

Metropolitan Ephraim
President
The Holy Orthodox Church in North America
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Your Eminence:

I have just been made aware that a draft copy of my letter was, without my knowledge or consent, sent to laity. I learned of this on Saturday, October 20, 2012. The following is the corrected letter.

I am sending this directly to you for you are the President of the synod; however, I am also sending a copy to Metropolitan Makarios and Bishop Gregory. Because these topics are of importance for all the clergy and faithful in our Church, I will make this available to them as well.

At the synaxis, October 5 and 6 of this year, the only topic that was discussed for two days was the Name Worshipping controversy. The accusations against Father Pateleimon were only mentioned by Metropolitan Makarios in his statement just before his departure to return to Toronto. I want to address the two issues, Name-worshipping and Father Panteleimon in this letter.

At the Synaxis you stated, as you have on other occasions, that our opinions have no value, rather, only what the Holy Fathers and the councils teach determines the teaching of the Church. You and Bishop Gregory then presented your opinions regarding the Russian council's decisions in 1913 as to why you rejected their statements regarding Name-worshippers. (Metropolitan Makarios made no comments during the two days except shortly before he left to return to Toronto.) These were your opinions because from what you presented, you, Metropolitan Makarios and Bishop Gregory are the only three bishops in North America who have come to this conclusion in one hundred years.. (It is interesting to note, Bishop Gregory Lourie in Russia agrees with your position.) Because so much was said at the Synaxis and because many articles written regarding this matter have been distributed on both sides, it has taken time to read and comprehend what is the issue. Even after the Synaxis there are clergy who do not understand your position and why many monks have left Holy Transfiguration monastery and why many of your priests and parishes have departed from the Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Boston.

During the Synaxis, Father Christos Patitsas asked you to accept a quote that we could take to our parishioners from the Elder Barsanuphius of Optina to show you rejected the heresy of Name-worshipping: "Remember that the power is not in the word, not in the name, but in Christ Himself Who is being named (*Letters of Spiritual Children*, pg. 810).

In addition, I submitted, below, Constantinople's Decision, 1913, regarding Name-worshipping for you to use in stating your position regarding Name-worshipping:

1. The name of God is holy, worshipful, and desirable, because it is useful to us as a verbal designation for that most desired and most Holy Being, God, the source of everything good. This name is of God, because it was revealed to us by God, it speaks to us of God, it refers our spirit towards God, etc. In prayer (especially the Jesus prayer) the name of God, and God Himself are inseparably into our consciousness, and it is as if they coincide, and indeed, they cannot and ought not be separated, opposing one to the other;

but this only in prayer and only by our heart. Examined theologically and in reality, the name of God is only a name! It is not God Himself nor an attribute (characteristic) of His. It is the name of an object not the object itself. Therefore, it is impossible for it to be considered or named either God (this would be mindless and blasphemous) nor divinity, for it also is not energy of God.

2. The name of God uttered in prayer with faith is able to perform miracles, but not by itself in itself, nor as a consequence of some divine power which, in a matter of speaking, is enclosed in it or attached to it, which would then work mechanically, but rather thus: the Lord seeing our faith, in the power of His unlying promise, He sends His grace, and through it He performs the miracle.
3. Each of the Holy Mysteries are accomplished neither by the faith of him who performs them nor by the faith of him who receives, but neither by the invoking of depiction of the name of God, but by the prayer and faith of the Holy Church, on whose behalf it is performed and with the power granted her by the Lord's promise. Such is the Orthodox Faith, the patristic and Apostolic Faith.

Furthermore, Father Michael Azkoul submitted his own quote, October 10, 2012, in the hopes you would find it acceptable to use to indicate that you are not Name-worshippers.

Following the holy Fathers and all lawful conciliar proclamations on the subject of Name-Worship, the Holy Orthodox Church of North America does endorse their decisions which identify this doctrine as a heresy. We condemn the notion that God and the Name of God are ontologically the same. We neither equate the Essence or Hypostases or Uncreated Energies of the Blessed Trinity with a word, a phrase, a letter, a syllable or thought which in fact may signify or indicate only Their Presence. There are, nevertheless, Names which have been revealed (e.g., Father, Son and Holy Spirit) which are eternal and unalterable, Names which convey an immutable truth. There also sacred but created Names which convey meaning and truth (e.g., the language of the divine Liturgy) and which also endow Grace to him who transmits and he who receives them with true and living faith. Moreover, even if a Name were indeed confused with the Uncreated Energies we would not worship or adore it, because we worship and venerate not the Name but only the Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

I believe this is sufficient to demonstrate that several clergy did not approve of that which you were presenting as an acceptable defense to renounce the Name-worshipping heresy.

The following quote is from a letter of Matushka Anastasia to Archbishop Valentin, 2001, translated by Father Nicholas. Copies of all this correspondence was given to you, Metropolitan Ephraim, and Father Panteleimon.

Don't become angry with me, dear Vladyka,...but in your Fr. Gregory Lourie. I fear greatly that he — like the feather from the fire-bird in the fairy-tale *The Hunchbacked Pony* — “brings much disturbance with itself”. May God grant that I prove to be wrong in my opinion of him, but somehow it seems to me that you will yet have a lot of bother from him, if not downright trouble.

For you to say you did not know anything about Bishop Gregory Lourie prior to 2011 is not an accurate statement. It appears she was correct in anticipating trouble.

On March 6/19, 2001, Father Nicholas, monk at Holy Transfiguration monastery, under your guidance, wrote to a Matushka in Russia and said the following:

We received your letter of February 22 / March 7, together with the enclosures. I translated them, in summary, for Metropolitan Ephraim and Archimandrite Panteleimon. After having discussed this material, they asked me to convey to you their thoughts on the subject.

At present they do not think that it is our place to interfere in this matter. Firstly, because it is still an internal affair of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church. Secondly, because almost all of the written sources dealing with the “name-worshipping” controversy exist only in Russian and, therefore, are not readily available to Metropolitan Ephraim and Archimandrite Panteleimon. To translate all of that related material into English would indeed be beyond our strength.

We do feel that during the original controversy (1913–1914) there were excesses on both sides: some ignorant monks did interpret things too literally; while some genuine hesychasts were misunderstood and unjustly persecuted. However, as the translators of *The Dogma of Redemption* into English, we obviously would never agree to calling Metropolitan Antony, of blessed memory, a heretic.

Perhaps if what you said above had been adhered to, we would not have this controversy today.

To address the issue of Name-worshipping: Vladimir Moss wrote a paper *On the Name of God* in 2005: the following long quote provides background information regarding the councils during the years 1912-1918:

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).

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 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 dogmatized in council, but we expect that at the forthcoming Council it will be formulated and dogmatized. 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 “Mixing truth with unrighteousness” (Romans 1.18), Bulatovich mixed Orthodoxy with heresy. Thus Orthodoxy recognizes that there is a “Divine Power” dwelling in, or resting on the name of Jesus, but does *not* recognize 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 unailing 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: “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, remains 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 judgment 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 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).”

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;.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”!

ON THE NAME OF GOD, Against the Name-worshipping Heresy of Fr. A. Bulatovich and Fr. G. Lourié by Vladimir Moss, pgs. 4-8: this was written in 2005.

Metropolitan Ephraim, perhaps, neither you nor Bishop Gregory would accept the conclusions of Vladimir Moss but that would only be your opinion which you prefer over the

findings of several councils. This article was written before this controversy has divided the diocese so I believe it to be an objective presentation of the facts. But, this is my opinion much as your rejection of these facts would be your opinion.

In late afternoon on Saturday, October 6, you, Metropolitan Ephraim, were asked this question: Is name worshipping a heresy? When it was repeated a second time you said, "Yes, it is a heresy, how many times do we have to say it before you people understand what we are saying?" You were then asked, "Put it in writing." To that you did not reply. To date you have not put in writing that Name-worshipping is a heresy. You have stated that the hierarchs of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America are not Name-worshippers, but that does not mean you agree that Name-worshipping is a heresy. Since you have said, before the clergy and bishops, that Name-worshipping is a heresy, I ask you to state clearly and unequivocally, that Name-worshipping is a heresy.

To the second issue: Father Panteleimon. The issue is not Father Panteleimon, it is what you, Metropolitan Ephraim, and Father Isaac did after you learned of his transgressions. The clergy and laity who have known the fathers at the monastery for many years reacted when they heard there was truth in the accusations against Father Panteleimon. Their initial response, from the majority of them, was, "It is not true, this is a slander against Father Panteleimon, etc". It is understandable as to why they responded as they did, yet, it turns out that in fact there was truth in the accusations.

It is helpful to read the following from the Gospel of Luke:

And one of the malefactors which were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Remember me, O Lord, when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Amen I say unto thee, Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise.

Luke 23:39-42

The one thief on the cross recognized the consequences of his action; for this reason he said, *And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds:* It is exactly this point that has been ignored in the case of Father Panteleimon. St. John Chrysostom wrote: "He (Christ) did not say: 'I deliver you from damnation and from punishment'; rather, He puts him into paradise as a righteous man. Did you see that he became righteous through confession?" (*On Repentance and Almsgiving*, The Fathers of the Church, pg. 117.)

If there was truth in the accusations against Father Panteleimon then, as you stated in your letter to the faithful dated September 1, 2012: "The truth is that some fathers of the Monastery have requested that Fr. Panteleimon retire from the Monastery for reasons that are under investigation by the bishops." This investigation never took place and as a result the faithful have heard mixed statements regarding this matter. Father Panteleimon, by his own actions, falls under the canons of the Church and he should be held accountable for what he has done.

A chronology of events:

- August 20, 21, 2012: the monks' depositions regarding Father Panteleimon were given to you, Metropolitan Ephraim, as you had requested (this fact that you had been given

depositions from the monks became known to the clergy only after the September 1 meeting.).

- August 23, 2012, a copy of one deposition was faxed to Metropolitan Makarios in Toronto at the St. Nicholas House.
- Saturday, August 25, 2012: a meeting was held at Holy Transfiguration monastery with you, Metropolitan Ephraim, Father Isaac, Father Barsanuphius and 10 clergy. At this meeting Father Isaac stated there was truth in the accusations against Father Panteleimon and he asked forgiveness for having covered up his transgressions. He wept as he asked forgiveness. You, Metropolitan Ephraim, said no monk had said anything to you or given you any statements; you then corrected yourself and said that Father Elias, Metropolitan Moses' brother, did give you a letter on his return to the monastery (this was a number of years ago) but you did not investigate or make further inquiry into it. The clergy said this should be dealt with at the monastery and appropriate action should be taken, namely, Father Panteleimon should be deposed. The matter was to be discussed at a scheduled meeting of all the clergy in the area on Saturday, September 1, 2012.
- Saturday, September 1, 2012: Present were Metropolitan Ephraim, Bishops Demetrius and Gregory, Father Isaac and 18 clergy. Once again when the issue of Father Panteleimon was raised, Father Isaac, with great remorse, asked forgiveness from all present for having covered up Father Panteleimon's transgressions. All the clergy were in agreement this matter should be handled discreetly and Father Panteleimon should be deposed and retire to the skete in Maine. At the end of the meeting a draft letter was composed and given to the bishops to go over and send out. That same evening a letter to the faithful was sent out signed by all three bishops. The above quote regarding the investigation was in that letter; however, no investigation was ever conducted.
- September 11/August 29, 2012: Synodal Statement regarding Father Panteleimon said: "With regard to Father Panteleimon, the Holy Synod has resolved to accept his resignation from the priesthood and his retirement so that he would live out his last days in solitude and hesychia." This raises many questions, e.g.; Why would a priest resign from the priesthood when he retires? How does a priest resign from the priesthood? What canons give this privilege to a priest to resign from the priesthood?

The fact that you have refused to look into the accusations against Father Panteleimon has caused confusion and doubt among the clergy, but also among the faithful because you have deliberately covered up Father Panteleimon's transgressions. No one is interested in his transgressions and that has been stated clearly at each of the meetings with the clergy, however, the clergy did ask that appropriate discipline be taken against Father Panteleimon according to the canons. I spoke twice with Father Panteleimon over the phone prior to the Synaxis. He advised me he was writing a letter and the monastery was typing it and he would sign it on Monday, October 1, when he came into Boston for a doctor's appointment. I asked him if Father Isaac could make the letter available to everyone, and he said, "Yes". I also advised him of what Father Isaac said at the meeting regarding himself; Father Panteleimon said he was at the skete and the matter was between Father Isaac and the clergy, he offered no further comment.

In your 3rd Confession of Faith you stated the following:

In this my confession of the holy Faith, I promise to observe the Canons of the holy Apostles, and of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, and of the holy Local Councils, the traditions of the Church, and the decrees, orders and rulings of the Holy Fathers. And all things whatsoever they have accepted I also accept; and whatsoever things they have rejected those also do I reject.

I promise also to preserve the peace of the Church, and firmly and zealously to teach the people entrusted to me, and not to devise anything whatsoever which is contrary to the Orthodox Catholic Christian Faith all the days of my life; and that I will, in all things, follow and always obey the Most Holy Synod; and ..And I promise to rule the flock committed unto me with the fear of God and in devoutness of life; and with all diligent heed to guard it against all heresies of doctrine...

I promise to visit and watch over the flock now confided to me, after the manner of the Apostles, to discern whether they remain true to the Faith, and in the exercise of good works, more especially the Priests; and to inspect with diligence, and to exhort and inhibit, that there may be no schisms, superstitions and impious veneration, and that no customs contrary to Christian piety and good morals may injure Christian conduct.

And all those things, my bounden duty, which I have this day promised in word, I also promise to perform in deed unto my uttermost breath, for the sake of the covenanted good things to come. And may God, Who seeth the heart, be the witness to my vow.

Your action to do nothing except deflect attention to other matters has made some clergy to question your moral authority in resolving conflicts and following the canons of the Orthodox Church.

I still believe you can reinstall peace in our Church, if you respond to my following two requests:

- 1) State in writing what you have said verbally: The Synod of HOCNA condemns the heresy of name-worshipping.
- 2) Explain why you have refused to investigate the accusations against Father Panteleimon when you have been given depositions from the monks and heard Father Isaac's witness to the truth of those accusations in front of three bishops and eighteen clergy. Father Isaac has admitted to several laity that the accusations against Father Panteleimon are true. Is it so difficult to admit that there is truth in the accusations and that you have mismanaged the handling of the charges for not taking corrective action immediately?

Since September, seventeen monks (eleven schema monks and of those, seven were clergy), and seven parish clergy and three parishes (these numbers may be incorrect) have left the Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Boston, yet the Holy Synod is acting as if there is nothing to be concerned about. At your consecration you promised "to preserve the peace of the Church"; your position is to see only fault with all those who have left, never believing that you, our bishops, were at fault in anything. You are falling into the same pattern as when

monks left the monastery years ago; find fault with them, slander them and accuse them unjustly.

Metropolitan Ephraim, all this division that has taken place could have been avoided if you had followed the canons of the Church; and the directives of the Holy Synod: it is still possible to heal the wounds if you would admit to your mistakes and respond to the above requests.

Your unworthy servant in Christ,

Father John Fleser
Parish Priest
St. Anna's Orthodox Church