledge through converse with the Creator by means of sensory sounds, and added to it from himself but with inspiration from God, Who had predetermined man for social living.

“St. Chrysostom explains the intention to survey and name the animals when he says that ‘God did this in order to show us the great wisdom of Adam... and as a sign of his dominion.’<sup>9</sup> In order to present the giving of names as an act of wisdom, we must suppose that Adam previously had a knowledge of the general properties and laws of existing things, and in applying to this general knowledge that which he discovered by experiment or the closest observation in the particular species of creatures, he gave them names which depicted their nature. Such names have been preserved to this day mainly in the Hebrew language.”<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis*, 2. Quoted in Fr. Seraphim Rose, *Genesis, Creation and Early Man*, Platina: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2000, p. 177.

<sup>8</sup> St. Ambrose, *On Paradise*, ch. 11; Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>9</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis*, 14.5.

<sup>10</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, *Notes of Guidance for a Basic Understanding of the Book of Genesis*, Moscow, 1867, p. 47 (in Russian).

The second act recorded of Adam is also an act of naming. We read: "The Lord brought upon the man a deep sleep; and when he awoke He took one of his ribs and covered up the place with flesh. And the Lord God built out of the rib that had been taken from the man a woman, and the man said: 'This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man'" (2.23). On which St. Ephraim comments: "Just as on this day all the animals received from Adam their names according to their kinds, so also the bone, made into a woman, he called not by her proper name, Eve, but by the name of woman, the name belonging to the whole kind."<sup>11</sup> In other words, the naming of Eve was not simply denotative, but connotative; the name was not just a pointer, but the expression of *knowledge*.

What was this knowledge? That Eve had been created from him. And this knowledge was expressed in the name; for the Hebrew word *isha* (woman) is clearly derived from *ish* (man).<sup>12</sup> It was also revealed to him, as the following verses show, that from the union of man and woman would come the whole human race. So this God-inspired knowledge was not only of the present, but also of the future; it was prophetic.

This knowledge and these names were clearly *man's*; for God "brought them unto Adam to see what *he* [Adam] would call them". At the same time, the inspiration of this knowledge was no less clearly *God's*, insofar as it "surpassed the power of human nature", in St. Ephraim's words. Thus the act of the correct naming, classification and knowledge of created nature is a work of Divine-human synergy.

At this point an interesting question arises: Why, having been granted to know and name the creatures that were below and equal to him, was not Adam granted to know and name Him Who was higher than himself, his Creator?

Of course, the fact that Adam is not described as naming God in Paradise does not necessarily mean that no such naming took place. And, as we shall see, there are good grounds for believing that Adam did in fact know the name of God. Nevertheless, the omission of any reference to Adam's naming of God in the sacred narrative is significant. Its significance lies in the fact that *whereas the rational knowledge, naming and classification of creatures is possible for man, albeit only with the help of God, such knowledge is impossible in relation to the Creator, God Himself, Whose being infinitely transcends all human knowledge.*

This is not to say that *no* knowledge of God is possible. Adam in a real sense knew God in Paradise; he was still without sin and conversed with Him openly; and if he had remained in obedience to Him, he would have ascended

---

<sup>11</sup> St. Ephraim, *Commentary on Genesis*, 2; Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

<sup>12</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

to a still higher knowledge, the knowledge that comes through *contemplation* of Him. Such knowledge through contemplation, according to St. Gregory the Theologian, was in fact the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Only it was forbidden to Adam at this stage in his spiritual development. For “contemplation... is only safe for those who have reached maturity of habit to enter upon, but... is not good for those who are still somewhat simple and greedy; just as neither is solid food good for those who are yet tender and have need of milk.”<sup>13</sup>

Contemplation, or the knowledge of good and evil, can safely be given only to those who have already reached spiritual maturity, that is, who have exercised their free will to choose good and reject evil in a steadfast, constant manner. The reward for such steadfastness in the practice of the good is the contemplation of Goodness Itself and the ability to discern and trample on all the snares of the evil one. However, those who attempt to see God without having passed this test fall into spiritual deception and the *pseudo-knowledge* of God. Since their real motivation is not to know God for His own sake but to “be as gods” for their own sake – in other words, not love, but self-love, – they receive the due reward of their evil works, which is enslavement to the evil one. The archetypal evil works in this connection are the practice of *magic*, which uses incantations of verbal formulae and, in its Jewish, kabbalistic form, seeks to manipulate the “names of God” (as the magicians suppose) in order to control and manipulate God for antitheist ends, and *heresies*, which give a false, blasphemous understanding of God.

The tree of knowledge was God’s instrument in testing man: if he was obedient to God, then the fruit of the tree would be ever-increasing knowledge of God and enjoyment of the Good through contemplation. If, on the other hand, he was disobedient, then the tree would be for the knowledge and experience of evil. Thus, depending on the fulfilment or non-fulfilment by man of the commandment, the tree was indeed the tree of the knowledge of both good and evil.

Man disobeyed the commandment, and so the tree, which, when partaken of at the right time, would have been for the knowledge of good in the true knowledge of God in contemplation, became for the knowledge of evil in spiritual deception, sin and death.

However, some glimmers of the true knowledge of God and creation remained. We see this in the second name that Adam gave to his wife after the fall – “Eve”, meaning “life”, “because she was the mother of all living” (3.20). We might at first see here a certain inappropriateness in the name, since it would have been more accurate to call her “death”, as being the mother of all mortals. But, as Metropolitan Philaret points out, there is a prophetic meaning in it: “the woman is called life by reason of the promise

---

<sup>13</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *Second Oration on Pascha*, 8; Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

given by God concerning her seed, 'she was the mother of all living' as mother of the second Adam, who is 'a life-giving Spirit' (I Cor. 15.45)".<sup>14</sup>

*Conclusion 1: The first act of the first-created man was the naming of the animals. He thereby demonstrated his knowledge of their nature. The act of naming with correct names and classifications, and the knowledge of created natures is a combined activity of God and man.*

---

<sup>14</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, op. cit., p. 71.

## 2. The Nameable and the Unnameable

During the time of Enos, the grandson of Adam, we read (in the Hebrew text) that “men began to call on the name of the Lord God” (4.26). On which Metropolitan Philaret comments: “In the time of Enos, with the multiplication of the pious [Sethite] race, public and open Divine services were established, which had been formerly carried out by each family and private person without the agreement of others”.<sup>15</sup> And we read in the hymnography of the Church: “The wondrous Enos trusted in the Spirit and with divine wisdom began to call upon the God and Master of all with mouth, tongue and heart.”<sup>16</sup>

This interpretation is supported by Archimandrite Theophan (later Archbishop of Poltava) in his fundamental work on the Old Testament name of God, *The Tetragram*<sup>17</sup>, and by Fr. Seraphim Rose.<sup>18</sup> It opens up the fascinating hypothesis that the name of God in question, “Jehovah”, was not revealed for the first time to Moses on Mount Horeb, but was known to the people of God much earlier – certainly in the time of Enos, and possibly even earlier, in Paradise. This thesis is defended in detail by Archimandrite Theophan, who concludes that since “Jehovah” was “the name of the living God Who reveals His life in revelation”, it was “very probably contemporaneous to the existence of revelation and, consequently, has existed from the very beginning of human history. It probably arose, in our opinion, as early as the lives of the first people in Paradise. Here, as we know, man gave names to the animals and, of course, to all the objects of the visible world. It cannot be that the Being with Whom he was most of all in communion with, should remain without a name for him. And out of the possible Divine names that are known to us from revelation, the name ‘He Who is’ was as suitable as could be for this purpose. As being higher than every existence and human thought, and as excelling all in goodness, the Creator of the world created man according to His image and thereby instilled into the very bases of the spiritual nature of man the thought and knowledge of His own eternity. Through this He made him, according to the expression of St. Athanasius the Great, a contemplator and knower of Him Who is, so that man, in converse with God, lived a blessed and immortal life. From this contemplation of God by the radiant mind of the first-created man, undimmed by sinful impurity, there arose the present name. But even after the fall, when the union of man with God was broken and the mental contemplation of God ceased, this name continued to retain for man its complete significance, although it changed in its religio-historical content in conformity with the course of the whole of soteriological revelation in general. It is self-evident that when to the name

---

<sup>15</sup> Metropolitan Philaret, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> *Sunday of the Holy Fathers*, Mattins, Canon, Ode 3, verse.

<sup>17</sup> Archimandrite Theophan (Bystrov), *The Tetragram*, St. Petersburg, 1905, p. 159 (in Russian).

<sup>18</sup> Rose, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-234.

'He Who is' is ascribed such profound antiquity, it is not the name's external wrapping in sounds that we have in mind, whose antiquity, of course, cannot extend beyond the antiquity of the language that created it, but the very idea of the living God, which found its incarnation in the tetragram at a definite historical moment. From such a point of view, the idea of God as 'He Who is' is bound in the very closest way with the whole of the Old Testament revelation and reflects in itself all the destinies of this revelation..."<sup>19</sup>

"And Moses said to God: Behold, I shall go to the sons of Israel and shall say to them: 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you'. And they will say to me: 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them? God said to Moses: 'I am the Existing One' And He said: 'Say this to the sons of Israel: "The Existing One has sent me to you"' And against God said to Moses: say this to the sons of Israel: the Lord, the God of our fathers, of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob has sent me to you. This is My name for ever, a memorial of Me from generation to generation" (Exodus 3.13-15).

Moses was concerned that the sons of Israel would not believe that he had been sent by the true God. So the Lord gives him the "password", as it were: the name of God as it had been revealed to Adam, and used in Divine services since the time of Enos. The Israelites did not need to worry: it was truly Jehovah Who had sent him, the same God Who had appeared to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of their fathers.

But God did more than identify Himself by means of a commonly accepted name. He gave them two important lessons, according to Philo of Alexandria. The first was: "Tell them that I am He Who is, that they may learn the difference between what is and what is not, and also the further lesson that no name at all can properly be used of Me, to Whom alone existence belongs."<sup>20</sup>

St. Gregory of Nyssa expands this first lesson as follows: "None of those things which are apprehended by sense perception and contemplated by the understanding really subsists, but the transcendent essence and cause of the universe, on which everything depends, alone subsists. For even if the understanding looks upon any other existing things, reason observes in absolutely none of them the self-sufficiency by which they could exist without participating in true Being. On the other hand, that which is always the same, neither increasing nor diminishing, immutable to all change whether to better or to worse (for it is far removed from the inferior and it has no superior), standing in need of nothing else, alone desirable, participated in by all but not

---

<sup>19</sup> Archimandrite Theophan, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-167.

<sup>20</sup> Philo, *Life of Moses*, 1.14.75. Cf. St. Justin the Martyr, *Exhortation to the Greeks*: "In sending Moses to the Jews, God does mention any name of His, but mystically signifies Himself by means of a participle ('Being'), thereby giving them to know that He is one."

lessened by their participation – this is truly real Being. And the apprehension of it is the knowledge of truth.”<sup>21</sup>

So God is true Being, absolute personhood, transcendent from, and independent of, all other beings and persons. This conception of God is sharply distinct from the pagan conception in which, as Archbishop Theophan writes, “the divinity either merges pantheistically with the world and, deprived of conscious rational self-determination, develops according to the laws of cosmic necessity, or if it is represented personally, then the very person is seen anthropomorphically and anthropopassionately, with all the traits of human limitedness and sinfulness”.<sup>22</sup>

But – and this is the second lesson to be drawn from the definition of the name – *such a Being cannot be named*. For to name something – if such a name is more than simply a label, if it not only denotes but also *connotes* something, – means to define it in relation to, or in terms of, something else: X is Y. But this is impossible for God the absolutely transcendent One. God can be defined only in terms of Himself: X is X. Hence the formula, which is here best translated from the Hebrew: “I am Who I am” (‘ehyeh šer ‘ehyeh), of which the word “Jehovah” or “Yahweh” is a contraction.<sup>23</sup> In other words, what we have is a *tautology* which, like all tautologies, tells us *precisely nothing* about the object named. And yet the very emptiness and negativeness of this definition tells us something very important about God: that He cannot be known through naming, definition, conceptual reasoning. For He is simply *existence, life*, and life can only be lived, not conceptualised. That is why it was the tree of life that was placed at the centre of the garden, and why access to it was barred to Adam and Eve after they had tasted of the tree of knowledge. For those who think they can know God by naming, by conceptual reasoning can never know Him as He is in Himself, that is, as ineffable and indescribable *life*. Thus the world of abstract essences revealed by logic and reasoning is incommensurable with the world of concrete existences. And God is “the Existing One” par excellence, before and above all other existences. And if He is also essence (for, as St. John of Damascus writes, “He is called both Existence and Essence”<sup>24</sup>), that essence cannot be known by us. Thus He is not *something*. He simply *is*.

“Our starting-point,” writes St. Gregory the Theologian, “must be the fact that God cannot be named. Not only will deductive arguments prove it, but the wisest Hebrews of antiquity, so far as can be gathered, will too. The ancient Hebrews used special symbols to venerate the divine and did not allow anything inferior to God to be written with the same letters as the word ‘God’, on the ground that the divine should not be put on even this much of a

---

<sup>21</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, II.24-25.

<sup>22</sup> Archimandrite Theophan, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> See Alan Cole, *Exodus*, London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973, pp. 69-70.

<sup>24</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, I, 12.

level with things human. Would they ever have accepted the idea that the uniquely indissoluble nature could be expressed by evanescent speech? No man has yet breathed all the air; no mind has yet contained or language embraced God's substance in its fullness. No, we use facts connected with Him to outline qualities that correspond with Him, collecting a faint and feeble mental image from various quarters. Our noblest theologian is not one who has discovered the whole – our earthly shackles do not permit us the whole – but one whose mental image is by comparison fuller, who has gathered in his mind a richer picture, outline, or whatever we call it, of the truth."<sup>25</sup>

Before leaving the subject of the tetragram, let us consider the question: what is the difference in meaning between the name of God as "Jehovah" or "Yahweh" and the other major name of God in the Old Testament, "Elohim"?

These two names alternate frequently in the early books of the Bible, but in the later books "Jehovah" comes to predominate. Modern critics have tended to see in this difference evidence of multiple authorship of the early books. However, Archimandrite Theophan provides a much more illuminating explanation, and one much more in accord with the spirit of faith. He shows in detail, from the study of many passages of Scripture, that "Elohim" expresses the idea of the cosmic, transcendent "God of nature", providing for and sustaining all things that exist, including all men; while "Jehovah" expresses the idea of "the God of Revelation" (the meaning of the name was explained in a special revelation to Moses) and "the God of grace", which is given, not to all men, but only to His chosen people, with a view to their *salvation* (hence the revelation of the name took place just before the Exodus, when God *saved* His people from slavery to the Egyptians). Thus "in the light of an integrated Biblical world-view, the Divine names Jahveh and Elohim signify two special spheres of the Divine rule of the world – regnum gratiae and regnum naturae. Historically, insofar as the knowledge of God in His capacity as Master of nature is accessible to every man who has not lost a living feeling for God, it undoubtedly characterises the knowledge of God already of the very first part of the patriarchal period. While the knowledge of God in His capacity as the God of grace, according to the clear witness of Exodus 6.3, began to be assimilated into the religious consciousness of Old Testament man only with the coming of the Sinai period, and in particular with the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt"<sup>26</sup>

If, in the beginning, there was no distinction between nature and grace, and so no distinction between the meanings of "Elohim" and "Jehovah", insofar as the kingdom of nature was identical with the kingdom of grace, after the fall and the disjunction between nature and grace the distinction became important. And with each succeeding covenant between God and His

---

<sup>25</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *Oration 30*, "On the Son", 17.

<sup>26</sup> Archimandrite Theophan, op. cit., p. 73.

chosen people – first with Noah, then with Abraham, then with Moses – it also became sharper. But if the connotations of the two names were different, their denotation always remained the same: the God of nature was the same God as the God of grace.

However, towards the end of the Old Testament period, as Archimandrite Theophan explains, the distinction became corrupted by a nationalistic consciousness among the Jews, who tended to see Jehovah as the God exclusively of the Jews in a strictly ethnic sense. Hence there arose, among the later prophets, the increasing use of the term “Jehovah Sabaoth”, “Lord of hosts”, as if to emphasise: Jehovah is indeed the God of the chosen people of Israel, but He is also the God of the heavenly hosts, of the whole of nature under the heavens, and hence also of the whole of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles.

And so, as Archbishop Theophan writes, “in the first pages of the Bible the tetragram has the widest significance, meaning the God of Revelation generally in distinction from His purely cosmic providence over the rest of the world. Then it is narrowed to a strictly theocratic name. And, finally, it is again broadened to include traits of universality and super-universality.”<sup>27</sup>

Thus the stage was set for the coming to earth of Jehovah Himself, Who would indeed be salvation for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles, a truly universal Saviour...

***Conclusion 2: According to His Essence, God cannot be named, He is unknowable. For He simply is. Therefore His Essence can be named or defined only by means of a tautology – “I am Who I am” or “I am the Existing One”.***

---

<sup>27</sup> Archimandrite Theophan, op. cit., p. 214.

### 3. Names, Energies and Hypostases

And yet, while God is unnameable in His essence, He *is* described in terms of other beings in the Holy Scriptures. Why? St. John of Damascus explains: “The Deity being incomprehensible is also assuredly nameless. Therefore since we know not His essence, let us not seek for a name for His essence. For names are explanations of actual things. But God, Who is good and brought us out of nothing into being that we might share in His goodness, and Who gave us the faculty of knowledge, not only did not impart to us His essence, but did not even grant us the knowledge of His essence. For it is impossible for nature to understand fully the super-natural. Moreover, if knowledge is of things that are, how can there be knowledge of the super-essential? Through His unspeakable goodness, then, it pleased Him to be called by names that we could understand, that we might not be altogether cut off from the knowledge of Him but should have some notion of Him, however vague. Inasmuch, then, as He is incomprehensible, He is also unnameable. But inasmuch as He is the cause of all and contains in Himself the reasons and causes of all that is, He receives names drawn from all that is, even from opposites: for example, He is called light and darkness, water and fire: in order that we may know that these are not of His essence but that He is super-essential and unnameable: but inasmuch as He is the cause of all, He receives names from all His effects”.<sup>28</sup>

“And so,” writes St. Basil the Great, “the God-inspired Scriptures of necessity use many names and expressions for the particular and, moreover, enigmatic (i.e. unclear) portrayal of the glory of God”.<sup>29</sup> Again, St. Gregory the Theologian writes: “The Divinity is unnameable. When we represent God by borrowing certain traits from that which surrounds God, we compose a certain unclear and weak idea gathered in parts from this and that. And the best theologian among us is not he who has discovered everything, but he whose idea is broader, and who has formed in himself a fuller likeness or shadow of the truth.”<sup>30</sup> “We,” writes St. Gregory of Nyssa, “following the suggestions of Scripture, have learned that that nature (of God) is unnameable and unspeakable, and we say that every term either invented by the custom of men, or handed down to us by the Scriptures, is indeed explanatory of our conceptions of the Divine Nature, but does not include the significance of that Nature itself”.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, I, 12.

<sup>29</sup> St. Basil the Great, *On Faith*, part V; quoted in Schema-Monk Epiphany (Chernov), *Against Hilarion*.

<sup>30</sup> St. Gregory the Theologian, *Fourth Theological Oration*.

<sup>31</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *To Ablabius, on 'not three Gods'*, P.G. 45, 121B; Schema-Monk Epiphany (Chernov), *op. cit.*

Seeking greater clarity, we may ask: if God is unnameable, do the names we give Him describe anything at all about Him? And if they tell us nothing about His essence, what, precisely, are they describing? And if they are not describing His essence, is it not the case that they are not describing God at all?

The answers to these questions are to be found in the distinction between the essence and the energies of God, which was most fully expounded by St. Gregory Palamas in the fourteenth century, but is to be found clearly expressed already in St. Basil the Great: “While we affirm that we know God *in His Energies*, we scarcely promise that He may be approached in His very Essence. For although His Energies descend to us, His Essence remains inaccessible.”<sup>32</sup>

The Energies of God “descend to us”, that is, they are God coming out of Himself, as it were, and descending to the realm of created nature.

We may compare the Energies of God to the rays of the sun, and His Essence – to the sun itself. Thus God as He is in Himself, in His Essence, is unknowable and unnameable, but God as He comes out of Himself and reveals Himself to us, in His Energies, is both knowable and nameable.

This distinction is of critical importance in the name-worshipping controversy; for the name-worshippers attempt to proceed from the fact that the Energies of God are nameable to the much more dubious proposition that the names of God *are* the Energies of God and therefore God. Their main support in this argument is the authority of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, who in his *The Divine Names* does indeed call the Energies of God the Names of God.

However, the holy fathers much more frequently described the names of God as the “inventions of men”, in St. Gregory of Nyssa’s words, which *refer to* (or *are explanations of*, in St. John of Damascus’ words) the Energies of God, but are not to be identified with them. For how can an invention of men be identified with the Uncreated God? The truth is that the Uncreated God is not *identified with* His names, but *portrayed by* His names, each name portraying one Energy.

This is particularly clearly expressed by St. Basil’s friend, St. Amphilochius of Iconium: “What did Christ not suffer to be called for our sake? We cannot enumerate [all of] His names, but I will attempt to state [some of] them, beloved: Door, Way, Sheep, Shepherd, Worm, Stone, Pearl, Flower, Angel, Man, God, Light, Fountain, and Sun of Righteousness. Though He has many names, Christ is one, and though He has many names, the Son is one, not being subject to change or alteration, for His Divinity is immutable; but He accommodates Himself to each thing according to His energies, assigning a

---

<sup>32</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Letter to Amphilochius*, *P.G.* 32, col. 869.

particular name to each energy. Now let us see, beloved, whether we can portray an energy by each of these names.”<sup>33</sup>

St. Gregory of Nyssa likewise writes: “The miracles seen in everything provide the matter for the theological names by which we call God wise, powerful, good, holy, blessed, as well as saviour and other such names. All of these names indicate some quality of God’s myrrh which we may say has been gathered from all nature and kept there as in a perfume bottle.”<sup>34</sup>

Even St. Dionysius uses the word “name” in this conventional, “human” usage, as we can see in the following passage: “He is many-named, because this is how they represent Him speaking: ‘I am He Who is, I am Life, Light, God, Truth’. And when the wise in God praise God Himself, Creator of all, by many names *gathered from created things*, such as Good, Beautiful, Wise, Beloved...”<sup>35</sup> And again: “This is the nature of prayer: it raises man from earth to heaven, and, *surpassing every celestial name*, eminence, and dignity, it present him to God Who is above all things”.<sup>36</sup>

Later theologians also use the word “name” in the conventional usage. Thus St. Maximus the Confessor writes in his commentary on St. Dionysius: “Note that the name ‘God’ does not show the essence, or what God is, but a certain good deed in relation to us, and that *we create names for God* from the gifts of God of which we are participants”.<sup>37</sup> And St. Gregory Palamas, the theologian par excellence of the Energies of God, also makes it clear that the naming of God is a human activity: “God exists completely in each of the worshipful Energies, according to each of which we name Him”.<sup>38</sup> And again: “The names apply to the energies (των δε ενεργειων εστι τα ονοματα)... That which surpasses every name is not identical to that which is named (ταυτο δε τω ονομαζομενω το υπερουμον ουκ εστιν); the essence and the energy of God are not identical.”<sup>39</sup>

So we may conclude that the unnameable Essence, the nameable Energies and the Names themselves are not identical. The Holy Fathers understood the Names of God as *referring to His Energies* (in most cases), but not as *being* those Energies, but rather as being the creations of men.

---

<sup>33</sup> St. Amphilochius, *Concerning the Newly-Illumined and on the Resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ*, 5; *Amphilochii Iconiensis Opera*, ed. C. Datema (*Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* [Turnhout: Brepols, 1978]), vol. III, pp. 155-162; translated in *Orthodox Tradition* (Etna, California), vol. XIX, no. 1, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Homily 1 on the Song of Songs*.

<sup>35</sup> St. Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, I, 6; quoted by E. Kholmogorov, *Notes on Name-worshipping*.

<sup>36</sup> St. Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, III, 1.

<sup>37</sup> St. Maximus, *Scholia on the Divine Names*, II.

<sup>38</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, II, 7.

<sup>39</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, III, 2, 10.

Why “in most cases” only? Because in some cases the name of God refers, not to His Energies, but to one or more of the Divine *Persons* or *Hypostases*. Among these *Personal* names of God we must include both “Yahweh” and “Elohim”. And, as we shall see in more detail later, the all-important name “Jesus”.

As for the word “God”, it sometimes refers to His Energies, sometimes even, by a certain “economy”, to His unnameable Essence, and very often, of course, to One or Other of the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity. Thus the name “God” in “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son” ([John 3.16](#)) refers exclusively to the Father. And in “God became man” – exclusively to the Son.

The names of God cannot refer simultaneously to the Energies and the Hypostases of God. For, on the one hand, all the Energies of God belong to all three of the Hypostases and do not each have their own Hypostasis; for, as St. Gregory Palamas writes: “It [the Energy of God] is enhypostasised’, not because it possesses its own hypostasis, but to the degree that the Spirit sends it into the hypostasis of another...”<sup>40</sup>. And on the other hand, some of the actions of individual Persons of the Trinity – for example, the Incarnation of the Son, or the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – can be ascribed only to one of those Persons.

***Conclusion 3: Although God is unnameable in His Essence, He is nameable in His Energies, which are God’s actions, or, in the words of one of the Holy Fathers, “the movements of the Essence”. The names of God sometimes refer to His Uncreated Energies, and sometimes to His Divine Hypostases.***

---

<sup>40</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, *Triads*, III, 1, 9.

#### 4. The Name of Jesus

At a certain specific historical time and in a certain specific geographical place, the Creator of the universe, He Who is, the same God Who spoke to Adam in the garden, and to Moses in the burning bush, and to the judges and kings and prophets of Israel, became man. And on becoming man, He acquired a new name, "Jesus". For "at the end of eight days, when He was circumcised, He was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2.21, 1.31).

Some have asserted that "Jesus" became the name of the humanity of Jesus Christ. But this is a mistake that smacks of Nestorianism. "Jesus" is the name, not of the humanity of Christ, but of His *compound Theandric Hypostasis* - but according to His human nature.

For, as St. John of Damascus writes: "By the word 'Christ' we understand the name of the Hypostasis, not in the sense of one kind only, but as signifying the existence of two natures", in that after the Incarnation "the natures are united in the Hypostasis, they have one compound Hypostasis" (*μὴν ὑποστάσιν συνθετον*).<sup>41</sup> And the holy father continues: "The Lord received the name Jesus Christ not before His Incarnation, as some falsely reasons,... The Word received the name Jesus Christ when He became flesh."

Now the name "Jesus", unlike "Elohim" and "Jehovah", is not exclusively a *Divine* name; it is not exclusively the name of God the Son in accordance with His human nature. Before being given to God, the name "Jesus" was also applied to Jesus (Joshua) the son of Nave (Nun), among others. The fact that Jesus the son of Nave and Jesus the Son of God have the same name is not accidental. "Jesus" means "Saviour", and both were the saviours of their people, albeit in different ways and with very different degrees of profundity and appropriateness. Jesus the son of Nave was the saviour of his people, the Israelites, in the sense that he conquered their enemies and made a way for them into the Promised Land, which was at that time called Canaan. Jesus the Son of God was and is the Saviour of His people in an infinitely more profound sense: He conquered our enemy, the devil, and made a way for us into the Promised Land, the Kingdom of heaven.

Before the Incarnation of the Son of God, "Jesus" was an ordinary name in the sense that it was an ordinary human invention applied to ordinary human beings. Several different people could have, and did have, the same name "Jesus", and these people were, of course, able to exchange this name for another. Thus "Jesus" was no different in principle from other ordinary human names such as Peter and Paul.

---

<sup>41</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, III, 3.

St. Gregory of Nyssa emphasises the human origins of these names, writing that the Apostle Peter could acquire the name “Cephas” without ceasing to be Peter, and that “Peter and Paul received their names from people, whence it follows that in their case it was possible to change their names... What, of the things that exist, did not receive its name from men?”<sup>42</sup>

However, at the Incarnation – and not before – the Divine Word acquired the human name “Jesus”. “For when the Word became flesh, then it was, we say, that He was called Christ Jesus.”<sup>43</sup> Thus it was that the grace of God came to rest on the name “Jesus”, and “Jesus” will remain glorious and worthy of veneration as the name of the Son of God to the ages of ages. As Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov writes: “O what a gift! It is the earnest of unending, infinite good things! It proceeded from the lips of the uncircumscribed God, Who clothed Himself in circumscribed humanity, and called Himself by a human name. A name which externally is circumscribed, but which depicts in itself an uncircumscribed Object, God, which borrows from Him an uncircumscribed, Divine dignity, Divine properties and power.”<sup>44</sup>

As the Most Holy Synod of the Russian Church put it in their Epistle on name-worshipping of May 18, 1913: “The name of God is holy, and worthy of veneration, and desired, because it serves for us as a verbal sign of the supremely desired and most holy Being – God, the Source of all good things. This name is divine, because it is revealed to us by God, it speaks to us about God, and raises our mind to God.”<sup>45</sup>

***Conclusion 4: “Jesus” is the name of the compound Theandric Hypostasis of the Son of God. It is created, and before the Incarnation of the Son of God it was the name, not of God, but of created people. But after the Incarnation it has become holy and worthy of veneration through its indissoluble connection with our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the Divinity may be said to rest on it, but not to be equivalent to it.***

---

<sup>42</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, VII, 4.

<sup>43</sup> St. John of Damascus, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, I, v, 6.

<sup>44</sup> Bishop Ignatius, “Word on the Jesus Prayer”, *Complete Collection of Works*, vol. II, p. 218 (in Russian).

<sup>45</sup> “On the false teaching of the name-worshippers”, *Church Gazette (Tserkovnie Vedomosti)*, No 20, 1913 (in Russian).

**PART II: THE MAIN ARGUMENTS OF THE NAME-  
WORSHIPPERS**

Now let us pass to a more detailed examination of the arguments of the leading name-worshippers.

### 5. Name-worshipping and Eunomianism(I)

Names are paradoxical, in that they seem to hover between extreme insignificance, even nothingness, on the one hand, and great power, almost equal to that of their bearers, on the other. In Goethe's *Faust* Mephistopheles says: "Happiness, heart, love, God - I have no name for it - feeling is all; names are but sound and smoke dimming the glow of heaven".

This romantic view is clearly wrong: names, like icons can reveal the glow of heaven, rather than dim it. Here the comparison with icons is useful (and will be discussed in more detail in a later section). Icons, in the words of St. Stephen the Younger, are "doors to heaven", doors that *open* the way to heaven, rather than closing it; and the same can be said of the names of God and His saints. As Archbishop Nikon pointed out in his report to the Russian Most Holy Synod on name-worshipping, even if names are no more than shadows of their bearers, it remains a fact that shadows, like the shadow of the Apostle Peter, work miracles."<sup>46</sup>

The question is: Is a shadow part of the body that casts it? Not according to the ordinary use of language. Nor, according to the same ordinary use of language, are names identical with, or part of, the people or things who bear them.

Nor is this just a truth of the "common-sense" use of language. For the common-sense usage is confirmed by the Holy Fathers. We have seen this already in the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa in his debate with the heretic Eunomius, who insisted on the identification of names and their objects: "One thing is the object which is subject by its nature to, the name which signifies the object".<sup>47</sup>

It is sometimes argued that this may be true of ordinary objects and persons, but it is not true of God insofar as God is eternal and unchanging, and everything about Him, including His names, is eternal and unchanging and inseparable from Him. However, St. Gregory of Nyssa, in the work quoted from above, was speaking precisely about the Divine names.

---

<sup>46</sup> Archbishop Nikon, "A great trial surrounding the most holy name of God", *Church Gazette (Tserkovnij Vestnik)*, № 20, 1913, pp. 853-869. Even Florensky, whose attitude to Archbishop Nikon's article is highly critical, says that here "he expressed himself *well*". See Florensky, in Nikon, *op. cit.*, footnote 77.

<sup>47</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, quoted from the Russian edition, Moscow, 1864, book 12, p. 373.

In any case, it is necessary to point out that the name-worshippers generally do *not* make this distinction between Divine names and ordinary names, but rather insist on the *universal* identification of names and the things they name. Thus Fr. Hilarion wrote: "Can anything be without a name? The name expresses the very essence of the object and is inseparable from it"<sup>48</sup> And again: "The name expressing the essence of an object cannot be removed from the object without the object losing its significance. We can also see this in simple things, for example, a glass. Do you see how the name lies in the very essence of an object and is merged into one with it, and it is impossible to separate it without the concept of the object changing? [Thus] if you separate the name of Jesus from Him, the concept we have of Him and which we unite with this name of His will also be changed."<sup>49</sup>

The absurdity of the idea that a glass ceases to be a glass when it is called by another name would appear to be self-evident. And yet it has been defended by the leading contemporary name-worshipper, Hieromonk Gregory (Lourié), who in a semi-official dialogue with the present writer declares: "If you take away the name "glass" from a glass, it truly ceases to be a glass, but turns into a *cylindrical (or some other form of) glass (or made out of some other material) vessel, which is usually used as a container for liquid or some wet substance*. You can no longer speak of it as a "glass". The same applies to any other named objects – in the absence of a name their definition disappears and we are forced to describe them as a combination of other objects, dividing their hypostatic integrity in accordance with various properties of various natures (for example, we have to speak of a glass as a combination of "glassness", "cylindricity", "use for liquids" and, so to speak, "vesselness"). In this way the simple nature of the glass is as it were annihilated, and any existent glass is turned into a complex hypostasis of the above-named properties."<sup>50</sup>

But it is of the essence of language that different words and names can refer to one and the same object. And yet an object in no way changes in essence or is "annihilated" if its name changes.

Fr. Gregory continues: "Not one nature is contemplated in itself (as the Fathers, and above all St. John of Damascus teach), but is contemplated in hypostases (moreover, the holy father indicates hypostases precisely through the name, see for example, *Dialectics*, ch. 44: "the nature of people is not contemplated in its own hypostasis, but in Peter, in Paul and in other human hypostases), either in one's own – as humanity in the human hypostasis of

---

<sup>48</sup> *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*, foreword (in Russian).

<sup>49</sup> *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*, p. 889 in the fourth edition, St. Petersburg, 1998; quoted in S.V. Troitsky, "The Commotion on Athos", *Church Gazette (Tserkoonij Vestnik)*, № 20, 1913, pp. 882-909.

<sup>50</sup> *Dialogue on name-worshipping between Fr. Gregory (Lourié) and Vladimir Moss*, 2b (in Russian) (<http://imiaslav.narod.ru/sovr/sovr.htm>).

Peter, or in another's – as humanity in the incarnate hypostasis of the Son of God. But in both the one and the other case to the hypostasis in which the nature is contemplated there belongs a definite name, which indicates precisely this hypothesis, "this glass" (that is precisely this glass, which we have in mind), "Peter" (that is, the Peter in question). If it is possible to pose the purely abstract question: what is to be done with an unnamed hypostasis (although there are no unnamed hypostases), then in respect of people such theoretical speculation is impossible, insofar as the existence of human hypostases without names turns out to be simply impossible."<sup>51</sup>

However, Fr. Gregory merely asserts, without attempting to prove, that it is "simply impossible" for a person not to have a name. In the absence of such a proof we have the right to remain unconvinced. The theoretical possibility seems self-evident, and is openly asserted with regard to the Name of God by St. Isaac the Syrian: "There was a time when God had no name, and there will be a time when he will have no name."<sup>52</sup>

Fr. Gregory continues: "It is characteristic that the changes in name that take place in baptism and monastic tonsure are perceived in an ecclesiastical sense as a new birth, that is, as the appearance of a new hypostasis. Besides, it is precisely the acquisition of the new name that is the indicator, as it were, of the appearance of this new hypostasis"<sup>53</sup>.

This shows to what dangerous distortions of true doctrine in other spheres the name-worshipping heresy can lead. What happens in baptism? Human nature is cleansed and reborn through water and the Holy Spirit. We call this a new birth, but this does not mean that at baptism a new hypostasis is created. It means that the human *nature* of one and the same person is renewed. The change in name undoubtedly signifies a renewal of nature. But not a change of person or hypostasis.<sup>54</sup>

Fr. Gregory continues: "This makes it still more understandable why the Person of the Lord cannot be linked by us with any other name than the name "Jesus". Even to think of such a change or remove this name is blasphemous and impossible. It would signify the abolition of the whole of Christianity, the whole existence of the Church and Her teaching and sacraments. This fact is still more powerfully emphasised by the fact that this name was pronounced by the Archangel at the same time as the conception of the Lord, and, still earlier than the Nativity and already from the time of

---

<sup>51</sup> Lourié, op. cit.

<sup>52</sup> St. Isaac the Syrian, *Unpublished Chapters on Knowledge*, III,1, syr e7, Bodleian.

<sup>53</sup> Lourié, op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Lourié, op. cit.

the conception, constituted an inalienable property of His Theanthropic Hypostasis".<sup>55</sup>

Of course, there is no denying – and we have openly asserted it above – that the name of the Son of God is “Jesus” now and to the ages of ages; and anyone who, knowing this truth, would seek to deny it would be lying and even blaspheming. And yet, as we have also pointed out above, the name “Jesus” can be, and has been applied, to other people than the Son of God. Moreover, there was a time, before the Incarnation of Christ, when the same Divine Person Whom we now call “Jesus” was not called Jesus. And yet the saints of the Old Testament knew Him and worshipped Him and prayed to Him – under another name, the name of “Jehovah” or “Yahweh”. Indeed, one of the major differences between the Orthodox and the Jehovah’s Witnesses lies in the fact that we, unlike those heretics, confess that the Jehovah whom the saints of the Old Testament worshipped and prayed to is *the same Jesus* Whom we now see clothed in human flesh and with a human name.

It is important here to distinguish between the *denotation* of the name Jesus, its *indicating* the Son of God, and the name’s *connotation*, its *meaning* as “Saviour”. When we think of the names of people we naturally think of them in their denotational use, as *indicating* the persons, no more. That is how we would naturally understand the statement “the Son of God is called ‘Jesus’”. However, this statement is *not* equivalent to the statement: “the Son of God is the Saviour”, nor to the statement: “the Son of God is rightly and appropriately called ‘Jesus’, insofar as He is truly the Saviour of the world”. The name-worshippers craftily confuse the denotative and connotative uses of the name “Jesus” in order to accuse their Orthodox opponents of blasphemy.

Thus the Orthodox fully accept that Jesus Christ is rightly and appropriately called “Jesus”, insofar as He is truly the Saviour of the world. This is a fundamental tenet of our faith, to deny which would indeed be to “signify the abolition of the whole of Christianity, the whole existence of the Church and Her teaching and sacraments”. But it is quite another truth, – and a truth of a lower, less fundamental order, – that the Lord’s name according to His humanity was “Jesus”. A person who denies that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world is not a Christian. But a person who accepts this truth, but for some reason or other does not know that the Lord is called “Jesus”, or thinks he had another name according to His humanity, has not denied the faith and is still a Christian.

Fr. Gregory attempts to justify his and Fr. Hilarion’s teaching on names by a very strange distinction between the concepts “word” and “name”. “Any human being you like can be called by the *word* ‘Jesus’, and it can become his

---

<sup>55</sup> Lourié, *op. cit.*

name. But the *name 'Jesus' as the property of the Person of the God-man* belongs only to Him and cannot belong to any other hypostasis. The name 'Jesus' in Jesus son of Nave and the name 'Jesus' in the Lord, are identical words but different names belonging to different persons".<sup>56</sup>

However, in ordinary language names *are* words. And in ordinary language "Jesus" as referring to the Son of God and "Jesus" as referring to the son of Nave *are one and the same word and one and the same name*. Moreover, if they were not one and the same word and one and the same name *having one and the same connotative meaning*, the very important correspondence – albeit on vastly different planes – between the two Jesuses would be missed: the correspondence, namely, between the mission of Jesus the son of Nave as physical and political saviour of the Old Testament people of God, and the mission of Jesus the Son of God as the spiritual Saviour of the New Testament people of God.

In confirmation of all this, St. Theodore the Studite writes: "*Many bear the name of Jesus, but only the Saviour of all – Jesus Christ*".<sup>57</sup>

One and the same name can point to different people depending on the intention of the person who uses it, just as a torch can point to different objects in the darkness depending on the direction in which it is pointed. It goes without saying that if the torch illumines a beautiful picture, the effect will be different that if it illumined only a dustbin. But in both cases the torch remains the same. In the same way, although the name "Jesus" acquires an infinitely greater depth and power when it refers to the Son of God – a genuinely Divine depth and power, - than when it refers to a simple mortal, it remains one and the same name.

The persistence with which both Fr. Hilarion and Fr. Gregory insist on the identification of objects and persons with the names they bear shows that this is a cardinal axiom of the name-worshipping heresy, whether in its early, unsophisticated, or contemporary, more sophisticated form.

Perhaps not coincidentally, it was also a cardinal axiom of the fourth-century heretic Eunomius, who said: "A name is one and the same as the object being named"<sup>58</sup>, on the basis of which he constructed his heretical teaching on the knowability of the Essence of God through certain revealed Names which express that Essence. And Fr. Hilarion certainly seems to come close to Eunomianism when he writes that "the name expresses the very essence of the object and is inseparable from it"; for if the object in question is

---

<sup>56</sup> Lourié, *op. cit.*

<sup>57</sup> St. Theodore, *Collected Works*, St. Petersburg Theological Academy, 1907-08, vol. 2, p. 100 (in Russian).

<sup>58</sup> Quoted by St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, from the Russian edition, Moscow, 1864, book 12, p. 329.

God, then this statement is asserting that the name of God expresses His essence. The later name-worshippers expressed themselves more cautiously...

Let us look a little more closely at the heresy of Eunomianism. "For Eunomius," writes Vladimir Lossky, "there are two types of names which designate objects of knowledge. First, invented names, conceived by human thought by reflection (κατ' επινοιαν), imagined names, conventional signs having no objective value, giving no knowledge of the object itself. If a man is reduced to this class of names, he remains mute, incapable of expressing any reality. But there are other names which are not at all the product of human reflection. These are objective names, so to speak, expressing the very essence of objects; they are rational name-revelations. The concept revealing the intelligible content, i.e. the essence of things, is found in analysing these names. Since the true name is that which expresses the essence of a being, only God gives names to things."<sup>59</sup>

It is clear that Eunomius' "rational name-revelations" correspond to the names "expressing the very essence of the object and inseparable from it" of Fr. Hilarion and Fr. Gregory. Thus for him the name "Unbegotten" expressed the essence of God and could not be known by human thought.

However, the Holy Fathers reject this concept. Thus St. Basil the Great said that the name "Unbegotten" was of human origin. And he "firmly rejects the distinction between essential names of objects and names invented by reflection - (κατ' επινοιαν). All names with which we designate objects are found by way of reflection, but this does not mean that the reflection is sterile, that it does not correspond to any objective reality... To the intellectualised and impoverished world of Eunomius he opposed an extremely rich world, a world inexhaustible for thought; to the passive revelation of essences impressed on the soul by God he opposed the activity of human knowledge and at the same time its objective character. We do perceive the actual properties of objects, even if the names by which we designate things do not really express what they are in essence.

"It this is true for the knowledge of created beings, still less can the essential concept of divine reality be expressed in a concept. The names which we apply to God reveal to us a particular reality which we contemplate. But there is not one among all the divine names which express what God is in essence."<sup>60</sup>

As we have seen, St. Gregory of Nyssa also insisted on the created nature of names. He asserted, according to Lossky, that "we do not come to know essences, even in created things. Our intellect discovers the properties of

---

<sup>59</sup> Lossky, *The Vision of God*, London: The Faith Press, 1963, p. 63.

<sup>60</sup> Lossky, *op.cit.*, pp. 64-65.

things in the exact measure necessary for our life.”<sup>61</sup> This does not mean that God does not help us in our invention of names to describe created and uncreated properties. It does mean that there is no *essential*, quasi-logical or causal relationship between God and the Names men use to describe Him.

Eunomius asserted that “God was what He is before the creation of man”, so that His Names existed also before the creation of man, i.e. from all eternity. But St. Gregory retorted that whatever we know about God “received its name after the namer came into being... [For] names were invented to denote the Supreme Being, not for His sake, but for our own.”<sup>62</sup>

*Conclusion 5: Following the heretic Eunomius, the name-worshippers identify names with that which they name. But names are distinct from the objects and persons to which they point, just as a shadow is distinct from the body that casts it. Moreover, the Names of God came into existence together with the namers, being invented, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says, by men for the sake of men, not God.*

---

<sup>61</sup> Lossky, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>62</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Answer to Eunomius' Second Book*; Eerdmans English edition, p. 266.

## 6. Name-worshipping and Eunomianism (II)

This teaching on the nature of names is not the only similarity that was observed between name-worshipping in its early phase and Eunomianism. Many suspected the early name-worshippers of believing, like Eunomius, that the Essence of God was knowable through the Divine Names. Later, however, as we have seen, this misunderstanding was cleared up when the leading name-worshippers, especially Fr. Anthony Bulatovich, declared that by "God" they did not mean the Divine Essence, but the Divine Energies.

But misunderstandings continued to be created by the name-worshippers' use of the phrase "God *Himself*", as in the confession of faith of the name-worshippers of the Athonite skete of St. Andrew on January 10, 1913: "I, the undersigned, do believe and confess that the Name of God and the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ is holy in itself, inseparable from God, and is God Himself..." The addition of the word "Himself" was considered by the Ecumenical Patriarch German V to be heretical on the grounds that it presupposed the idea of the Divine Essence; and he condemned the name-worshippers on these grounds.<sup>63</sup>

The name-worshippers were also suspected of identifying the names of God with the physical sounds or letters with which they are pronounced or written. That this was a real temptation for some Russian believers is proved by the superstition of some priestless Old Believers, who reasoned that since the Orthodox spelled the name of the Son of God according to His humanity as "Iisus" in Russian, while they themselves spelt it as "Isus", the Orthodox were actually worshipping a different Jesus.<sup>64</sup>

The better-educated name-worshippers did not fall into this temptation. However, the theological commission established by the Ecumenical Patriarch Joachim III in September, 1912 noted, and condemned, a tendency towards pantheism among the name-worshippers, that is, a tendency to confuse the boundary between the created and the Uncreated. As we shall see in more detail below, the conclusion of the Greek theologians is confirmed by a study of both the old and the new name-worshippers.

---

<sup>63</sup> Hieromonk Theophan (Areskin), "Sketch of the history of the life and activity of the Athonite name-worshippers in Russia after the Athonite rout" (in Russian), [http://imiaslav.narod.ru/istoire/xronik\\_feof.htm](http://imiaslav.narod.ru/istoire/xronik_feof.htm). Bulatovich tried to avoid this accusation, writing: "To this day I have not simply used 'God' when speaking about the Name of God, but 'God Himself', precisely in order to weaken the force of the naming and so as to eliminate the idea that in the Name of God some special God apart from the One God Himself was understood" (Letter to P. Florensky of 8 April, 1913, in Florensky, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-92).

<sup>64</sup> See Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, *Opinions, Comments and Letters*, Moscow, 1998, p. 364 (in Russian).

An example of the kind of text that gave rise to this suspicion is the following extract from Fr. Hilarion: "But can this Divine feeling be removed from the mind of the believer, who sees God existing in the whole of creation, in Heaven and on Earth, in the seas and in all the abysses. There is not the smallest line in space, nor a single moment in time. But everything that exists in the visible and invisible world is full of the presence of the Divinity. As a most pure and boundless Spirit, the whole Lord is everywhere in the whole of His Essence. And without doubt he abides in it also in Holy name."<sup>65</sup>

But then, to avoid any suspicion of pantheism, the elder goes on: "Only one must remember that, as it says in Theology, although 'the action of the omnipresence of God is everywhere, it is not to the same degree at every level of created being: it is in different forms in impersonal and personal beings, in pious and impious people. It is in the one place and in the other in accordance with the capacity of creatures to receive it.' And this may be the true reason why they do not want to give Divine status to the name 'Jesus' and have this name as, as it were, the Son of God Himself."<sup>66</sup>

In avoiding the accusation that they are deifying written letters or sounds, the name-worshippers are forced to distinguish between two senses of the word "name", one created and the other Uncreated. Thus Bulatovich writes: "When we are talking about the Name of God, and have in mind the essence of the Name itself, by which we name God, then we say that *the Name of God is God*. But when we have in mind letters and syllables, by which the truth about God and the Name of God is conventionally expressed, then we say that *God is present in His Name*". Again he writes: "In the Name of Christ we have a created, so to speak, shell, that is, those sounds and letters by which we express the Truth. These sounds and letter are different in each language, and do not pass into eternity, and are not united with the Lord Jesus Christ, which is why, when we, in speaking about the Name, have in mind the created human word, by which an idea about God and Christ is expressed, it is fitting to speak about the presence of God in His Name. But when we have in mind the Name itself, then it is the Truth itself, is God Himself, as the Lord said of Himself: 'I am... the Truth' (John 14.6)"<sup>67</sup>.

Fr. Gregory Lourié makes a similar distinction between created names of God and Uncreated Names of God: "Created names are indissolubly bound up with the Uncreated Energy-Names, and in their capacity as names point to God or to the Mother of God, Angels and Saints represented in them, and not to chance objects or people"<sup>68</sup>.

---

<sup>65</sup> *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*, foreword (in Russian).

<sup>66</sup> *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*, foreword.

<sup>67</sup> Bulatovich, *My struggle with the fighters of the name on the Holy Mountain*, Petrograd, 1917, p. 117 (In Russian).

<sup>68</sup> Lourié, *Dialogue*, *op. cit.*, 2b.

Does this distinction between created names and Uncreated Energy-Names help the name-worshippers? No: it helps clear up some confusions, only to create others. Thus what is the relationship between the created name and the Uncreated Energy-Name? Does not the one *name* the other? Is not the created name “wisdom”, for example, the name of the Uncreated Energy-Name Wisdom? Yes, of course. “Wisdom” is the name of Wisdom, the name names the Name.

But then a distinction must be made between the created name “wisdom” referring to the Uncreated Energy-Name, Divine Wisdom, and the created name “wisdom” referring to the created property of men, human wisdom. And then these two kinds of wisdom, together with their created names, must be distinguished from Christ, “the Wisdom and the Power of God” (I Cor. 1.24). For here “wisdom” is not a common name referring to a human property or Divine Energy, but a proper name referring to a Divine *Hypostasis*, in Whom “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom” (Col. 2.3), both human and Divine, but Who is to be distinguished from these treasures as being their Possessor. So now we have the following schema: “Wisdom”, the *name* of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Wisdom, “Wisdom”, the *name* of the Uncreated Energy-Name, Divine Wisdom, and “Wisdom”, the *name* of the created property, human wisdom.

In this context it hardly matters whether we call “wisdom” a single name with three different denotations, or three distinct name-“homonyms”, as Fr. Gregory prefers. The important point is that it is impossible to tell, simply by hearing or reading the created name “wisdom”, whether it is referring to a Divine Hypostasis, a Divine Energy or a human energy. A further piece of information is required: *the intention of the speaker or writer, the idea he had in his mind when uttering or writing the word.*

What is the relation between the created name and the idea behind the name, which determines what the name refers to? Let us first see Bulatovich’s answer to this question: “*The word of every language and in every form, as long as it is alive and is pronounced orally or mentally, is, of course, a reflection of the idea, and has a real connection with the idea, - while the idea is also a reality, having a hypostatic existence. For example: the Russian “благо”,... the Greek “το αγαθον”, etc. - these are words. Then there is “идея-благо”, and finally “Благо-Бог, триипостасный*”.<sup>69</sup>

“The word...is... a reflection of the idea” is somewhat vague. Could the word be said to be a *name* of the idea, its “external shell”? To the present writer’s knowledge, this question is left unanswered by Bulatovich and the other leading name-worshippers.

---

<sup>69</sup> Bulatovich, letter to a bishop, in *Apology of the Faith*, editorial introduction (in Russian).

In any case it seems that we must distinguish between three levels of reality: the *name-word*, the *name-idea* and the *object named*. Thus we get the following expanded schema: “wisdom”, a name-word  $\Rightarrow$  (a) “wisdom”, a name-idea  $\Rightarrow$  ( $\alpha$ ) Jesus Christ; “wisdom”, a name-word  $\Rightarrow$  (b) “wisdom”, a name-idea  $\Rightarrow$  ( $\beta$ ) Divine Wisdom; “wisdom”, a name-word  $\Rightarrow$  (c) “wisdom”, a name-idea  $\Rightarrow$  ( $\gamma$ ) human wisdom.

From this schema it is immediately evident that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Hypostatic Wisdom of God ( $\alpha$ ), has only a *created* name (1 or a), confirming our conclusion in part I. The non-Hypostatic (“Energetic”) Wisdom of God ( $\beta$ ) also has only a *created* name (2 or b), while being Itself an Uncreated Name (in the unconventional, “Dionysian” sense of the word “name”). As for human wisdom ( $\gamma$ ), that is, of course, created, and has itself a created name (3 or c). Thus out of the nine elements in the schema only one ( $\beta$ ) can be called a Name of God in the name-worshippers’ understanding – that is, a Name of God that is at the same time God Himself. But of all these nine applications of the word “name”, this one is *the most unusual, the most unconventional*. For in ordinary language “name” *never* means “energy”.

At the same time, we have involuntarily had to resort to the conventional sense of the word “name” in order to explicate the name-worshippers’ unconventional use of the word. For there is no other way to understand the relationship between created names (whether name-words or idea-names) and Uncreated Names except in terms of the created names being the *names* (in the conventional, everyday sense) of the Uncreated Names. They are the names of the Names, as it were.

But then the thought arises: if we have to use the word “name” in the conventional sense (in which names are distinct from their bearers) in order to explicate the meaning of “Name of God” in the unconventional sense (in which names are not distinct from their bearers, but are fused with them, as it were), why not stick to the conventional sense in all our discourse in order to avoid confusion? True, St. Dionysius used the word “name” in an unconventional sense for a specific purpose: to express the idea that the Energies of God reveal God to us, and are therefore in a sense the “names” of God. But since God in His Essence is in fact unnameable, there is nothing, strictly speaking, that these Names actually name; they are the Names of the Unnameable. So the heresy of Eunomianism can be avoided only by making it clear that these Names are not “names” in the conventional sense; they reveal God *without* naming Him.

***Conclusion 6: We can distinguish nine possible meanings of the word “name” in the context of the name-worshipping controversy. Out of these nine only one corresponds to the name-worshippers’ use of the word, that is, “name” in the sense of the uncreated Energy of God. But this “energetic” meaning of the word is the most unusual and the most unnatural, since in***

*ordinary language "name" never signifies "energy". Moreover, if we ask the question: "What or who is named by these uncreated Name-Energies?", then only one reply is possible: the Essence of God. But the theory that the Essence of God is nameable is the heresy of Eunomius.*

## 7. Name-worshipping and Pantheism

The name-worshippers have not been in a great hurry to dispel the confusion which they have created in the minds of their readers by their revolutionary use of language. They have created confusions, as we have already noted, not only between created and uncreated name-*words*, but also between uncreated and created name-*ideas*. Now let us examine more closely how these confusions are developed in Bulatovich's *Apology*.

The name-worshippers' thesis is that if an idea is about God, it *is* God, whoever thinks this idea. As Troitsky writes: "In the *Apology* [of Bulatovich] it is proved that the name, as our idea about God and our expression of this idea in words, is God. 'Every mental representation of the named property of God is the Name of God', it is said here (p. 52). The contemplation of the name of God is God Himself (53). 'The conscious naming of God is God Himself' (27). 'We call the very idea of God God' (26)."<sup>70</sup>

What if the person who has the idea of God is a heretic or a criminal or even a demon? It makes no essential difference, according to Bulatovich. The idea is still God, only in the case of an evil man the idea is thought to his condemnation, just as the Body and Blood of Christ is received by an evil man to his condemnation.

In what sense, according to Bulatovich, is the name of God an idea about God, and therefore God Himself? In the sense that it is an Energy of God, or more precisely: a *verbal* Energy or Action of God.

Bulatovich approaches this subject in the following way: "God is unchanging, but also ever-moving. The evermovingness of God is expressed in the revelation by Him of the properties of His Essence. Before the creation of the angels and men, the action of God was turned towards God Himself - 'and the Word was with God' (John 1.1). But lo! God turned His attention partly also to creatures, and in creation He began to show His Divine properties. And, first of all, being Himself Light unapproachable, He poured out His Divine Light on the ranks of the angels, making them in different degrees light-bearing. And this Light by which the angels are radiant - is God Himself. But the first-created people shone with a similar Light in Paradise, but the fall deprived them of this Light. However, although God deprived man of a visible radiance, He did not completely deprive him of the radiance of the Light of Truth, and after the fall continued to reveal to men the God-revealed truths about Himself by His Holy Spirit through the patriarchs and prophets. And finally He shone with the noetic Light of Truth in the Sun of Righteousness - His Only-Begotten Son. And so, just as the Divine visible

---

<sup>70</sup> Troitsky, *op. cit.*

Light is the action of the Divine Light and is God, so the noetic *Light of Truth* is *the verbal action of God and is God Himself*. And so, just as the Church recognises the visible Light of Tabor to be God and pronounces anathema on those who do not recognise this Light to be God, so also the words of God on Tabor, that is the naming of Jesus as the 'Beloved Son' (Luke 9:35), is also God Himself, as being the verbal action of God; and so also in general, every God-revealed truth announced to people by the Holy Spirit through the prophets and apostles and God-bearing men, and also every truth pronounced by the incarnate God and Word, and also every God-moved prayer and the Church prayers inspired into the Church by the Holy Spirit – are *God*, for they are *the verbal action of God*. Consequently also, *every Name of God, as a God-revealed truth, is God Himself, and God exists in them with the whole of His Essence, in accordance with the inseparability of His Essence from His actions.*<sup>71</sup>

Two things immediately strike us about this definition. The strangeness of the definition of statements of truth as "names". And the broadness of the definition of "the verbal action of God".

Let us examine the first point first. In ordinary language a name is not a truth, because *to name or indicate* a thing or person is not the same as to *affirm* a statement – and truths are *affirmed*, not named or indicated. Thus "Jesus" is a name, and "Saviour" is a name. But "Jesus is the Saviour" is not a name, but an affirmation, an affirmation of a most important truth. The word "Truth" is also a name when it refers to Jesus Christ, but "'Jesus' means 'Saviour'" or "Jesus Christ is the Truth", or "I am the Truth" in the mouth of Christ Himself, are all not names, but true affirmations. By means of a confusion between true names and affirmations of the truth, the name-worshippers try to confuse prayer and theology. Thus it is one thing to call on the name of Jesus, invoking the Saviour and speaking to Him, and quite another to declare the truth: "Jesus is the Saviour". The first is prayer; the second is theology, a statement of truth. Of course, true prayer must be based on true theology; he who prays to Jesus not knowing that He is the Saviour, is not praying to the true Jesus. And it is also the case, as one Church writer said, that only he who truly prays can be a true theologian, and theology that is not mixed with the spirit of prayer is empty words. Nevertheless, prayer and theological thought are different activities involving different persons of speech (the second person in the case of prayer, the third in the case of theology). The name-worshippers' error here consists in confusing intellectual activity *about* God with prayer *to* God, the *statement* that Jesus is the Saviour with the *Person* of Jesus the Saviour. It is the intellectualist heresy par excellence.

As regards the definition: "every Name of God, and God-revealed truth is God Himself,... the verbal action of God", great caution is necessary.

---

<sup>71</sup> Bulatovich, *Apology*, op. cit., ch. 1.

First, Bulatovich tries to draw a parallel between the Uncreated Light of Tabor, which is indeed the Action (Energy) of God, and every true word that has ever been spoken about God, which is *not*. By introducing the theme of the Uncreated Light, the name-worshippers hoped to invoke the authority of St. Gregory Palamas in their favour and against their Orthodox opponents. Since the link between name-worshipping and Palamism is not immediately obvious, it may be worth reminding ourselves of the main thesis of Palamism, which consists in the assertion that the Divine Essence is to be distinguished from the Divine Energies (this distinction is already explicit in the words of St. Basil quoted above), but that both are uncreated and both God. Hence the Divine Light which the apostles saw on Mount Tabor, being a Divine Energy, was God (or “the Divinity”, to use the terminology of the Russian Synodal theologians). Now the name-worshippers point out that the Divine Light was not the only Divine Energy manifest on Tabor: there was also the voice of the Father, Who said: “This is My Beloved Son”. By analogy, therefore, assert the name-worshippers, *all* the words that are used in the Holy Scriptures and the Divine services and the Holy Fathers, and in general all true ideas or thoughts about God are “the verbal actions of God” and God Himself in His uncreated Energies. And those who deny it, they say, fall into the same category as the heretic Barlaam, who denied that the Divine Light on Tabor was God and who was anathematised by the fourteenth-century Palamite Councils!

But is there really no substantial difference between the words of God the Father on Tabor and the writings of the Holy Fathers? Is there really no difference between “the verbal actions of God Himself” and the “verbal actions”, not of God Himself, but of men *inspired by* God – and still more, of any man on the street who dares to speak about God?

It is necessary to understand the difference between the direct Revelation of God, which is uncreated, and the *consequences* of this Revelation in the created world. We must distinguish between:

- (a) The words spoken directly by God the Father Himself or God the Son in the Old and New Testaments.
- (b) The words of the Prophets and Apostles when they speak about God. These also are the Word of God (for “neither flesh nor blood has revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in the heavens” (Matt. 16, 17), and it is the Holy Spirit Who “spoke through the Prophets”), but not in the direct sense of the word, because they are passed down through the medium of human consciousness.
- (c) True words about God spoken by people, but without the full faith and understanding which the Apostles had. They are lower than the Word of God in the first two categories.

- (d) Still lower are the “confessions” of heretics and demons, which may from a formal point of view contain true words about God (for “even the demons believe, and tremble” (James 2.19). These words must not be considered to be the Word of God. And that is why the Lord forbade the demons to confess Him.

The boundary between uncreated grace and the *effects* of grace in the created world is difficult, if not impossible to draw. And yet the necessity of there being such a boundary may be understood from the following example.

When the Lord created man, “He breathed into his face the breath of life, and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2.7). Now the words for the Spirit Who inbreathes (πνευμα, Дух) and the human soul created as a result of this inbreathing (πνοη, душа) are very similar in both Greek and Russian, and indicate a real kinship between the created human soul and the Creator God in Whose image it is created.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, to infer that the soul *is* God is paganism of the grossest kind. The soul may be filled with God, it may be *deified* by communion with God, so that, as the apostle says, our spirit and God’s become “one Spirit”. And yet our created soul, or spirit, is *not* the uncreated God.

In defence of his definition of idea-names as “the verbal Actions of the Divinity”, Fr. Anthony writes: “Let us try to prove that the Name of God is by no means a simple everyday human word, but *Spirit and Life*, a living and active word. God is unnameable, that is, the very essence of the Divinity remains unknown and unattainable for the minds of created beings, and cannot be expressed by a created word. But insofar as the human soul is created in accordance with the image and likeness of God, that is, it possesses properties similar to the properties possessed by God, the properties of God can be named by man, and God is nameable by man in accordance to the properties of God that are known to him, which God Himself revealed to man, either from His creation, or in His word. One of the properties of God is His truthfulness, and, consequently, every word of truth is a verbal action of God Himself, and, consequently, as *an action of God it is also God Himself* (cf. the 5<sup>th</sup> definition against Barlaam). Every word of truth about God, being a truth revealed by God, and the word of God, is not an abstract and lifeless truth, but is living truth... The fact that *truth is one of the main properties of the Divinity*, and that the Tri-Hypostatic God can truly be named *the Tri-Hypostatic Truth* by us is witnessed to by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: ‘I am the Truth’ (John 14.6). and “He Who glorifies Me (the Father) is true” (John 8. 26), and the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of truth” (John 16.13), and “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” (John 8.32)”. “And so, if God is the Tri-Hypostatic Truth, Who is so called in accordance with one of His main properties, just as He is: “Tri-Hypostatic Love”, then is not every

---

<sup>72</sup> Blessed Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, VII, 2, 3.

word of truth revealed by God to men *the verbal action of the Tri-Hypostatic Truth?*"<sup>73</sup>

Now the words of the Gospel, being God-inspired truth, are venerated by the faithful on a par with the holy icons and the holy cross. For they are filled with the grace of God. But just as the cross is not Christ, and the icons are not the persons, Divine, human or angelic, that are depicted on them (we shall discuss this in more detail below), so the words of the Gospel are not God Himself. True, they are not lifeless, abstract words, but are filled with life, the life of God. And true again: God *is* Life and Truth and Spirit. But God as Life is not the same as those words of men which His life-creating Spirit enlivens, and God as Truth is not the same as those statements of men which His Spirit of truth informs and infuses with truth. God as Truth transcends creation, and cannot be twisted, perverted or defiled by His creatures. But true words can be perverted and defiled by evil men, who, like the witches in Macbeth, "lie like truth". Is God in the mouth of heretics or sinners when they quote Scripture in order to justify their own heresy or sin? No - for "they have set their mouth against heaven" (Psalm 72.9), and "unto the sinner God hath said: Why declarest thou My statutes and takest up My covenant in thy mouth?" (Psalm 49.17). Is God in the mind of a demon when He confesses the existence of God - and trembles because he sincerely believes in the truth of his words? No - for the Lord forbade the demons to speak, even when they spoke the truth about Him.

The Apostle Paul acted in the same way when the demon-possessed woman said of him and those with him: "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation" (Acts 16.17). But Paul replied: "I charge you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" (Acts 16.18). For the truth that this woman declared here was not inspired in her heart by the Spirit of truth, but by the father of lies. Can the Name forbid the Name, or God forbid God? No, no more than demons can really cast out demons. In the final analysis, all truth and goodness and beauty come from the Uncreated God. But, if we are not speaking about the Incarnation of God the Word Himself, then after this truth is incarnate, as it were, in the created realm, it acquires a certain autonomous existence, which can then be manipulated by the enemies of God. But in this manipulation of the truth the Spirit of truth plays no part.

Before leaving this section, it is worth pointing out that the Catacomb Bishop and Hieromartyr Mark Novoselov, who is commonly thought of as being a name-worshipper, and who certainly sympathised with the movement, nevertheless rejected Bulatovich's cardinal idea that every true idea of God is God. Thus Bulatovich wrote: "Human thought is not the product of the human mind to the extent that that which the human eye sees is not a product of his vision... Forcing the mind to think about God is a

---

<sup>73</sup> Bulatovich, *Apology*, ch. 2.

human action, but any true thought about God is already a vision of God in some God-revealed property of His and is God Himself." But Hieromartyr Mark rejected this idea, writing: "The thought and my object are not one and the same... The thought of a man about God remains a human thought... The power of God, penetrating the mind, elicit in him a thought about God, which is nevertheless a human thought, a condition of my mind."<sup>74</sup>

*Conclusion: 7. Just as names are distinct from the objects or persons which they name, so name-ideas are distinct from those objective facts which they affirm. Contrary to the theory of the name-worshippers, a true affirmation about God is not the same as God-the-Truth, the statement "Jesus is the Saviour" is not the same as Jesus the Saviour. The source of all truths, in the final analysis, is God-the-Truth; but the true affirmation of a created man or angel participates in God-the-Truth only to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the relationship of the man or angel to the Creator. In general, uncreated grace is to be distinguished from the consequences of this grace in the created world. Otherwise we fall into pantheism.*

---

<sup>74</sup> Florensky, *op. cit.*, pp. 101, 190.

## 8. Name-worshipping and the Sacraments

Bulatovich places particular emphasis on the role of the name of God in the sacraments, claiming to see in them proof that the name is “the verbal action of God” Himself: “And so the denial by the fighters of the name [i.e. the Orthodox] that there is a Divine power in the Name of the Lord [which, however, the Orthodox in no way deny] must logically and necessarily lead only to a wavering in faith in the unfailing accomplishment of the holy sacraments. And in actual fact will it be possible for us to retain in ourselves faith in the unfailing accomplishment of any of the sacraments if we do not believe that the Name of God and the prayer by which the sacrament is consecrated is God? If we place the accomplishment of the sacrament in dependence on the faith of those who accomplish it, then is it possible to be certain that every baptised person is in fact baptised, or every person who has received communion or been chrismated has in fact been communed and chrismated? If we recognise the main effective and Divine force in the sacraments to be the force of the priest’s faith, then there will turn out to be a vast number of cases when the priest has not carried out the sacrament completely worthily or, for example, absent-mindedly, and during the invocation of the Name of the Lord his mind has suddenly been distracted by some other thought. And so if the very Name of God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is not God, but a mediating power between the priest and God, then of course if the priest has called on the Name of the Lord without faith, then it must remain *inactive, the sacrament cannot be accomplished*; but if the Name of God is... God, then even if It is unworthily invoked It accomplishes the sacrament *through the Divine power inherent in it*. – To this day the Holy Orthodox Church has believed that the Name of God invoked in the sacrament and the very words of the sacraments *by the power of the Holy Spirit which is inherent in them and inseparable from them, as the Word is inseparable from the Father, and the Holy Spirit from the Word, accomplish the sacrament*. Let us recall the description in the *Prologue* for January 8 of how some children thought of serving the liturgy as a joke, and having placed the bread of consecration on a stone and read all the appointed prayers, which they evidently knew by heart, there descended fire from heaven and burned up both the bread and the stone, while they fell unconscious. Let us recall one bishop from the *Lives of the Saints*, who, when he was a child, as a joke baptised some pagan children on the sea-shore, and the local hierarch, on hearing this, recognised them all as truly baptised and ordered the newly-baptised to be chrismated with the holy chrism. Let us remember, finally that at the present time the sacrament of baptism is recognised as valid even if performed by a midwife, for the sake of the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that is invoked on the baptised. But if we recognise the Name of God to be only a mediating power, then everything that has been said will turn out to be impossible, for the Name of God will turn out to be only a mediating power between the priest and the Holy Spirit, and the priest does

not baptise by the Name of God, but only calls on the Holy Spirit. And so, of course, the Holy Spirit will not listen to him who calls on Him in a not altogether worthy manner, and the sacrament will not be accomplished, for the Name of God is not God, but a mediating power between God and man, as the name-fighters teach. But we cannot accept this new teaching. We recognise the effectiveness of every invocation of the Name of God – *whether for salvation, or for condemnation*, for we believe that the Name of God is God Himself. Therefore we believe that the sacraments, even if not accomplished altogether worthily, are nevertheless unfailingly accomplished, being consecrated by the very *Name of God and by prayer and by the sign of the cross formed in the shape of the name, forming the Name Jesus Christ*. Since we also believe that both the Name of God and the words of prayer, and the Name Jesus Christ are *God Himself, as the verbal action of the Divinity*, we suppose that the priest who does not have this faith cannot even carry out his priestly service with a pure conscience. We think that it is also impossible for Christians to approach any of the Sacraments peacefully and with assurance if he does not believe that the words of the Name of God and of the prayer accomplish the Sacrament independently of the worthiness of the priest”.<sup>75</sup>

This passage contains a reductio ad absurdum of name-worshipping. Thus let us note that a distinction is made between the Name of God in the sacraments and the power of the Holy Spirit that is said to be “inherent” in it. And this distinction is crucial to Bulatovich’s argument. For he affirms that if a priest simply calls on the Holy Spirit, the Spirit “will not listen to him who calls on Him in a not altogether worthy manner, and the sacrament will not be accomplished”, whereas by calling on the Name of God he is *guaranteed* the validity of the sacrament. But what is this if not a recognition that the Name of God is *not* God, since it works in a different way (and more reliably!) than God Himself?! Bulatovich places great emphasis on the *words* (names) of the rite, independently of who pronounces them, with what kind of faith, and in what Church the sacrament is accomplished. But this is very reminiscent of the magical nature of the Latins’ attitude to the sacraments. According to the Latins, even a heretic or schismatic can perform the sacrament provided he pronounces the correct words (and has apostolic succession from a Catholic bishop). However, according to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, no sacraments are accomplished in the conventicles of the heretics and schismatics, even if they have exactly the same words and rites and intentions (Apostolic Canons 46, 47; First Canonical Epistle of St. Basil the Great). It is true, as Bulatovich says, that even a midwife may carry out the sacrament of baptism – but that sacrament and no other, and only if she is Orthodox. Again, only an Orthodox priest can carry out the sacrament of the Eucharist - and only if he is given authority to do so by an Orthodox bishop. Exceptions to the rule, like that quoted by Bulatovich from the *Prologue*, prove only that God is absolutely free and sovereign and can make exceptions to His own rules, not that He is a slave to words and rites. *As a rule*, the correct words and rites are

---

<sup>75</sup> Bulatovich, *Apology*, ch. 1.

insufficient in themselves to accomplish the sacraments, but only in the context of the faith and prayer of the True Church, the Orthodox Church, to which God has promised His grace (and God never breaks His promises). To believe otherwise, and to maintain that God can be *guaranteed* to accomplish the sacrament, not by virtue of His promise to fulfil the prayer of His true servants, but by virtue of the utterance of a certain name or set of words, is to adopt a magical view of the sacraments, as if God is forced to submit to the actions and invocations of mortal men provided that certain words and rites are carried out correctly.

The contemporary name-worshippers have attempted to come to Bulatovich's rescue here by an attack on the Russian Holy Synod's *Definition* against name-worshipping. Thus Fr. Gregory (Lourié) writes: "In the [1913] Definition of the [Russian Holy] Synod it says that the Name of God 'can also work miracles, but not in and of itself, but in consequence of a certain... Divine power that is always as it were sealed in it', and that 'the holy sacraments are accomplished not according to the faith of him who accomplishes them, and not according to the faith of him who partakes of them, and not also by virtue of the Name of God that is pronounced or depicted, but in accordance with the prayer and faith of the holy Church, in whose name they are accomplished, and by virtue of the promise given by the Lord'

"This is also something unheard of for the Orthodox teaching of the faith. This is what, for example, St. John of Damascus says: 'The bread itself and the wine are changed into God's body and blood. But if you enquire how this happens, it is enough for you to learn that it was through the Holy Spirit... And we know nothing further save that the Word of God is true and energises and is omnipotent, but the manner of this cannot be searched out... The bread of the table and the wine and the water are supernaturally changed by the invocation and presence of the Holy Spirit into the body and blood of Christ'<sup>76</sup>".<sup>77</sup>

But was it really necessary for the holy Father to say everything simultaneously in one place? Did he not say in another place with complete clarity that heretics and schismatics do not have the grace of sacraments, because they do not have 'the faith of the Church'? And has not this been the position of the Church at all times? But if we take this argument to its logical conclusion, we are led to suppose that heretics and schismatics also have the grace of sacraments, which is one of the main affirmations of the ecumenist heretics. Moreover, such a point of view presupposes a magical understanding of the sacraments which is completely unacceptable for the Orthodox. If the invocation of the name of God were sufficient for the accomplishment of the sacraments, without it having to take place in the

---

<sup>76</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, IV, 13.

<sup>77</sup> Lourié, *Dialogue*, *op. cit.*, 1b.

bosom of the True Church and in accordance with the faith of the True Church, then God would be compelled to accomplish the sacrament even if the name of God were pronounced by satanists. Such a perception of God is the extreme of impiety.

It should also be pointed out that Bulatovich here, as so often, exploits the ambiguity in the name-worshippers' definition of the phrase "name of God", as "the verbal action of God", slipping almost imperceptibly from one part of the definition to the other, from the name as a "verbal" *creation* to the name as an *uncreated* "action of God". The name-worshippers love to insist that the names of God are the uncreated Energies of God, and that created written characters or pronounced words are nothing more than the "external husk" of the Name, and not the Name Itself. However, when Bulatovich writes that "the Holy Orthodox Church believed that the Name of God invoked in the sacrament and the very words of the prayers of the Sacraments... accomplish the sacrament", and cites a case in which certain children "read the words of transubstantiation, and fire fell down from heaven", and denies that God guarantees the accomplishment of the sacrament (for the Holy Spirit "will not listen to him who calls on Him in a not altogether worthy manner, and the sacrament will not be accomplished"), it is evident that he is laying the emphasis, not on the uncreated, but on the *created* name, the created, human element of the rite....

However, there is no doubt that the sacrament is accomplished, not through the created name, but through the uncreated grace of the Holy Spirit, Who descends "in accordance with the prayer and faith of the holy Church", as the Most Holy Synod completely correctly puts it.<sup>78</sup> The pronunciation of certain created words and names plays an important – indeed, an essential – role in the sacrament, but it does not *accomplish* the sacrament. The sacrament is accomplished by the Lord God alone, in response to the prayer and faith of the Church *expressed* in the words of the rite.

Bulatovich also opines that already during the time of the proskomedia, from the moment of the piercing of the lamb, "the lamb and the wine in the chalice are a most holy thing, sanctified by the confession of the Name of Jesus, and are Jesus Himself by grace, but not yet in essence".<sup>79</sup>

Now there can be no doubt that the bread and wine are holy already during the time of the proskomedia. But it does not follow from this that Bulatovich "completely correctly wrote that this is 'Jesus Himself by grace'", as Fr. Gregory affirms.<sup>80</sup> Such an expression is unacceptable in relation to the unsanctified gifts. As we shall see below, the Holy Church does not use the

---

<sup>78</sup> Bulatovich, quoted in the Epistle of the Holy Synod, "On the false-teaching of the name-worshippers", *op. cit.*

<sup>79</sup> "On the false-teaching of the name-worshippers" *op. cit.*

<sup>80</sup> Lourié, *Dialogue*, *op. cit.*, 2b.

phrase “god by grace” in relation to inanimate objects, even very holy objects, but only to holy *people*. Fr. Gregory also affirms that according to the teaching of the Synod, “this bread is not a holy thing, and one must not make full prostrations before it as before an icon (the practice of making a full prostration during the Cherubic hymn proves the opposite).” But the Holy Synod does *not* say this, and in general does *not* deny the iconic character of the bread, but only Bulatovich’s claim that the bread is “Jesus Himself by grace”.<sup>81</sup>

The name-worshippers also like to quote Mark 9.38-40 as an example of a miracle worked through the name of Jesus but without faith: “John said to Him, ‘Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in Thy name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us’. But Jesus said: ‘Do not forbid him; for no one who doeth a mighty work in My name will lightly speak evil of Me’”.

But this example does not confirm the name-worshippers’ thesis, for the person who accomplished the miracle most probably *did* have faith – he simply did not belong to the number of the apostles. In any case, Orthodoxy does not assert that every miracle can only be accomplished in accordance with the faith of Christians. God is free and can accomplish miracles with or without the faith of man. *The rule* is heartfelt prayer to God filled with faith, but God is higher than all rules, even His own. He can make exceptions to every rule. However, the point of view of the name-worshippers’ presumes that He is bound to accomplish a miracle at the invocation of His name insofar as He *is* His name – which, as indicated above, is nothing other than magic.

Let us see how the Lord punishes those who pronounce His name in vain, without true faith, in furtherance of the aims of impious magic: “Some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to pronounce the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, ‘I adjure you by the Jesus Whom Paul preaches’. Seven sons of a Jewish high priest called Sceva were doing this. But the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?’ And the man in whom the evil spirit was leapt on them” (Acts 19.13-16).

The sounds of the name of Jesus were incapable in themselves of acting on the evil spirit, which, of course, would not have happened if Divine grace were “inherent” in the very sounds or idea of the name, as Bulatovich asserts (“we believe that even in these sounds the grace of the Divine pronounced by them is inherent”)<sup>82</sup>. The evil spirit paid attention not only to the name invoked, but also to the person who invoked it: he knew Jesus and Paul, but he did not know the sons of Sceva. If the name had been pronounced by Jesus or Paul, the demon would have had to depart from the people possessed by

---

<sup>81</sup> Moss, *Dialogue*, op. cit., 3a.

<sup>82</sup> Bulatovich, *Apology*, p. 89; quoted in Troitsky, op. cit.

him, but insofar as the sons of Sceva were not Christians, and did not believe in Jesus, the name in their mouth was powerless. And so the effectiveness of the name *as a rule* presupposes faith, the faith of the person who pronounces it in the Person to Whom it refers.

The Lord said: "Many will say unto Me in that day: 'Lord, Lord, in Thy name did we not prophesy? And in Thy name cast out demons? And in Thy name work many miracles?' And then I will declare to them: 'I never knew you; depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity' (Matt. 7.23). These "workers of iniquity" have the name of God on their lips, but their hearts are far from Him. And insofar as He is far from them, the Lord does not even know them. Even if we suppose, following Blessed Theophylact, that God, and not the devil, worked these miracles in His name, He worked them not because He was forced to it by their pronounciation of His name, but because these miracles were the fulfilment of His holy will, in spite of the evil will of those who pronounced His name in vain.

Bulatovich's idea that every idea about God is God Himself is so revolutionary, so redolent of pantheism, that even those who sympathised with him were compelled to reject it.

Thus Bulatovich once wrote: "I do not agree with Troitsky, who calls the human thought a human action. The human thought is not the product of the human minds, insofar as that which the human eye sees is not the product of human sight... Forcing the mind to think about God is a human action, but any true thought about God is already the vision of God in some God-revealed property of His and is God Himself".<sup>83</sup>

To this the Church writer and future catacomb bishop, M.A. Novoselov, who sympathised with the name-worshippers, replied: "*My thought and its object are not one and the same thing. ... Man's thought about God remains a human thought... The power of God penetrating the mind elicits in it a thought about God, which is nevertheless a human thought, a condition of my mind*".<sup>84</sup>

***Conclusion: 8. The name-worshippers affirm that it is not God, but the names of God pronounced in the rites, that guarantee the validity of the sacraments. But the words of the sacraments, including the names of God, do not accomplish the sacraments by themselves, although they are necessary elements. The sacraments are accomplished by God alone, and only in the context of the prayer and faith of the True Church. The basis of faith in the validity of the sacraments is not the pronounciation of certain words or names, but the faithfulness of God to His promises. If we identify the uncreated God with the created words of the rite, we fall into pantheism.***

---

<sup>83</sup> Bulatovich and Novoselov, in Florensky, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>84</sup> Bulatovich and Novoselov, in Florensky, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

## 9. Name-worshipping and Icons

We noted above that, according to Bulatovich, the sign of the cross in a sense is the name of God: “The sacraments, even if not accomplished altogether worthily, are nevertheless unfailingly accomplished, being consecrated by the very *Name of God and by prayer and by the sign of the cross formed in the shape of the name, forming the Name Jesus Christ.*” This view finds some support among the Holy Fathers. Thus St. Theodore the Studite writes that the image of Christ, “like the image of the Cross”, is “just as” worthy of one and the same veneration with its Archetype”.<sup>85</sup> And again: “The righteous, the victors over sin, over the Devil and over the world will have as their boast, as their trophy, the sign of the Cross! ‘And His name shall be on their foreheads’ (Rev. 22.1), meaning ‘the sign of the Lord’ (Abba Isaiah, *Evergetinos*, vol. II, p. 466). The Cross!”<sup>86</sup>

However, it is not clear whether “the Name of God”, in Bulatovich’s lips, means the Uncreated Name or the created name. On the one hand, the whole context of the passage (quoted in full above) would appear to indicate that the Uncreated Name, “the verbal Action of God”, is being spoken of. On the other hand, “the sign of the cross” and “the shape of the name, forming the Name” would appear to indicate a *physical formation*, and so the created name. Certainly, Abba Isaiah and the words quoted from Revelation are speaking about a physical formation.

This same ambiguity, which plagues the writings of Bulatovich, is found in the following passage: “That the Name of the Lord according to Divine power can by no means be equated with the holy icons is evident from the fact that the holy icons, according to the definition of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council (cf. the Greek Rudder) are not subject to sanctification, but the sanctification for any icon is the inscription of the Name of the saint that is depicted on it, or of the Lord, or of the Mother of God. In the same way on each cross it is the inscription on it of the Name “Jesus Christ” which serves as its sanctification, making it holy and distinguishing it from the crosses of the robbers.”<sup>87</sup>

It is not in fact true that it is the inscription of the Name of Jesus Christ on a cross that makes it holy: the shape of the cross alone, made with reverence by a believer, has the power to drive away demons. However, leaving that aside, this passage is in any case ambiguous. The phrase: “that the Name of the Lord according to Divine power can by no means be equated to the holy icons” would seem to indicate that the Uncreated Name is in question – the grace of

---

<sup>85</sup> St. Theodore, *Collected Works*, vol. 2, p. 97 (in Russian). Quoted from Metropolitan Benjamin (Fedchenko), *The Teaching of St. Theodore the Studite on the veneration of the Cross of the Lord and the Holy Icons* (in Russian), <http://st-jhouse.narod.ru/biblio/Name/letters/let3.htm>

<sup>86</sup> Archimandrite Vasilios Bakogiannis, *After Death*, Katerini: Tertios, 1995, pp. 117-118.

<sup>87</sup> Bulatovich, *Apology*, ch. 3.

God, which is indeed higher than the “honourable matter” of the icons. But then Bulatovich goes on to talk about “the inscription of the Name”, which would seem to indicate the created name – the letters as written in paint on the icon. And this is confirmed by the reference to “the inscription on it of the Name “Jesus Christ”” in the last sentence.

A third example of almost the identical ambiguity is to be found in the following words of Fr. Gregory Lourié: “The Name of God, although it cannot be God according to its sounds or letters, is God according to the energies (by analogy with the presence of God in the holy icons; cf. ... on the sanctification of the icon by the inscription of the name on it). The name of God is the most primary type of icon. If the teaching on this by St. Dionysius the Areopagite (especially in his tract *On the Divine Names*) and St. Maximus the Confessor (especially in his *Mystagogy*) had been taken account of, then the task of the Russian name-worshippers in the quarrels of the years 1913-1918 would probably have been substantially simplified”.<sup>88</sup>

Here there seems to be no doubt that the *created* name is being talked about. For only something created could be called “the most primary type of icon”. But then why mention St. Dionysius’ *On the Divine Names*, which, as Fr. Gregory points out with great insistence in other places, speaks about the *Uncreated* names?

However, lest we think that the name-worshippers are *always* ambiguous in this context, we shall quote the following honourable exception, from the writings of one of Fr. Gregory’s pupils, Tatiana Senina: “We venerate the Theotokos and the saints, the icons and the relics, and bow down to them because God is present in them according to the energies, and the saints themselves, from their union with God, are called gods – not by essence, but by grace. But the name is one and the same. But the Name according to its inner essence is greater than the icon, insofar as it is the energy of God (this is evident from the fact that the icon is sanctified by the Name), whereas the inscription of the Name is truly equal to the icon, since in it, as in the icon, God is present by His energies.”<sup>89</sup>

This at last is clear. The Uncreated Name is clearly distinguished from the created name, and it is clearly stated that it is the Uncreated Name (in the name-worshippers’ terminology) that sanctifies the icon, not the created name inscribed on it. Can we agree with this?

---

<sup>88</sup> Lourié, commentary on the Russian translation of Protopresbyter John Meyendorff, *A Study of St. Gregory Palamas*, London, 1964, St. Petersburg: Vizantinorossika, 1997, pp. 393-394 (in Russian).

<sup>89</sup> Senina, “Name-glorifiers or name-worshippers”, *Religion in Russia (Religia v Rossii)* (in Russian), <http://religion.russ.ru/discussions/20011221-senina.html>, p. 7.

We can certainly agree that it is the grace of God, and not the physical inscription that sanctifies the icon. At the same time, the physical inscription is necessary, because it is through that inscription, as through a channel, that the grace of God sanctifies the icon. This is confirmed by St. John of Damascus, who writes: "In obedience to Church tradition, we allow the paying of reverence to icons that are sanctified by the name of God and the friends of God and for this reason are overshadowed by the grace of the Divine Spirit".<sup>90</sup> And again: "Divine grace is communicated to objects consisting of matter, since they bear the names of those who are represented on them".<sup>91</sup> As the Seventh Ecumenical Council says: "The visible icon has communion with the archetype only according to its name, and not according to its essence". And again: "The icon has communion with the archetype only according to its name, and not according to its very essence... The icon receives the very name of the Lord; through it alone is it in communion with Him; and for that very reason it is holy and worthy of honour".

Of course, the presence of the inscription alone does not guarantee the sanctification of the icon. Otherwise, completely inaccurate or even blasphemous representations of God and the saints would be icons so long as they contained their names. Icons are accepted as true and holy representations of their holy archetypes insofar as they are more or less accurate likenesses of these archetypes, where by "likeness" we mean *the composition of the icon as a whole*. The presence of the correct name is only a *part* of the representation - albeit a very important part.<sup>92</sup> That is why St. Tarasius, president of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, writes: "It is fitting to accept the holy icons of Jesus Christ... so long as these icons are painted with historical accuracy, in agreement with the Gospel story".<sup>93</sup>

Thus there must be at least a visible, historico-representational link between the icon and the archetype. That is why St. Theodore the Studite writes: "Even if we allow that the icon does not look the same as the archetype because of the lack of skill of the artist, nevertheless our arguments do not lose their force. For the veneration is given to the icon not because it is unlike the archetype, but because it is like it."<sup>94</sup> In other words, for St. Theodore, the relationship of the icon to the archetype is not established by the name in itself, but by their general correspondence (resemblance) to each other.

---

<sup>90</sup> St. John of Damascus, *First Sermon against those who deny the holy icons*, 16.

<sup>91</sup> St. John of Damascus, *First Sermon against those who deny the holy icons*, 36.

<sup>92</sup> And for the purely practical reason that without the name we in many cases would not be able to determine whom the given icon represents!

<sup>93</sup> Mansi, XIII, 404D; quoted in Leonid Ouspensky, *The Theology of Icons*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992, p. 167.

<sup>94</sup> St. Theodore, *Antirrheticus* III, 5; in Ouspensky, *op. cit.*, p. 167. Even Fr. Gregory admits that for St. Theodore the Studite "the most important line of defence of icon-veneration passes via the establishment of a correspondence between the icon and its archetype" (Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 381).

So why is the name necessary? Because it is part of the likeness, part of the historical picture, part of the Gospel story. But not the whole of it. And of course, this written name, being a physical object, cannot be considered to be an Energy of God, and cannot sanctify the icon. The name itself is sanctified by the Energies, and is then a *channel*, as it were, for the Energies of God that sanctify the icon. And the Energies of God sanctify the icon in response to the faith and prayer of those who make and venerate them; for “matter is filled with divine grace,” writes St. John of Damascus, “through prayer addressed to those portrayed in the images”.<sup>95</sup>

The matter becomes clearer when we consider the names of the saints. It is obvious that the icon of the Apostle Peter is not sanctified only by the created name “Peter”, and also not by any uncreated name “Peter” (for none exists), but by the grace of God, which issues from the archetype, the Apostle Peter himself, to the icon because of the general resemblance between the icon and the archetype.

Now let us return to Senina’s article, in which it is said that God and the saints have “one and the same name”. What is Senina’s aim in insisting that God and the saints have “one and the same name”? And what relation does this have to the nature of names and icons?

It appears that the following argument is being adduced: “Just as the saints are gods, insofar as God abides in them, and also in their clothes and names, in the same way the Name of God is God, insofar as God abides in it.”

Now the saints are indeed called “gods” in the Holy Scriptures (“Ye are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High” (Psalm 81.6)), so we can agree that God and the saints have one and the same name – if we pay no heed to the not insignificant fact that the saints are called “gods” with a small letter “g”, and never with a big letter “G”. But it is important to note that this conclusion contradicts the name-worshippers’ arguments on the nature of names. For, as was noted above, they insist that “Jesus” as applied to Jesus the son of Nun is *not* the same name as “Jesus” as applied to Jesus, the Son of God. Thus according to their own principles, “God” in relation to God Himself, and “god” in relation to the Mother of God, and “god” in relation to St. Nicholas, etc. are all *different* names.

But what kind of name are we talking about in this context? Created or uncreated? Created, it would seem, since God “abides” in His creatures, and “names” here are placed on the same level as “clothes” – and clothes, it goes without saying, are created things. But created names cannot be called the

---

<sup>95</sup> St. John of Damascus, *Ancient Documentation and Testimony of the Holy Fathers concerning Images*, in *St. John of Damascus on the Divine Images*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980, p. 36.

uncreated God. Even the saints cannot be called that. We say that they are “gods by grace”, and grace, of course, is uncreated. But that does not mean that they are uncreated Gods (or gods). Once again we see with what amazing skill and cunning the name-worshippers mix up two different senses of the word “name”: “name” as a created word (the normal, everyday, and at the same time patristically sanctified sense), and “name” as the uncreated Energy or Grace of God (the unusual, strictly specialized, “Dionysian” sense). We see an artfully created confusion. Its aim: to demonstrate that the created name is in fact uncreated, that both the uncreated God Himself, and those created beings in which He abides, are *one and the same*...

In order to gain complete clarity here, we need carefully to distinguish between the many different ways in which God may be said to be present in a thing. First, there is the sense in which God is in all places and fills all things. Without this universal presence of God sustaining all things, the whole universe would disappear into nothingness. But does that mean that God *is* all things? Certainly not; for this would be pantheism, and would imply that God is even the devil! Secondly, there is the sense in which God is present in holy but inanimate things such as icons, holy water, holy oil, the cross, the Holy Scriptures. Because of this special presence of God in these things, they are holy and we pay them honour – not the honour and worship that is due God alone (Greek: λατρεία), but the honour and veneration (Greek: προσκυνησις) that is due to that which God has sanctified. Thirdly, there is the sense in which God is present in men by virtue of the fact that men are created in the image and likeness of God. Even evil men who have lost the likeness of God retain his image; and that image is due veneration. Saints are worthy, of course, of far greater veneration, so great that we call them gods by grace; for they are not only made in the image of God – they have recovered His *likeness*.

There is an important difference between the holiness of the saints and the holiness of “honourable matter”. The energies of God can enter and sanctify a vast variety of material objects – for example, wood in the holy cross, water in holy baptism, oil in the sacrament of anointing. But we do not call these objects gods by grace. The saints fall into a different category because, unlike physical objects such as wood, water and oil, they are made in the image and likeness of God; and it was by virtue of this likeness that God became man without ceasing to be God. But God cannot become wood or water or oil. For God can only become that which is akin to Him, which already, in its originally created state, bears the imprint of that freedom, rationality and eternity which belongs to God alone.

God took on matter, made it part of Himself, only in and through His natural likeness, that is, man.<sup>96</sup> But matter can be said to become divine only

---

<sup>96</sup> That is why the monastic saints are called “like” in Slavonic (prepodobnij in Slavonic). See Ouspensky, op. cit., p. 158, note 10.

by being “enhypostasised” in Him, in the man who is also God, the God-Man Jesus Christ. Thus there is a cardinal difference between the wood of the holy cross, the water of holy baptism, and the oil of the sacrament of anointing, on the one hand, and the bread and the wine of the holy Eucharist after they have been sanctified and transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, on the other. The grace of God works on all these material objects; but in the case of the wood, the water and the oil, it works to sanctify, *but not deify in the sense of make part of God hypostatically*; whereas in the case of the bread and the wine it works to incorporate that matter into God by making it into the Body and Blood of the God-Man.

When we say that the saints are gods by grace, we mean that they are filled with grace, that they are deified by participation in the God-Man, but not that they *are* God, or the grace of God. If the saints *were* the grace of God, then they would be uncreated, since the grace of God is uncreated. Thus to say that the saints *are* the grace of God is heresy; for it removes the boundary between created and uncreated being. The greatest of the saints, the Mother of God, is called by St. Gregory Palamas “the boundary of created and uncreated nature”<sup>97</sup>; and she attains this supremely exalted position, “more honourable than the Cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the Seraphim” through the action of the uncreated grace of God working in her, penetrating her completely and making her “all-holy” and “full of grace” (the Greek word *κεχαριτωμενη* could perhaps better be translated: “engraced”). But she remains a created being. To confuse the created being of the saints with the uncreated grace that deifies them is an anthropological variant of the Monophysite heresy.

If it is a heresy to say that the likenesses of God that are the saints *are* the grace of God, then a fortiori it is heresy to say that the names of God *are* the grace of God, or “the verbal action of God”, as Bulatovich would put it.

The contemporary name-worshipper Eugene Pavlenko has constructed a similar argument to Senina’s and come to the same conclusion. First he cites St. John of Damascus: “If a certain person painted Christ crucified on an icon and someone asks him: ‘Who is this?’, he would reply: ‘Christ our God, who became man for our sakes’”.<sup>98</sup> Then he cites the similar thought of St. Theodore the Studite: “If people study the imprint of the portrayed person, they call the icon ‘Christ’ or ‘an image of Christ’ – ‘Christ’ by reason of the identity of name, ‘an image of Christ’ by reason of the relationship”.<sup>99</sup> “And so”, writes Pavlenko, “they call the icon an image of Christ by reason of the similarity of representation, and Christ by reason of its inscription. So much

---

<sup>97</sup> St. Gregory Palamas, “On the Dormition”, PG 151, 472B.

<sup>98</sup> St. John of Damascus, *First Sermon against those who deny the holy icons*, 67.

<sup>99</sup> St. Theodore, P.G. 99, 34 1BC.

the more can and must the very Name of Christ be called God by reason of the presence in it of the Divine energies."<sup>100</sup>

Let us note the insistence: the Name of Christ "can and *must* be called God" ("God" with a capital "G"!)."Can" maybe; "must" - certainly not. It is not the normal way of speaking about icons. It is not the normal way because it engenders confusion, confusion between the icon and its archetype. Is that to say that St. John and St. Theodore were engendering confusion? By no means! They were making a special point in a special context. They would no doubt be very surprised to learn how their words would be used by the name-worshippers to make a quite different point in a quite different context. The two defenders of Orthodoxy against iconoclasm are here emphasising the *undividedness* of an icon and its archetype, by virtue of which, in praying in front of an icon of Christ, one can say that one is praying in front of Christ, which undividedness is reflected in the identity of names. For the honour rendered in prayer to the icon ascends to the archetype, as St. Basil the Great says. But undividedness is not the same as identification.

And so St. Theodore says in another place: "The archetype and its representation are not at all the same thing, since one is the truth, and the other a shadow"<sup>101</sup> For obviously a piece of wood, even a piece of wood sanctified by the energies of God, is not the same thing as the Lord Jesus Christ. And the same with icons to the Mother of God and the saints.

For, as Archbishop Nikon quite correctly says: "It is accepted by the Church that there are wonder-working icons [of the Mother of God]" in which "a certain power of God is inherent... But nobody calls them the Mother of God"<sup>102</sup> Or if they do, it is understood by everybody that the icon and its archetype are different in nature, even if they share the same name. In the same way, we may point to a photograph of Peter and say "That's Peter!", but it is understood by everybody that the photograph is only an image of Peter and not Peter himself.

St. Theodore the Studite confirms that the name "Christ" is given to the icon of Christ and Christ Himself in different senses. Thus he writes: "*In the proper sense* the icon of Christ is called His *icon*, and not in the proper sense is it called Christ"<sup>103</sup> And again: "The icon of Christ is called Christ, not in the proper sense, but in a figurative sense"<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> Pavlenko, "Name-worshipping and the Byzantine theory of the image", *Theological Collection (Bogoslovskij Sbornik)*, VIII, Moscow, 2001, pp. 56-69 (in Russian); <http://imiaslav.narod.ru/sovr/sovr2eugen.htm> (in Russian).

<sup>101</sup> St. Theodore, *First refutation of iconoclasm*, 12.

<sup>102</sup> Archbishop Nikon, *op. cit.*, p. 860.

<sup>103</sup> St. Theodore, *Letter 147, to Diogenes*. Quoted in Fedchenko, *op. cit.*

<sup>104</sup> St. Theodore, *Letter 161, to Niketas Spatharios*. Quoted in Fedchenko, *op. cit.*

What is said here about images must also be said about names: they and their bearers are undivided, but at the same time unconfused, being of different natures. In prayer it is the undividedness that is felt, so that a person who is praying to Christ in front of an icon of Christ and using the name of Christ feels no difference between the name and the icon of Christ, on the one hand, and Christ Himself, on the other. Only when he stops praying, reflects, looks at the icon in isolation from its archetype, or thinks of the Name in isolation from the Person named, does the unconfusedness of icon and archetype, name and person named, come to the foreground of consciousness. But the *psychological fusion* of icon, name and person prayed to in prayer – a fusion which is at the same time *spiritual*, since it is formed by the grace of God – is not the same as *ontological identity or equivalence*.

Schema-monk Epiphany (Chernov) confirms this thought: “The holy and God-bearing Fathers teach us to venerate the name of God as an image of God that is holy and worthy of honour. This is precisely the teaching of St. Theodore the Studite: ‘The name is a certain natural image of the object’.<sup>105</sup> An image of the object, and not the object itself! For the object itself for the image is the archetype. God is the archetype for every representation (pictorial in the icon and verbal in the name). And there can never be equality or identity between the image and the archetype. ‘For always,’ teaches the holy confessor, ‘the archetype will be the archetype, just as the representation will be the representation, and the one will never turn into the other’.<sup>106</sup> That is, God, as the Archetype, will always remain the Archetype, and the name of God, as a representation, will always remain a representation. And God will never become a name, and the name of God will never become God, although God is present in the name of God as the archetype is present in the image. But this presence is not according to essence.”<sup>107</sup>

***Conclusion: 9. It is the grace of God that sanctifies the holy icons, which grace is communicated from the archetype to the icon if the icon bears a general resemblance to its archetype. This resemblance must include the inscribed, created name of the archetype. But the inscribed, created name is not the sanctifying element, the grace of God, but only the means, the channel, as it were, through which the grace of God is communicated to the icon.***

---

<sup>105</sup> A fuller quotation: “The name is the name of that which is named by it, and a certain, as it were, natural image of the object which bears this name: in it the unity of veneration is indivisible” (*Antirrheticus*, 1, 14).

<sup>106</sup> St. Theodore, *Third refutation of iconoclasm*, 4

<sup>107</sup> Schema-monk Epiphany, *Against Hilarion*, Conversation 3, 7 (in Russian).

## 10. Name-worshipping and the Jesus Prayer

Fr. Hilarion, writes: “The Name ‘Jesus’ is as eternal as the Divinity itself... The Name ‘Jesus’, being eternal, as God is eternal, appeared on earth in the Person of the Saviour of the world.”<sup>108</sup> Fr. Hilarion’s thesis was supported by Bulatovich, who wrote that the name “Jesus” is in actual fact “God Himself and the Lord Jesus Christ”.<sup>109</sup> But this contradicts another, central thesis of the name-worshippers, that the names of God are Divine Energies. For Jesus, as we saw above, is not a Divine Energy, but a Divine *Hypostasis*.

Leaving aside this contradiction, we should note that the names “Jesus” and “Christ” refer to Christ *after* His Incarnation, *as incarnate in space and time*. Therefore it is wrong to assert that these names existed *before* space and time. Otherwise we would have the absurd idea of a name pre-existing that to which it refers, an idea that recalls the heretical Origenistic idea of the pre-existence of souls!

Egor Kholmogorov tries to rescue Fr. Hilarion at this point by interpreting him to mean that the name of Jesus was in the Divine Counsel before all eternity, a logos or idea in the mind of God, but not an Energy of God. However, as Kholmogorov himself goes on to point out, if “he is simply speaking about the pre-eternal counsel”, “then it is not an argument in favour of the special Divinity of the name of Jesus”.<sup>110</sup> Why? Because in fact *everything* was in the Divine Counsel before all eternity. Therefore the fact that the name of Jesus was predetermined from all eternity to be the name of God does not make it eternal in itself.<sup>111</sup>

But Kholmogorov believes he can rescue the name-worshipping position in another way. Abandoning the thesis that the name of Jesus is a Divine Energy or simply identical with Jesus Christ as a whole, he identifies it with a *part* of the Divine-human Hypostasis of Christ according to His human nature: “The

---

<sup>108</sup> Fr. Hilarion, *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*.

<sup>109</sup> Bulatovich, *Apology*, ch. 1.

<sup>110</sup> Kholmogorov, *Notes on name-worshipping* (in Russian).

<sup>111</sup> What, then, is a logos, or idea in the mind of God? It is a kind of icon. For, as St. John of Damascus writes: “The second kind of image is God’s foreknowledge of things which have yet to happen. His changeless purpose from before all ages. The divine nature is immutable, and His purpose is without beginning. His plans are made before all ages, and they come to pass at the time which has been predetermined for them by Him. Image and figures of things He has yet to do, and the purpose of each of them, were called predeterminations by the holy Dionysius. In God’s providence, those things predetermined by Him were characterized, depicted, and unalterably fixed before they even came to pass.” (St. John of Damascus, *Third Word against Those who attack the Divine Images*, 19; translated by David Andersen, *St. John of Damascus: on the Divine Images*, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997, pp. 75-76) At the same time, as Fr. George Florovsky writes, “the Divine idea of creation is not creation itself; it is not the substance of creation” (“Creation and Creaturehood”, in *Creation and Redemption*, vol. 3 of the Collected Works, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1976, p. 61).

name of the Lord Jesus Christ attached solely to the incarnate Son of God constitutes a hypostatic characteristic of His Divine Hypostasis according to the humanity, and for that reason inseparably belongs to Him, as does His flesh and His features... In this *and only in this* sense we say that 'the name of Jesus Christ is God Himself', not deifying the created words and sounds or ideas, but witnessing to the fact that in Jesus Christ the true Humanity is wholly united with the true Divinity in the one Hypostasis of the incarnate Son of God and completely deified."<sup>112</sup>

However, there are several problems with this definition.

First, if the name "Jesus" is part of the human nature of Christ on a par with His Flesh, then the question arises: *when* did it become so? And the answer must be: on the eighth day after his birth; for the Angel said to Mary at the time of the Incarnation: "you *shall* call His name Jesus" (Luke 1.31), making it clear that His name was *not yet* Jesus, but that He was to receive that name (from His Mother) *at a later time*. That is, the name "Jesus" cannot have been a part of the human nature of Jesus *from the very beginning, at conception*.

The same conclusion follows from St. Demetrius' *Homily on the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ*, in which the angel is represented as addressing Joseph thus: "Fear not, 'for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She shall bring forth a Son,' and as His father, you shall name Him, though you had no part in His conception. It is the custom that fathers name their children, like Abraham did Isaac. You are only the supposed father of Mary's son; nonetheless, you shall fulfil the paternal duty of giving Him His name." And he quotes Saint Theophylact, who has the angel tell Joseph: "It is true that you had nothing to do with the conception, but I still give you the title 'father', that you may name the Child."<sup>113</sup>

So the human nature of Christ was created by God at the Incarnation; but the name of Jesus was given by men on the eighth day after His birth. Evidently, therefore, the name Jesus was not part of His human nature as created by God in the beginning, at conception. And this is only to be expected; for names *point to* that which they name, and so are given *after* that which they name has come into existence: they are not *part* of that which they name.

Secondly: if the name of Jesus is part of His Divine-human Hypostasis according to His human nature, what part of His human nature are we talking about? His soul or His body? Both alternatives present difficulties. It is certainly difficult to speak of my name as being part of my body. More

---

<sup>112</sup> "Letter of the layman of the ROAC Egor Kholmogorov to the editors of the journal 'Vertograd', 10 theses" (in Russian), <http://vertograd.ru/doc/011113001.html>

<sup>113</sup> St. Demetrius of Rostov, *The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints*, December 25.

promising, and more consistent with the name-worshippers' own description of the name as an *idea*, is the identification of the name with a part of my soul. If my soul can be said to include all my learned experiences, and every aspect of my self-image, then having a particular name can be said to be part of my self-image, insofar as my self-image would change, however slightly, if I abandoned this name and acquired a new one.

But the idea that one's name is an *essential* part of one's soul is difficult to accept, still more the idea that this comparatively unimportant part or attribute of oneself (if it is that) can be *identified* with oneself, as in the sentence: "The name 'Peter' is an attribute of Peter, therefore the name 'Peter' is Peter." This sounds strange, and for the same reason as indicated before: because, namely, we are not accustomed to identify names with their bearers. Names *refer to* their bearers, they *point to* them, but they are not *identical with* them. There is always a certain conceptual distance between a name and its bearer: once we identify a name with its bearer it ceases to be a name in the ordinary sense of the word "name". For, as St. Gregory of Nyssa writes: "One thing is the object which is subject by its nature to the name, and another is the name which signifies the object".<sup>114</sup>

Thirdly, if the name of Jesus is part of Him just as His Flesh is, then to have the name of Jesus on one's lips or in one's mind is equivalent to receiving the Holy Sacrament. But none of the Holy Fathers has ever said this. And not surprisingly; for insofar as one does not have to be Orthodox in order to invoke the name of Jesus, it would mean that salvation through partaking of the human nature of Christ is possible outside the True Body of Christ, which is the Orthodox Church.

A tendency to see the name of Jesus as equivalent to the Eucharist can be seen also in the early name-worshippers. Thus Fr. Hilarion writes: "The Son of God... is unchangingly in the whole fullness of His Divine Essence in the Holy Eucharist, in the Christian churches: and He is wholly and completely in His holy Name with all His perfections and with the whole fullness of His Divinity".<sup>115</sup> And yet there is a difference between the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and in the Christian churches: the Eucharist *is* Christ (His Body and Blood, together with His all-holy Soul and "the whole fullness of His Divinity"), whereas Christ cannot be identified with the churches in which He dwells by His grace. And the name of God is closer in this respect to the Christian churches than to the Eucharist. For all these reasons, then, we may reject the name-worshippers' thesis that the name of Jesus is one of the Energies of God, on the one hand, or a part of the Divine-human Hypostasis of Christ, on the other.

---

<sup>114</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, quoted from the Russian edition, Moscow, 1864, book 12, p. 373.

<sup>115</sup> *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*, ch. 4.

Does this mean that the Name is necessarily insignificant and unholy? Not at all. The name *in itself*, be it a word or a sound or a thought, is insignificant; but through the grace of God it becomes of enormous significance. For grace creates the naming relationship between the name and the Person named, making the former to partake of the greatness of the latter. However, to say that grace creates the naming relationship is by no means the same as saying that the name *is* grace...

From the time that the name of Jesus was applied to the Son of God, it acquired - *in this application alone* - a status and grace and power that it did not have before. It became a *Divine* name, since it became the name of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ. Moreover, this name *as applied to Christ* was no longer changeable; it belonged and belongs to the Son of God for all eternity.<sup>116</sup> Others since Christ may have taken the name of Jesus - or even Emmanuel ("God with us") - and dropped it again. But Jesus the Son of God will never abandon this name; and it is precisely to this name as applied to this Man that every knee will bow (Philippians 2.10)...

Insofar as it was now the name of God, the name "Jesus" received the grace of God, just as its "forerunner" in the Old Testament, "Jehovah", received the grace of God, becoming so holy and terrible that in the last centuries of the Old Testament Church it was considered impious even to pronounce it outside the Divine services of the Temple for fear of using the name of God in vain.

In the same way, in the New Testament the name "Jesus" received the grace of God and became holy and awesome - but also most sweet. Not only "Jesus", but also all the other names that refer to the Divine Hypostases, such as "Father", "Son" and "Holy Spirit", receive grace and holiness through their association with God. Similarly, the names of Divine Properties or Energies, such as "Wisdom", "Power", "Spirit", "Truth", "Goodness", "Beauty" and "Peace". All these names, as we have seen, are human inventions originally referring to created beings or properties, which become Divine and grace-bearing when they refer to Divine Persons and Properties. In this respect the Divine names become a special case of the general truth stated by Fr. George Florovsky as follows: "When divine truth is expressed in human language, the words themselves are transformed. And the fact that the truths of the faith are veiled in logical images and concepts testifies to the transformation of word and thought - words become sanctified through this usage. The words of dogmatic definitions are not 'simple words', they are not 'accidental' words which one can replace by other words. They are eternal words, incapable of

---

<sup>116</sup> Those who will be saved will also receive a new an unchanging name in the age to come: "To him who conquers I will give... him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it" (Rev. 2.17).

being replaced. This means that certain words – certain concepts – are eternalized by the very fact that they express divine truth.”<sup>117</sup>

Having said that, it is important to realise that the transformation undergone by human names when they refer to the Divine is not a change of nature. For, as St. Anastasius of Sinai writes, “Deification is an exaltation to what is better, but not an enlarging or change of nature... and not a change of its own nature”.<sup>118</sup>

Let us now examine this question in the context of the Jesus prayer, which was the starting-point of the whole name-worshipping controversy at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Jesus prayer, like all prayer, has both a Divine and a human element. On the human side it is a psycho-physical action, involving the pronunciation of the name of Jesus with the lips (although this physical aspect is optional) and the calling on the name of Jesus in the mind. If no words are pronounced, and no name called on, there is no prayer (I am not here talking about the highest, wordless forms of prayer). Both the physical action of pronouncing the name and the psychological action of calling on the name are the actions of created people: they are not the actions of God. However, that does not mean that God is inactive in the Jesus prayer. On the contrary: without God there can be no true and effective prayer. The Energy or Grace of God inspires, strengthens, purifies and perfects prayer. Both elements – the human (created) and the Divine (Uncreated) – are necessary.

The name-worshippers argued against this Orthodox position by distorting certain isolated statements of the Holy Fathers. As an example, let us cite a patristic passage discussed by the warring sides: the words of St. Gregory of Sinai so beloved of the name-worshippers that “prayer is God, Who accomplishes everything in everyone”.<sup>119</sup> The context of this statement is as follows: “Prayer is the preaching of the Apostles, an action of faith, or, rather, faith itself, ‘that makes real for us the things for which we hope’ (Hebrews 11.1), active love, angelic impulse, the power of the bodiless spirits, their work and delight, the Gospel of God, the heart’s assurance, hope of salvation, a sign of purity, a token of holiness, knowledge of God, baptism made manifest, purification in the water of regeneration, a pledge of the Holy Spirit, the exultation of Jesus, the soul’s delight, God’s mercy, a sign of reconciliation, the seal of Christ, a ray of the noetic sun, the heart’s dawn-star, the confirmation of the Christian faith, the disclosure of reconciliation with God, God’s grace, God’s wisdom or, rather, the origin of true and absolute

---

<sup>117</sup> Florovsky, “Revelation, Philosophy and Theology”, in *Creation and Redemption*, vol. 3 of the *Collected Works*, Belmont, Mass.: Nordland, 1976, p. 33.

<sup>118</sup> St. Anastasius, *Viae dux*, chapter 2, P.G. 89, 77; quoted in the Russian edition of Florovsky’s “Creation and Creaturehood”, p. 149, note 113.

<sup>119</sup> St. Gregory of Sinai, *Chapters*, 113; P.G. 150, 1280A.

Wisdom; the revelation of God, the work of monks, the life of hesychasts, the source of stillness, and expression of the angelic state. Why say more? Prayer is God, Who accomplishes everything in everyone (cf. I Corinthians 12.6), for there is a single action of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, activating all things through Christ Jesus”.

Now all of these descriptions of prayer adduced by the holy father are true and relevant to an understanding of prayer in the round. But whereas some quite clearly point to the Divine element in prayer (“God’s grace, God’s wisdom”), others equally clearly point to the activity of men (“the work of monks, the life of hesychasts”). By virtue of the interpenetration of the Divine and the human in Christ and Christians, no sharp distinction between these elements is made. But that is not to say that no distinction exists; for while the Divine and human in prayer, and in the spiritual life generally, are inseparable, they are nevertheless unconfused. Properly understood, the saint is saying that the grace of God is the most important element in prayer, without which it would not be prayer at all; that God is the initiator, sustainer and fulfiller of all true prayer. This is perfectly true, and may be seen as an elaboration on the words of St. Paul: “not I, but Christ working in me” (Galatians 2.20). But neither the words of St. Gregory nor those of St. Paul can be understood to mean that prayer is God in the literal sense: without the human element, without the synergy of man’s will with the will of God, prayer would not be prayer. This synergetic essence of prayer is expressed by Metropolitan Theoliptus of Philadelphia, who writes: “Prayer is the mind’s dialogue with God, in which words of petition are uttered with the intellect riveted wholly on God.”<sup>120</sup>

As another example of how the name-worshippers distort the holy fathers, let us consider their oft-repeated claim that St. John of Kronstadt believed that the Name of God was God. Now it is quite true that St. John sometimes employed expressions which, taken out of context, might lead one to believe that he was a name-worshipper. But the context was always prayer; and the point St. John was always trying to make was that in true, heartfelt prayer, no distinction is felt between God and the Name of God. And this, as we have seen, is perfectly true. But that St. John did not confuse the *subjective* identification of “Jesus” and Jesus in prayer with their *objective* identification in reality is evident from the following: “Let not the heart weak in faith think that the cross or the name of Christ act of themselves, or that this cross and this name of Christ produces miracles when I do not look with the eyes of my heart or with the faith of Christ”.<sup>121</sup> These words of St. John contradict one of the main theses of name-worshipping, namely, that the name of God, being God Himself, works *of itself*. His words were echoed by one of the leading theologians of the time, Archbishop Theopan of Poltava, who was later to head the subcommission on name-worshipping at the 1917-18 Council of the

---

<sup>120</sup> St. Theoliptus of Philadelphia, *On Inner Work in Christ*.

<sup>121</sup> Fr. John Sergiev, *My Life in Christ*, 1893 edition, St. Petersburg, vol. 4, p. 30 (in Russian).

Russian Church (whose proceedings were cut short by the revolution): “Let not the heart weak in faith think that the cross or the name of Christ work miracles of themselves, and not through Christ, or that this cross or name of Christ produce miracles when I do not look with the eyes of my heart or with the faith of Christ the Lord, and do not believe from my heart in everything that He accomplished for our salvation”.<sup>122</sup>

Let us look at another passage. During the practice of the Jesus prayer, writes Fr. Hilarion, “the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, if one may put it in this way, as it were becomes incarnate, the person clearly feels the Lord Himself in the Name of God through an inner feeling of his soul. This feeling of the Lord Himself and His name merges into identity in such a way that it is impossible to distinguish the one from the other. And this in its turn becomes comprehensible if we remember that if the Lord Jesus Christ received our nature into His Divine person and is called by the one name of the God-man, because in His flesh ‘there dwelt the whole fullness of the Divinity’ (Colossians 1.19), then undoubtedly this fullness of His Divine perfections dwells also in his all-holy name, Jesus Christ. One could put it this way: if it dwelt visibly and bodily in the flesh, then it dwelt invisibly in His Holy name, but spiritually it is felt only in the heart or in one’s spirit. And so, introducing this name into our heart, in It, according to the word of St. Macarius the Great, we touch as it were the very nature of Christ, His theanthropic nature, and in this inner, most profound and heartfelt union or as it were merging of our spirit with the Spirit of Christ, we become with Him, according to the witness of the Holy Apostle, ‘one spirit’ (I Corinthians 6.17). Where by reason of the extremely close and intimate union or as it were merging, we already of necessity partake of the characteristics of Christ: His goodness, love, peace, blessedness, etc. – we perceptibly taste that the Lord is good. And from this we undoubtedly ourselves become, in accordance with the image of Him Who formed us, good, meek, unspiteful and humble; we bear in our hearts ineffable love for everyone and feel eternal life in ourselves. And only such a person, for the sake of his union in heart with the Lord distinctly feels in his spirit His Divine presence (Him Himself) in the name Jesus Christ, and without hesitation can witness before the whole world that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is He Himself, the Lord God; that His name is inseparable from His most holy essence, and one with Him, basing himself in this not on rational considerations, but on the feeling of his heart, which is penetrated by the Lord Spirit.”<sup>123</sup>

Most of this is perfectly acceptable from an Orthodox point of view; and even if the conclusion that “the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is He Himself, the Lord God” strikes one with its boldness, one is inclined to overlook it as simply a loose way of expressing the undoubted fact of the inseparability of

---

<sup>122</sup> Archbishop Theophan of Poltava, “On the Divine names”, *The Hierarch-Hermit Theophan of Poltava, His Works*, St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 714 (in Russian).

<sup>123</sup> *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*, chapter 3.

the Lord and His name in prayer. However, it must be emphasized that *inseparability is not the same as identity*. It is one thing to say that in prayer the name of the Lord is felt as being inseparable from the Lord Himself. It is quite another to say that they are in fact one and the same thing. When I call Peter by name, I am thinking about Peter himself, not about his name, and I am waiting for the arrival of Peter himself, not his name. But this does not mean that the name “Peter” and the man Peter are one and the same.

S.V. Troitsky developed this point in his report on name-worshipping to the Russian Holy Synod in 1913: “If those places in it [Fr. Hilarion’s book] which later aroused such controversy are examined in themselves without reference to the arguments that were later put forward in their favour, then one will find nothing offensive here except for some unsuccessful and inaccurate expressions. As the author declares, ‘our concern, in composing this book, was to express the need, importance and necessity of practising the Jesus prayer in the matter of everyone’s eternal salvation’ (X). ‘While making as detailed an explanation of the Jesus prayer as possible,’ he ‘encountered the inevitable need’ to touch on the significance of the name ‘Jesus’. He explained this significance both in the foreword and in three chapters: the 3<sup>rd</sup> – ‘giving an explanation of the fact that God Himself is present in the name of God’, in the 4<sup>th</sup> – presenting ‘proofs of why a Divine status is ascribed to the name ‘Jesus’ and why for the person who believes in and loves the Lord Jesus it is as it were the Lord and Saviour Himself’, and in the 26<sup>th</sup> – ‘On the incarnation of the Son of God and on the fact that in His name He Himself abides for the believer in His Divine Essence’: texts from the Holy Scriptures (see also chapter 27). For every faithful servant of Christ... the name is... as He Himself (p. 11), writes the author, and goes on to explain: ‘When a person calls with his mind or lips on the name of God through the sacred prayer of Jesus: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, if one may put it in this way, as it were becomes incarnate, the person clearly feels the Lord Himself in the Name of God through an inner feeling of his soul. This feeling of the Lord Himself and His name merges into identity in such a way that it is impossible to distinguish the one from the other’. (p. 12).

“This description of the inner experiences of the person who prays must be recognised as being completely correct. Logic and psychology tell us about the law of the objectivization of thought, whereby during the process of thought we identify our thoughts and words with those objects and persons to which they refer. We deal with the former as we would with the latter, and distinguish thoughts and names only when we direct our theoretical reason towards this distinction. But since prayer is not a practical and not a theoretical activity of our spirit, it is impossible to make such a distinction during it; for once our consciousness is occupied with the purely theoretical thought that the name of the Lord and the Lord Himself are not one and the same, prayer will no longer exist, but there will be abstract, theoretical

reasoning. Always inherent in prayer, together with this identification of the name of the Lord with the Lord, is an unfailing certainty that the Lord is present and attending to the one who prays; and the name of the Lord does not refer to, and is not identified with, the theoretical concept of God, but with the living representation of Him, as of an Essence close to and inherent in the man who prays."<sup>124</sup>

*Conclusion: 10. The name "Jesus" is neither an Energy of God nor Jesus Himself nor a part of the Theandric Hypostasis of Jesus, as the name-worshippers claim. It is filled with the Energies of God and bound up with Jesus Himself, but is distinct from Him. In the very act of the Jesus Prayer, which is composed of both Divine (Uncreated) and human (created) elements, of which the psycho-physical action of calling on the name is the human element, the name of Jesus is fused in the consciousness of the believer with Jesus Himself. But the name-worshippers err when they assert that objectively Jesus and His name are one and the same. This is pantheism.*

---

<sup>124</sup> Troitsky, *op. cit.*

## Conclusions

1. The first act of the first-created man was the naming of the animals. He thereby demonstrated his knowledge of their nature. The act of naming with correct names and classifications, and the knowledge of created natures is a combined activity of God and man.

2. According to His Essence, God cannot be named, He is unknowable. For He simply is. Therefore His Essence can be named or defined only by means of a tautology – “I am Who I am” or “I am the Existing One”.

3. Although God is unnameable in His Essence, He is nameable in His Energies, which are God’s actions, or, in the words of one of the Holy Fathers, “the movements of the Essence”. The names of God sometimes refer to His Uncreated Energies, and sometimes to His Divine Hypostases.

.....

4. “Jesus” is the name of the compound Theandric Hypostasis of the Son of God. It is created, and before the Incarnation of the Son of God it was the name, not of God, but of created people. But after the Incarnation it has become holy and worthy of veneration through its indissoluble connection with our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the Divinity may be said to rest on it, but not to be equivalent to it.

5. Following the heretic Eunomius, the name-worshippers identify names with that which they name. But names are distinct from the objects and persons to which they point, just as a shadow is distinct from the body that casts it. Moreover, the Names of God came into existence not earlier than the namers, being invented, as St. Gregory of Nyssa says, by men for the sake of men, not God.

6. We can distinguish nine possible meanings of the word “name” in the context of the name-worshipping controversy. Out of these nine only one corresponds to the name-worshippers’ use of the word, that is, “name” in the sense of the uncreated Energy of God. But this “energetic” meaning of the word is the most unusual and the most unnatural, since in ordinary language “name” never signifies “energy”. Moreover, if we ask the question: “What or who is named by these uncreated Name-Energies?”, then only one reply is possible: the Essence of God. But the theory that the Essence of God is nameable is the heresy of Eunomius.

7. Just as names are distinct from the objects or persons which they name, so name-ideas are distinct from those objective facts which they affirm. Contrary to the theory of the name-worshippers, a true affirmation about God is not the same as God-the-Truth, “Jesus is the Saviour” is not the same as Jesus the

Saviour. The source of all truths, in the final analysis, is God-the-Truth; but the true affirmation of a created man or angel participates in God-the-Truth only to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the relationship of the man or angel to the Creator. In general, uncreated grace is to be distinguished from the consequences of this grace in the created world. Otherwise we fall into pantheism.

8. The name-worshippers affirm that it is not God, but the names of God pronounced in the rites, that guarantee the validity of the sacraments. But the words of the sacraments, including the names of God, do not accomplish the sacraments by themselves, although they are necessary elements. The sacraments are accomplished by God alone, and only in the context of the prayer and faith of the True Church. The basis of faith in the validity of the sacraments is not the pronouncement of certain words or names, but the faithfulness of God to His promises. If we identify the uncreated God with the created words of the rite, we fall into pantheism.

9. It is the grace of God that sanctifies the holy icons, which grace is communicated from the archetype to the icon if the icon bears a general resemblance to its archetype. This resemblance must include the inscribed, created name of the archetype. But the inscribed, created name is not the sanctifying element, the grace of God, but only the means, the channel, as it were, through which the grace of God is communicated to the icon.

10. The name "Jesus" is neither an Energy of God nor Jesus Himself nor a part of the Theandric Hypostasis of Jesus, as the name-worshippers claim. It is filled with the Energies of God and bound to Jesus Himself, but is distinct from Him. In the very act of the Jesus Prayer, which is composed of both Divine (Uncreated) and human (created) elements, of which the psychophysical action of calling on the name is the human element, the name of Jesus is fused in the consciousness of the believer with Jesus Himself. But the name-worshippers err when they assert that objectively Jesus and His name are one and the same. This is pantheism.

It is tempting to think, on a first reading of Fr. Hilarion, that the heresy is based on no more than a misunderstanding, or a careless use of language. Thus he writes at one point: "In the name of Jesus Christ the almighty power of God is present, and *therefore* (italics mine - V.M.) this name is God Himself".<sup>125</sup> The premise of this statement is Orthodox, and if the name-worshippers had confined themselves to it, there would have been no quarrel: but the conclusion does not follow from it, and is false. Again, in another place Fr. Hilarion says that the name of God is "as it were the Lord Jesus Christ (italics mine - V.M.)"<sup>126</sup>. But there is a big difference between "*as it were* Jesus" and "Jesus"!

---

<sup>125</sup> *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*, chapter 4.

<sup>126</sup> *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*, foreword.

If this view of the conflict were true, then careful analysis of the different uses of words employed by the two sides would reveal an identity of faith underlying the differences in usage, and agreement would be attainable through a kind of translation process. However, no such agreement has been reached, either in the earlier phase of the conflict (in the years 1912-18), or in its recent resurgence. The Church authorities, not only in Russia, but also in Constantinople, came to the firm conclusion that they were dealing here, not with a simple misunderstanding, but with a real heresy.

And justly: like the heretics of all ages, the name-worshippers used deception and violence (see the account by Hieromartyr Archbishop Nikon (Rozhdestvensky) of his journey to Mount Athos to see the heretics<sup>127</sup>, and the autobiography of another eye-witness, Hieroconfessor Schema-Bishop Peter (Ladygin)<sup>128</sup>). And, again like the heretics of all ages, they accuse the Orthodox of various terrible heresies, as, for example, "Barlaamism", "iconoclasm" and "name-fighting". Fr. Gregory Lourié even writes of the Russian Holy Synod in 1914 that "perhaps, most likely, it was from the father of lies, and not from God!"<sup>129</sup>

Of course, if the name-worshippers, on the basis of one or two quotations from the Fathers, wish to use words in an unusual way, contrary to the normal way of speaking that has been accepted in the Orthodox Church for centuries, they are entitled to do so – so long as they make their meaning clear and unambiguous, and do not insist on others adopting their use of language. The problem is that they do not make their meaning clear and unambiguous, and they do insist on others adopting their own eccentric use of language – under threat of being labeled "Barlaamites" or "iconoclasts" or "fighters of the name".

Another major problem is that the name-worshippers give very different meanings to the phrase: "The Name of God is God". Not all the name-worshippers accept that the names of God are Energies of God, which is the position of Bulatovich and Lourie. But Lourie also likes a quite different definition: "the name is a primary type of icon". And Bulatovich, following Hilarion, considers that the name "Jesus" is Jesus Himself (Who, of course, is not an Energy of God). Pavlenko professes a variant of the "energetic" position: "The first meaning which patristic ontology attaches to the concept

---

<sup>127</sup> "My trip to Old Athos and the fruits of 'the great temptation'", *The Two-Edged Sword*, St. Petersburg, 1995, pp. 214-255 (in Russian).

<sup>128</sup> *Church Life (Tserkoovnaia Zhizn')*, №№ 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, 1984; №№ 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 1985 (in Russian). It may be not out of place here to mention that, according to Schema-Bishop Peter, the political sympathies of Bulatovich were with the Left Social Revolutionaries...

<sup>129</sup> Lourié, *Dialogue*, *op.cit.*, 1a.

of “name” is the logos-thoughts of God about creation”.<sup>130</sup> And Kholmogorov professes a variant on the “Name of Jesus is Jesus” position: “The name of God is a part of the Hypostasis of Jesus”...

In view of this confusion, it is not in vain that Pavlenko writes: “Quarrels over name-worshipping have illustrated one very important problem – what we are going to call a ‘name’ – which only at first sight appears to be terminological. In fact it is far from unimportant what content is attached to the understanding of this or that term. We can see this clearly from the history of the Councils. Behind non-Orthodox understandings of this or that term there is often hidden another picture of the world, another ontology. That is why it is all the more important to conform the concept of the name with patristic ontology”.<sup>131</sup>

Exactly! And so let us see what are the main meanings of the term “name”, emphasising, however, that which is the primary and central definition as opposed to the secondary, minor or even metaphorical definitions:

1. The name as word-indicator of some person or thing. This is the primary and central definition of the word. It is important to note here that the name as indicator is not necessarily sounds or letter, since a name is not necessarily pronounced or written, but is simply thought. But both that which is pronounced or written, and that which is thought, are equally created. For, as St. Maximus the Confessor writes, “we create names for God”<sup>132</sup> – and that which men create cannot be the uncreated God. It is also important to note that the name as indicator is always and necessarily distinct from the named person or thing. Therefore if, in the phrase “the name of God is God”, the word “name” is an indicator, then the statement is false, for the name in this sense cannot be God. There is only one exception to this rule:
2. The name as a Divine Person, the Word-Indicator of God the Father, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and God. This definition especially applies to certain expressions in the Psalms and to the words of the Lord’s Prayer: “Hallowed be Thy Name”, for, as St. Maximus the Confessor writes in his interpretation of the Prayer: “The Name of God the Father is... the Only Begotten Son”. This use of the word is often found in Jewish-Christian literature of the first two centuries of Christianity.<sup>133</sup> Bulatovich writes: “In its highest sense the Name of

---

<sup>130</sup> Pavlenko, “Name-worshipping in patristic ontology. Theses of a report” (in Russian), [\(http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=3236207&fs=0&ord=0&board=12871&1st=&arhv=\(26/03/02\)\)](http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=3236207&fs=0&ord=0&board=12871&1st=&arhv=(26/03/02)).

<sup>131</sup> Pavlenko, *op. cit.*

<sup>132</sup> St. Maximus, *Scholia on the Divine Names*, II.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964, pp. 147-162. Cf. St. Nilus of Sinai: “Call on Him in prayer, saying, ‘Hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come’, that is the Holy Spirit and Thine Only-Begotten Son.”

God is the Word of God"<sup>134</sup>, and we can agree with this judgement. But it is important to note that the Name as the Word of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, is not the Name as "verbal action of God", because a Person is not an action or energy.

3. The Name as a Divine Energy or all the Divine Energies as a whole. "Name" in this sense is found among the Fathers (Saints Dionysius the Areopagite, Simeon the New Theologian, Tikhon of Zadonsk), but this meaning must be considered metaphorical, because "name" in this sense is not an indicator and does not name anything. For what does the Name-Energy name? Not the Essence of God, because the Essence is unnameable. And so the Energies of God in a certain ineffable sense reveal God, and God is revealed in them, but in the direct, central meaning of the word "name" They do not name Him and are not names.

The name-worshippers' main stratagem consists in systematically confusing the first (main) and third (metaphorical) senses of the word "name". Thus in the Sacraments names in both the first sense (the words of the rite) and the third (the Energies of God) are present. Every Orthodox Christian knows that the Sacrament is accomplished by the Energies of God, not by human words. Human words are necessary, because they declare and demonstrate the faith of the Church, in response to which God acts. But the Actor Himself is not man, and not human words, but the Holy Spirit. However, Bulatovich insists that the validity of the sacraments is guaranteed, not by the Holy Spirit, but by the names of the rite. This is magism or pantheism.

Again, in the icons names are present in both the first sense (the inscription of the name of God or an angel or a saint or a sacred event) and the third (the Energies of God). Every Orthodox Christian knows that an icon is sanctified, not by the inscription, but by the Energies of God. The inscription is necessary, because it is a part of the likeness of the icon to its archetype, and without the likeness the grace of God is not attracted and the archetype is not present in the icon. But it is not the inscription which makes a holy icon out of simple wood and paint, but the grace of God. The name-worshippers, however, insist that the name creates the icon. But "name" in what sense? If we are to believe Fr. Gregory Lourié, then it is "name" in the first sense, because, as he writes, "the name is a primary type of icon", and an icon is not a name in the third sense, that is, an Energy of God. But on the other hand the name-worshippers love to repeat that they do not mean by "name" created sounds and letters. Which means that they have in mind "name" in the third sense, the sense of uncreated grace. But if so, why speak about the name as "a primary type of icon"? For a sacred icon is not the same as the grace that sanctifies it. Are we not witnessing here a most dangerous ambiguity, a

---

<sup>134</sup> Bulatovich, *Apology*, ch. 2.

mixing of the categories of the created and the uncreated – that is, magism or pantheism?

Again, in the prayer of Jesus names in all three senses are present. There is “Jesus” (a name in the first sense). There is Jesus Himself (“the Name” in the second sense). And there is the Energy of God (“Name” in the third sense). In real prayer a man invoking the “name” (in the first sense) becomes “one spirit” with “the Name” (in the second sense) through the “Name” (in the third sense). The name-worshippers, however, mix up all three meanings in a terrible confusion. And if the Orthodox try to make some distinctions, they accuse them of “subjectivism”, “psychologism”, “nominalism”, “positivism”, etc.... But it is evident that the distinction between “Jesus” and Jesus, between the name and He that is named, is not subjective, but logical and ontological.

There remains for the name-worshippers only one important argument that is not based on the mixing up of various meanings of one and the same word. We can know about God, the argument goes, only from God Himself. We really pray to God only in God. Without Him we can do nothing, for “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17.28). So it is God Who gives names, gives knowledge, gives prayer. God, and not man. Generally speaking, all true knowledge, all real naming of the uncreated God and the created world is possible only thanks to the fact that God by His grace so directs our minds that our human conceptions and names should correspond to the real order of things. But in what does this real order consist? In the logos-thoughts of God concerning Himself and His creation, which are uncreated – that is, God Himself.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, they say, the name of God is God Himself.

This is a serious argument containing much truth. But the conclusion is nevertheless false. Everything created and all our knowledge about the created and uncreated depends completely on the uncreated God. But the distinction between the created and the uncreated nevertheless remains and is not annihilated by God. Let us recall the first act of naming in the history of the world: “And God led them to the man to see what he [that is, the man, not God] should call them” (Genesis 2.19). There is no question that this act of naming was inspired by God, and constituted true knowledge of the animal world only thanks to God. But God Himself wanted man to use his mind and his creativity, created in the image of God the Creator, to understand the essences of things. And it is no different with the knowledge of God Himself. As we saw above, the holy Fathers write about the names of God as inventions of men (St. Gregory of Nyssa), “created by man” (St. Maximus), “taken from created things” (St. Dionysius), which explain the Energies of God (St. John of Damascus) – but are not to be identified with Them.<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> Pavlenko, op cit.

<sup>136</sup> In this context we have nothing to say against the words of the name-worshipper Pavlenko: “Thoughts, ideas, names, are first of all created; secondly, they are in the minds of

However highly we place the participation of God and the Energies of God in the processes of our knowledge of the Truth and union with Him, the boundary between the created and the uncreated remains to the ages. People can by deification become gods by grace. But they will still remain human beings...

It remains only to summarise the teaching of the Orthodox Church on the Names of God and related issues discussed in this article.

At the summit of the hierarchy of Being are the three Hypostases of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, containing the unnameable Essence, and the nameable Energies. Apart from this one God – Hypostases, Essence and Energies – there is no God. The Names of God are created words which are applied by men, under the inspiration of God, to the three Divine Hypostases and to their Uncreated Energies. There is no Name of God which is God in the strict ontological sense. The truth of this is not affected by the fact that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity is called “the Name” in some patristic texts, nor by the fact that the Energies of God are called “the Names of God” in some patristic texts.

Descending from the summit of the hierarchy of Being, we come to the rational creation, angels and men. Men are called “gods”, not by nature, but by grace. For they are made in the image of God, reflecting God’s own rationality, freedom and eternity, and when adopted by grace, they become sons of God and gods in the Son of God and God, Jesus Christ.

Descending still further down the hierarchy, we come to the holy icons, the holy Gospels, the Divine services, the holy churches, the honoured cross and the names of God. These objects and ideas are filled with the grace of God and can therefore be said to be images of God and holy.<sup>137</sup> But none of them share with men the honour of being called gods, for none of them is rational and free as man is, and none of them has been grafted into the Son of God through His Body and Blood, the only avenue by which created nature can ascend to participation in God, the avenue opened, as the apostle says, “in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and made Him sit at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,

---

rational beings and not as substances, but as accidents of the latter. No world of ideas in itself, distinct from the world of logoses and that which is in the heads of rational beings, exists. The opposite opinion would be Neoplatonism.... What relationship does the world of accidents have to the world of logoses? The most direct one. There is no accident which does not correspond to a definite logos. The opposite opinion would suppose that there existed something ‘created’ which was not created by God” (my italics – V.M.) (“Name-worshipping and the patristic ontology. Theses of a report 2” (in Russian), [http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=3236217&fs=0&ord=0&board=12871&1st=&arhv=\(26/03/02\)\)](http://webforum.land.ru/mes.php?id=3236217&fs=0&ord=0&board=12871&1st=&arhv=(26/03/02)))).

<sup>137</sup> For the different kinds of images, see St. John of Damascus, *Third Sermon against those who deny the holy icons*, 18-23.

and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1.20-21).

*March 25 / April 7, 2002*

*The Sunday of the Holy Cross.*

*The Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos.*

*St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.*

## APPENDIX: THE DECREES ON NAME-WORSHIPPING

On October 5/18, 2002 Hieromonk Gregory (Lourié) supposedly expressed “repentance” for his name-worshipping views before the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church. In fact, however, Lourié’s “repentance” read more like a self-justification than a statement of repentance. He expressed “regret”, not about his belief in the Bulatovich’s heresy, but only about the fact that his public statements on the subject had “become a reason for discord within our Church” – in other words, that he had been indiscreet in his public proclamation of the heresy. There was no mention of Bulatovich, no condemnation of any specific heresy, and no admittance that he had ever confessed any heresy at any time. Instead he actually *denied* that he confessed heresy: “I hold to the teaching of the Holy Fathers and confess no heresy about the names of God, which would have been condemned by previous Fathers and Councils”. He could say this with sincerity (and cunning) because he considers that the teaching of Bulatovich is “the teaching of the Holy Fathers” and is in fact not a heresy. Moreover, no large Council has yet condemned Bulatovich’s teaching, only several Synodal decisions of both the Russian and the Greek Churches. So in saying that no Council has condemned the teaching, he is not lying according to the letter of the law. But there is a direct lie in his assertion that no previous Fathers ever condemned that teaching. For several Fathers did, including Patriarch Tikhon, Hieromartyr Vladimir of Kiev, Hieromartyr Agathangel of Yaroslavl, Hieromartyr Basil of Priluki, St. Barsanuphius of Optina, etc. And he lies again when he says: “I also hold to the resolutions of the All-Russian Local Council of 1917-1918, which were confirmed by two resolutions of the Synod of our Church, in accordance with which the decision on the essence of the question of name-worshipping belongs exclusively within the competence of a Local Council of the Church of Russia”. For there were in fact no resolutions of the 1917-18 Council on name-worshipping, as Lourié (who has gone on record as calling the 1917-18 Council “a tragic-comic story, which exerted a minimal, or negative rather than positive, influence on the following life of the Church...”<sup>138</sup>) well knows.

A few weeks later, following a presentation by the Parish of the Holy Archangel Michael, Guildford, England of twelve questions relating to the heresies of Fr. Gregory to the Holy Synod (which questions have not been answered to this day), Fr. Gregory wrote a further “report”, dated November 11, 2002, in which he states that he “submits to Church authority and rejects the errors listed by the holy patriarch Tikhon” in a Nativity Epistle written on February 19, 1921. On the internet Bishop Gregory of Denver immediately expressed delight at this “report”, considering that, although it contained

---

138

[http://www.vestris.com/cgi-agnes/twenty-eight/agnes?PoetAgnes+PoetAgnesHTMLArticle+archive+Архив\\_номер\\_5+127.3.1](http://www.vestris.com/cgi-agnes/twenty-eight/agnes?PoetAgnes+PoetAgnesHTMLArticle+archive+Архив_номер_5+127.3.1)

even fewer expressions of penitential feeling than the previous “repentance”, it was nevertheless more precise than the previous “repentance”, in that Lourié had now “anathematized even the more deceptive version of name-worshipping... Even though he has not anathematized Bulatovich, he has succinctly anathematized his heretical teachings”.

Let us examine what the patriarch supposedly said in this Nativity epistle<sup>139</sup>: “In these high days, when the Church is celebrating the Nativity of the God-Man, Who brought the peace and goodwill of God the Father to earth, I consider it appropriate to remind you in brief of the Athonite imyaslavtsi (name-glorifiers) and give you certain instructions on how to treat these monks. It can be seen, that the Holy Synod in its definition of April 22-25 1914, number 3479, was indulgent to the spiritual mood and to the way of thinking of the Athonite monks, who have a poor knowledge of theology as expounded in books and of the forms of paper work, and allowed them, instead of the previously required signing by the imyabozhniki (name-worshippers) of a denial of their false teaching, to substitute for this a written testimony (a promise on oath) of their Orthodox faith, with the kissing of the Holy Cross and the Gospel. They promised exactly to follow the Orthodox Church and obey the God-established hierarchy, believing exactly as the Holy Church teaches, neither adding anything from themselves, nor taking anything away. In particular in regard to the glorification of the name of God, they promised not to consider His name the essence of God, nor to separate it from God, not to venerate it as a separate Deity, nor to worship the letters and sounds and occasional thoughts about God. The Holy Synod decided to admit into Church those who believed in this way and declared their willingness to obey the Church authorities, and to allow their priests to serve. But, in rendering its indulgence, the Holy Synod did not change its former opinion of the very error contained in the writings of Anthony Bulatovich and his followers, whom the Synod decided to pass over for the consideration of the All-Russian Holy Council, upon which depends the resolution of the whole issue in essence”.

“And so,” writes Fr. Peter Andrievsky, “the former judgement of the Synod on name-worshipping as a heresy, which is laid out in the ‘Epistle’ of the Synod of May 18, 1913, as also the later Synodal Decrees of 1914 and 1916, remain in full force to the present day. Moreover, we must not forget that the heresy of name-worshipping did not at all arise in the Russian Orthodox Church, but in the Constantinopolitan, to the judgement of which all Athonite monks belong canonically. In the Constantinopolitan Church, it would seem, the name-worshippers should have sought their vindication. Archbishop Nikon writes to Fr. Bulatovich: ‘... You, Fr. Anthony, have long ago been

---

<sup>139</sup> Its existence appears to have been discovered by V. Kapitanchuk, “Name-Glorifying”, *Tsar’-Kolokol (The Tsar Bell)*, 1990. №№ 6,7; reproduced in Polischuk, *op. cit.*, p. 512, and Priest Peter Andrievsky, “The Heresy of Name-Worshipping in the Past and the Present”, [http://www.moskvam.ru/blessed\\_fire/05\\_2000/andr.htm](http://www.moskvam.ru/blessed_fire/05_2000/andr.htm) (in Russian).

called to his court by his Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch; in a conversation with me he personally asked: will you appear at this canonical court? I could say nothing in reply to this question. So, instead of writing apologies for your heresy, instead of leading after you – and out of the Church – crowds of monks who blindly believe you in disobedience to Church authority, should you not first of all fulfill your duty before the First Hierarchy of the Constantinopolitan Church, to which you, according to the Church canons, belong? Go to Tsargrad [Constantinople] and cleanse yourself, if you consider yourself in the right, at the court of your Church, and only then enter into polemics and reproach me and those hierarchs who agree with me – our Holy Synod and all those who accept the teaching on the name of God expounded in the “Epistle” of the Synod’ (*My Diaries*, p. 170).<sup>140</sup>

Now the teaching of Bulatovich can be summarized in two propositions: that the names of God are energies of God, and that the name of Jesus is Jesus Himself. Neither of these teachings is in the list of errors listed by the patriarch. “To consider His name the essence of God” was not one of Bulatovich’s teachings (although it may have been that of some of his more ignorant followers). For, as St. Gregory Palamas teaches, the essence of God is not to be identified with the energies of God. “To venerate it as a separate Deity” is, again, not one of Bulatovich’s teachings. “To worship the letters and sounds” is, again, not one of Bulatovich’s teachings. “To worship... occasional thoughts about God” is one of Bulatovich’s teachings, and the only one, therefore, which Lourie may be said to have renounced (although it is doubtful, judging from his dialogue with Vladimir Moss on the subject, that he would accept such a phrase as representing Bulatovich’s real view). In any case, the most important point is that the two propositions that summarise Bulatovich’s main views are not in this list, nor can they be reinterpreted to come within this list.

So why was the patriarch’s characterization of Bulatovich’s errors inaccurate? In order to answer this question, we need to investigate a little further. Let us begin by posing the question: In what other document of the time can we find this same list?

The answer is: in the judgement issued by the Moscow Diocesan Court with regard to the name-worshippers on May 8, 1914: “... The Synodal Office has found that in the confessions of faith in God and in the Name of God coming from the named monks, in the words, ‘I repeat that in naming the Name of God and the Name of Jesus as God and God Himself, I reject both the veneration of the Name of God as His Essence, and the veneration of the Name of God separately from God Himself as some kind of special Divinity, as well as any deification of the very letters and sounds and any chance thoughts about God’ – there is contained information allowing us to conclude that in them there is no basis for leaving the Orthodox Church for the sake of

---

<sup>140</sup> Andrievsky, *op. cit.*

the teaching on the Names of God.' (decree № 1443)". The coincidence of wording is striking. It is obvious that the list of errors referred to by the patriarch in the document quoted by Lourié is in fact the list drawn up, not by the Holy Synod in its Resolution № 3479 of April 22-25, 1914, which does not contain a list of errors<sup>141</sup>, but by the Moscow Diocesan Court on May 8, 1914.

However, it is essential to realise that the decision of the Moscow Diocesan Court of May 8, 1914 was overturned by the Holy Synod in its decree № 4136 of May 10-24, 1914, which set aside decree № 1443 of the Moscow Synodal Office, and confirmed the sentences against the name-worshippers. This confirmation of the sentences against the name-worshippers was again confirmed by decree № 2670 of March 10, 1916. And yet again by Patriarch Tikhon and his Synod on October 8/21, 1918. And yet again by the Nativity Epistle of 1921.

Lourié tries to get round this by claiming that there was yet another decree of the Holy Synod that was supposedly passed in 1921, just before the patriarch's Nativity epistle, and which supposedly formed the basis for the patriarch's Nativity epistle. "Unfortunately," Lourié writes, "the true text of the decree of 1921 on removing all the bans from those name-worshippers who remained alive has not reached us". Unfortunate indeed! And devastatingly destructive for his whole case. For since this mysterious decree "has not reached us", I think we are fully entitled to conclude that *it does not exist*. After all, if it did exist, why should the patriarch not refer to it?

Again, Lourié says that that mysterious "disappearing" decision "removed all the bans from those name-worshippers who remained alive". But Bulatovich was already dead in 1921 (he was killed by robbers in 1919)!

It should be pointed out that the patriarch's desire to refer the whole question of the name-worshipping heresy to review by a future All-Russian Council in no way changes the canonical force of the bans placed on Bulatovich and his followers. It is of course highly desirable that this question should be reviewed in depth at a future Council, when precise anathematisations of the heresies and the heretics can be formulated and proclaimed by the highest organ of administration of the Russian Church. But until the convening of that Council the unrepealed decisions of the Holy Synod remain in force, and it is completely improper for the name-worshippers and their protectors to argue: "Well, the future Council may reverse the decisions against Bulatovich and his teaching, so we can assume that the question is open and that it is permitted to consider him a saint and his teaching true". To speculate that a future Council will and should overturn the decisions of the holy patriarch and many of his fellow hieromartyrs is already to separate oneself in spirit from the Church of that

---

<sup>141</sup> The text of the decree can be found in Polischuk, *op. cit.*, p. 499.

same holy patriarch, which is the Church of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia.