

Beloved Parishioners of Pillars of Orthodoxy Church,

Bless! Two Days ago I received a statement of our Hierarchs' explaining their confession of Faith regarding the Name of God. I found it difficult to comprehend. When I compare the purity and simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this statement, I, like a child seeking the Father, prefer the Gospel. One must be careful when anyone making an argument is allowed to create his own definition of things. This gives them control over your reasoning powers. They define Name worshiping for you. They define Orthodoxy for you. Then you are told: "See, we are not Name worshippers. We are Orthodox." They maintain that the pronouncements of the whole Orthodox Church which settled this matter in 1912-1913 are: "not reasoned theologically according to the traditional teachings of the Orthodox church". They do not tell us what these pronouncements are nor do they explain why they are not Orthodox. I have reprinted the Constantinopolitan decision of 1913 below:

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 and not the object itself. Therefore, it is impossible for it to be considered or named either God (this would be mindless and blasphemous) or 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 manner 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 that performs them nor by the faith of him who receives, but neither by the invoking or 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.

This is the Faith we have believed our whole lives.

The Hierarchs' statement goes on to say that "the name of God is holy by nature". On page 7 of Bishop Gregory's collection of Patristic quotations entitled "Prelude" he cites several Fathers and concludes that since the name is holy by nature then the name of God must be God Himself. That is not what St. Cyril of Jerusalem means. The temple of God is not holy by nature. It only becomes holy after prayers are read over it and God blesses it. God's name is holy because it refers to God who is holy whether we say so or not, whether we praise him or not, whether we worship Him or not. St Gregory of Nyssa in the quotation above it says the same thing, "Hallowed be Thy Name. If I did not utter these words at all, let us say, would it be possible that God's name be not holy? " Therefore, saying God's name is holy by nature does not mean that the name of God is God Himself.

The Hierarchs' statement condemns the Orthodox Church's teaching that the name of God is not the energy or operation or grace of God. What is a name? Here I cite Webster's dictionary definition of the term "name": a name is a word or phrase by which a person, thing or class of things is known, called, or spoken to or of, an appellation, or title; a word or words expressing some quality considered characteristic or descriptive of a person or thing, an epithet, as they called him names; fame, reputation or character, as, a good name, a good reputation; a

family or clan as, the last of my name; reputation or appearance only, not in reality, semblance, as chief in name only; a distinguished or noted person, as the greatest name in science; in logic, a designation for a concept or term.

Nowhere in this definition do you find that a name is the energy or operation of a person or object or thing. Lewis Carroll, in "Through the Looking Glass" writes: "When I use a word, "Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." Alas, this philosophy of words led to Humpty Dumpty's great fall. The devil, the deceiver, the father of lies, uses words this way, not as our precious Lord Jesus who said " Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." (Matthew 5:37).

The Hierarchs' go on to condemn the Orthodox teaching that God's revealed name is separate from Him. What does this mean? If I speak the word "door" how does anyone know whether I am referring to my neighbor's front entry way or to Jesus Christ? Consider the Name Jesus, the Name of God incarnate. Was this Name ever separate from Him? The Synaxarion of the Circumcision of our Lord states: "On the first of this month we celebrate the Circumcision in the flesh of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ: it being the eighth day after His birth, we commemorate the giving of the Name of Jesus. He that in six days made the earth and the heaven, now upon the eighth taketh the Name of Saviour". Even now, is his name ever separate from Him? Can we make Jesus present by saying His name? Yes, if the Lord Jesus chooses to be. If we pray with faith, with the fear of God, with love, with tears, with the foundation of a righteous life, then He may come to us. Sometimes He comes only when we are persistent in prayer. These things we know from our experiences as Christians. They are taught to us by our spiritual fathers. Because Jesus name is separate from Him, we don't have Jesus on a leash (His Name) to summon whenever we wish. We don't control God. Sometimes He only comes to us when two or three gather together in His Name (Matthew 18:20). Sometimes God will not accept our prayer because of our sins. In contrast, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Sometimes God requires the prayers of the priest. "Is any sick among you? Let him call the presbyters of the church and let them pray over him,

anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up” (James 5:14-15). In contrast to this Orthodox understanding of prayer, the heretic Anthony Bulatovich believed that the name of God maintains its wonderworking power even when pronounced unconsciously. He condemns the Orthodox Church’s teaching that it is not by the power of the divine name [alone] that miracles are performed, but by God Himself, and that the Name of the Lord serves only to call upon God. We Orthodox agree with the Elder Baranuphius of Optina when he says, “Remember that the power is not in the word, not in the name, but in Christ Himself who is being named.”