

28 Oct 12
St Louis, Mo

Metropolitan Ephraim, Bishop of Boston
Holy Transfiguration of Monastery
278 Warren Street
Brookline, Mass.

Your Eminence,

I was unaware until this summer about the nearly two year controversy which had disrupted the harmony of the HTM community. I learned only then that the cause of the upheaval was the Name-Worship heresy --- euphemistically called “Name-Glorifying.” I was stunned by what you had written --- *“That God’s Name is not His Essence, but rather it is the revealed truth about Himself, that is, His Uncreated*

Energy, His Uncreated Grace, His Providence, His Glory...” Are you redefining the glossary of Orthodox theology?

Perhaps, I was wrong I thought, for it seemed to me that you must have known that the Uncreated Energy is a distinction within the divine Nature, an Operation (to use the language of the Latin Fathers) --- It is God, to be sure --- but it is impersonal.

It was inconceivable to me that anyone would worship a *name*, even the holy Name of God. In the words of St. Gregory of Nyssa,

“Names were invented to denote the the Existent One, not for His sake, but for ours” (*Answer to Eunomius, Bk. 2*) And again, “We, following the suggestions of Scriptures, have learned that the Nature [of God] is un-nameable and unspeakable, and we say that every term, either invented by the custom of men, or handed down to us by the Scriptures, provides us with conceptions of the Divine Nature without including the significance of that Nature itself.” (*Answer To Ablabius*).

Thus, we honor it, we glorify it, we revere it, venerate it, because God’s Name identifies Him Whom I worship; likewise, the Name of Jesus the Christ.

I cannot understand under what circumstances an Orthodox Christian would be induced an worship a Name. We worship the Persons of the Father, the Son and the

Holy Spirit not their Names. (We also understand Its Biblical and Patristic context, as well as the idioms and metaphors they use to describe the purport of the Name).

At first I did not pay attention to quarrel over “Name-Worship,” until it finally came to my attention that the Name of God was being worshiped as something ontologically equated with the Uncreated Energy of God. Although the Energies of God may be called God (“divinity”) as emanating from Him, they are Operations of God. We do not worship the Energies or Operations whatever form they take. The Energies or Operations are divine Forces or Powers. They are impersonal. Moreover, you must see that if the Name of God is the Energy of God --- and the Energy or Operation is God --- then even letters G-O-D are deified and must be worshiped, for those letters compose the word *God*. Why don't you accept the logic of your position? .

It is the same with the other things you worship:

Dear Fr. Michael,

Do I worship God's providence? Yes, because His providence – i.e. His Grace – is God. Do I worship God's healing Grace? Yes, because His healing Grace – is God. Do I worship His creative Power? Yes, because His creative Power – is God? Do I worship the Holy Trinity? Yes, because the Holy Trinity is God; God's Essence and Energies are God, and I worship them. Do I worship the Light of the Transfiguration? Yes, because the Light of the Transfiguration is God. St. John Chrysostom says “God's Name is worthy of praise by nature.” That's what I believe also.

In Christ,

+ Ephraim, metropolitan.

. The Nature of God has three aspects: the Essence, the Energy or Operation and the Persons. The Essence is incommunicable, the Energy communicable (e. g., Grace, Light, etc.), while the divine Persons are both; hence, by the latter, the Person of the Son communicates in the flesh with His creatures. In any case, we do not worship the Essence or the Energy, not even the mystery of divine Incarnating Itself, only the Incarnate Lord; and neither do we worship *Names* of

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Names of the Persons indicate the distinct properties of Each: the Father who is the *Cause of the Trinity*, the Son Who is *Begotten* of Him, the Holy Spirit Who *Proceeds* from the Father alone. The Uncreated Energies or Operations emanates from Each of Them, as St Gregory Palamas wrote.

In the Old Testament, God's Names --- *Yahweh* (He Who creates), *Elohim* (authority), *El Shaddai* (Almighty), *Adonai* (Master), etc. --- describe His actions, that is, His Energies, but never are the Names worshiped no matter their grandeur, authority, repute or wonder. The People of ancient Israel adored only their Lord Who in fact was God the Son. To be sure, they knew that "*to call upon the Name of the Lord*" is to worship God (Gen. 21:33; 26:25), but to call upon His Name is to glorify, implore and entreat Him, not to worship the Name by which they called upon Him. Thus, your quotation from St John Chrysostom is irrelevant.

I have corresponded more than once with your Eminence and Bishop Gregory on this matter. The best His Grace could say --- "*We do not worship words.*" I was delighted until it was pointed out to me that his statement was tautology. Then, came Fr John Fleser's compelling letter; the powerful e-mails of Fr Yakov Tseitlin and, to be sure, numerous letters from other confused and disconsolate brethren priests of our own Church. We saw some of them at the October clergy synaxis They would not serve at the Sunday Liturgy. I spoke also with several laymen, monks and clergy who had already left HOCNA, including Bishop Dimitri.

Also, my son immediately saw the flaws in the arguments of your Eminence, your desperate appeal to the Church Fathers. The citations were dubious at best. He mentioned, too, that you had not repudiated the impious "*the Awake Sleeper*," the heresy which had so troubled HOCNA and caused so many to depart your *omophor*. The same has happened again and I fear will continue to happen as

the result of your adoption of this new heterodoxy. Indeed, one heresy invites another.

I can no longer endure the painful sentiment which has urged me to remain loyal to irresolute bishops, because they have been so long my friends and companions for fifty years and for whom I have had and continue to have very strong affection. Although grateful to my HOCNA brethren (especially, Fr Nektas Palassis) for their many kindnesses, I must act according to conscience. Therefore, I inform your Eminences that, invoking Canon 15 of the First-and- Second Council of 861, I and the congregation of St Catherine of Sinai must withdraw from your authority in order to find refuge with the ecclesial sanity of Bishop Dimitri of Boston under the Synod of Archbishop Kallinikos.

May you find once more the peace in the Faith you once served so well and for so long.

With all respect due your title,

Archpriest Fr Michael Azkoul