

May 28, 2016 / May 15, 2016
Venerable Pachomius the Great

Dearest Father John:

You're my father in all but biology. I wouldn't have made it through my divorce without your support and prayers. I know I'm your son in that same respect. It means the world to me. Now, when a letter begins this way, you know its both serious and critical. Please understand I mean these words in nothing but filial devotion. Things have been bothering me lately concerning the church. Do not be alarmed, I have no intention of leaving. That would take a sin of monstrous proportions.

I worry over the events of the last two to three years. At one point, we had a large organization, our "intercommunion," that showed great promise. All told, we had something like 500 parishes worldwide and many monastics. Then, apparently, a Gregory Lourie talked Metropolitan Raphael into some variation of "name worship," and that communion ended. This is where I get foggy.

As of now, it seems that the accusations of "Kabbalistic name worship" destroyed this church. I've yet to see evidence that anyone over there believed in what we think "Name Worship" is. I'm pretty sure they never did. Furthermore, there is no one at AHN nor in the synod well versed in the arcane symbolism such an accusation would require. Well, except me.

You accused Raphael of a "Kabbalistic" worship of names, sounds and material letters. This is not true and no evidence has been produced otherwise. No one believes that God's name is God. Anyone who does would be locked up in a sanitarium. Or at the very least, they would not try to form a church, since with God in the name, why have a church at all? It makes no sense. That's curious.

I have read and re-read your communications with Metropolitan Raphael. I'm worried and concerned. At one point, you write, quibbling over the term "prosygoria" –

However, when we examined the relevant passage in *Patrologia Graeca*, Volume 89, folio 53, we find that the translation given in the letter is not quite accurate. The Greek word 'onoma' is not present. Instead, we see that the word is 'prosygoria', which really means 'appellation'. So, in actuality, the question is not stated correctly. It is obvious that the whole context here is saying that we can apply an appellation to the Energies; but, it does not say "the Name is an energy"; we can call the Energies justice, love, mercy, etc, but we can apply nothing at all to the Essence, because it is incommunicable. Thus we can call the Energies by appellations, but, this does not say 'the Name is the Energy'.

Please tell me no. This kind of academic quibbling is cause for anathema? Has this intercommunion been disrupted over a dispute in translation? What were the attempts to resolve it? Now it is true I know little about ancient Greek. It is equally true that I've studied this material (and kept up with it) for many years at the doctoral level. Why I was I not asked about this? In fact, at no point in any of these highly academic discussions in ontological and metaphysical issues was I consulted at all, though you know I'm an expert in Platonic, Aristotelian and Hegelian metaphysics. While you are immensely knowledgeable, you are not a Platonist. Heaven knows Fr. Enoch is completely out of his depth on these issues. I find it odd I

never got a copy of these things before the church was shattered by them.

The problem, strictly from a philosophical point of view, is not stated correctly by either of you. This is partly my fault, since I just didn't keep up with these letters, assuming as I did that "name worship" was the actual worship of names.

Now, I have no difficulty with Enoch personally, I have great difficulty with a) the unqualified being consulted for important decisions and b) the qualified being bypassed. Whom did you consult over these issues? I have a lengthy and substantial paper on "name worship" that was totally ignored as well, "Name Worship," Epistemology and the Abuse of Christian Philosophy." Why?

I notice that nowhere does Raphael show anything like "Kabbalist" reverence for material marks and sounds. This quibbling, quite frankly, is philosophically weak and poorly reasoned. Here's one example:

Do you not understand ? It is thus:—Suppose, for instance, that your name is John Hitch. If you are called by these names, then you would acknowledge yourself wholly in them, and would answer to them, meaning that you agree, that your name is you, yourself, together with your soul and body;— it is likewise with the saints: when you call upon their names, you call upon them themselves. But, you would say, they have no body. What does that signify?

No one in the universe would argue this. Do you really think this is what's being advocated? Of course not. Then, you seem to state that Met. Vladimir (Bogoyavelnsky) of the Russian synod is philosophically correct because he was a martyr. Unfortunately, his statement was philosophically illiterate, as Vladimir Ern showed amply. St. Vladimir had no training in philosophy at all, yet he was called upon to pronounce on some of the most difficult ontological sorts of theology imaginable. Yet again, we all have different gifts. When one presumes the gifts of another, trouble begins.

The holy metropolitan Vladimir failed to realize that his words led to prayer being a matter of private conversation with phantoms. That no connection between man and God was really possible when names and words were arbitrarily created and used. Unfortunately, this is a consequence of his ill-advised argument and his lack of realization of the importance of Realism to the Orthodox church. I note no reference to him in the statement.

Raphael wrote:

Therefore it is a great misconception to think that man gives names to God, just as he gives names to creatures that he knows by the power of his reason as objects of his knowledge, identifying by means of his thought their properties and, in accordance and in accordance with these properties, naming them with verbal names. No! We cannot think of God as an object of our knowledge for our created mind, which could as it were know and define Him. Let us not speak such a blasphemy! It is not human reason, by its creaturely power, that gives Him names, but God Who reveals them through grace to man through his pre-eternal names (cf. Exodus 3:14). In this sense we can speak of God's names as divine, uncreated energies. But being received by the purified mind of the Holy Prophets, these name-energies are "clothed" in created human thoughts uttered by created sounds

or written in created letters. In this sense, we speak of God's names as sacred symbols, verbal icons, which are created images of uncreated name-energies.

There is nothing wrong with the above. Yet again, "name" and "word" are being used in the ancient, not nominal sense. This is far from the "esoteric" worship of letters he's been accused of. If this statement is condemned, then nominalism is enshrined. Nominalism is the "ontology of death" as I've termed it, the root of Satan's presence in the world, removing any divine purpose in creation. It is precisely here when I received my first call from Metropolitan Gregory of HOCNA. His concern was righteous. This important passage was ignored and Raphael insulted by us. Those with no philosophical or historical understanding were consulted while I was kept at arms length. Please, if I'm wrong, then I'm sorry. But if I'm even half right, this must be made right and Raphael contacted.

I do note something else: that the reference to the Kabbalah has been removed and replaced with "esoteric desire." This is also disturbing, since it suggests that Enoch was embarrassed at this accusation and removed it. However, this was the initial accusation and certainly played a great role in destroying the intercommunion. It was libelous. You operated on the assumption that he believed the name of God was God and that a "name" is a "word" and a "word" is like what I'm typing right now. He does not believe this. No amount of argument from him could change your mind.

Vladimir Ern writes:

Thus, the Name of God – to the precise extent in which it is revealed by God (i.e., unconditionally) – is a Divine action and in all its qualities is opposed to the relative and feeble forms of human naming. Therefore, either the Synod, along with all of Orthodoxy, will confess the revelatory nature of the Name of God – and then it should renounce the introduction of blasphemous nominalism in the area of the names of God ("the Name of God is only a name") – or, by insisting on its thesis, it should openly renounce all commonality with Revelation.

The question is over nominalism. This is the essential issue. If any of these "name worshipers" believed what you have accused them of, they would no longer need a church and would be able to dispense with the sacraments, since communion would be always available merely at the prayerful invocation of the name. Since they deny this, the issue must lie elsewhere. Fr. Anthony Bulatovich states:

But so that no one would think that this name is some kind of magical power, which by a mere combination of letters and by the power of mere pronunciation must work miracles, Peter added "and faith, which is for His sake, gave him complete healing." Our opponents ignore the power of the first half of the text and concentrate only on the second; seizing upon these words they say, "There, you see, not the name of the Lord healed the lame man, but faith in him himself." However, to the degree that it would be unorthodox to affirm that only the power of Peter's pronouncing the name of Jesus Christ without any co-action of his faith healed the lame man, to the same degree it would be unorthodox to affirm that it was not the power of the name of Jesus Christ that co-worked this miracle, and reject the words "His name strengthened him." (My Battle with the

Onomatoclasts on the Holy Mountain, 88)

Its hard to get a stronger statement than that. Had you read my paper on the subject, you'd see other examples from other leaders of this movement. Yet, we read from the Russian synod:

But this so natural and comforting explanation which so arouses in us love for the good Lord appeared to Father Hilarion and his followers to be insufficient; and they decided to replace it with their teaching, i.e., that the Jesus prayer saves, because the name “Jesus” is salvatory, for in it, as in the other divine names, God is inseparably present. But saying this, they do not suspect apparently to what fearful conclusions such a teaching inevitably leads. For if this doctrine is true, then it follows that the unconscious repetition of the name of God is effective (so Father Bulatovich states in his Apology, page 89). “If you unconsciously invoke the name of the Lord Jesus, you will still have Him in His name with all His divine properties like a book with everything printed in it; and if you invoke Him as man, you will still have in the name ‘Jesus’ all of God.” However this contradicts the very words of the Lord, “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven (Matt 7:21 ff). If this new doctrine be true, then in this case, it would be possible for someone to perform miracles with the name of Christ without believing in Christ.

Yes indeed. This is why Anthony did not believe it. Even if, through simplicity he did, rarely do these sort of errors get this level of attention. However, more recently, you've said that the 19th century nobility were deeply infused with the western arcanæ. Now, I've been saying that for about a decade, almost entirely alone. What happened was that you heard this from Enoch who forgot where he initially heard it. While this is certainly true, it destroys the credibility of this Petrine hierarchy that never bothered to mention it before nor reference it in the anathema of 1913.

Even the great Anthony Khrapovitsky, a man to whom I am quite devoted, was carrying out orders rather than doing analysis. He quotes Fr. Anthony: “However, these divine attributes—consubstantiality, eternity, spiritual essence, etc.—we do not ascribe to the letter, with which we express Divine truth, but only to the very word of truth.” Then, adding his own aside, he says: “What then? For a word itself consists of letters and sounds.” He knows better than this. He's using the Russian *slovo* equivocally. He knows that term can mean a conceptual reality, a Platonic archetype (so to speak) as well as an actual spoken or written word. He assumes the written word is meant and concludes that Anthony was a worshiper of the ink on a page.

Please read this passage from Ern with care:

[The 1913 synod] vehemently denies “that outside our consciousness the Name of God is synonymous with God or the Divine.” This denial is the definite thesis of all its name-fighting theories; all their “arguments” lead to defending this thesis. Thus, objectively and outside our consciousness, in the ontological order, the Name of God is not connected with God's being. It would seem that there is only one conclusion to this thesis, which we have just made, namely: in that case, calling upon God in prayer is a completely idle and futile occupation; the Name of God upon which we call is not objectively related to God; it does not create

any real relationship between the praying soul and God; our prayers, being entirely a “phenomenon of our consciousness,” has nothing to do with the Existing God. The Synod contrives to avoid this conclusion and save the efficacy of prayer, but what a new and cruel destruction of the humble Christian subject!

Now, as a philosopher, this is a severe argument against the synod's view. He's right: without the objective connection between the name and the energy, all that remains is an arbitrary mental construction. Of course, you need to read the full essay to get the argument, I realized that “name worship” never meant the worship of a name in this debate. I also realized the level of sophistication it takes to follow Ern's post-Kantian philosophy and how few Orthodox are capable of this (especially where factional agendas are at stake).

Then I wince again: “Where there is smoke, there is fire.” This is not a philosophical argument. Then, “No Father has ever said that the name of God is an energy of God. Nowhere does the Church teach of an uncreated name of God.” OK, but it was not until the Renaissance that this Greek vocabulary was standardized. It does damage to the statement and removes its force since the Palamite controversy standardized these meanings specifically.

Thus far, I've heard justifications for the disruption of the Intercommunion take the following forms (and I paraphrase in general):

1. Lurie is doing all sorts of dirty tricks against the simple Raphael;
2. Raphael believes in “name worship”
3. The “Russian nobility” believed in elements of the western occult, hence they had some connection with “name worship”
4. Raphael (or those around him) are into the Kabbalah
5. Lurie is Jewish, so there is a chance he might just be speaking it rather than writing it down;
6. Sts Tikhon and Filaret were preoccupied with name worship;

Now some of this might be true. I don't believe #1 because Raphael founded a substantial TOC body and survived a life in the Red Army bureaucracy. He's no simpleton. We do not know #2. #3 is largely from me but might not be directly related to “name worship” or at least not in the sense we condemn. #3 is false, but #4 is no grounds for an anathema (but might be grounds for other things). #6 is odd because so few seem to mention this about them. Your meeting with St. Filaret, which unfortunately has caused you some attacks online, is insufficient evidence for all this. It cannot be the engine of an anathema.

Now, I also read this:

I assure you of the most sincere and brotherly feeling of love for you and ask you, for the sake of love in Christ Jesus, to come without fail to our sacred celebration in the St. John the Forerunner Monastery on July 13-14 (New Calendar), so that in personal contact with me and all the Fullness of our Church, which will meet in these days at a Local Council, we can resolve any remaining confusion.

When did this take place? Did you issue the anathema and not go to meet him in council? How specifically, did you attempt to resolve the issue with Raphael?

I will not get into this any more deeply than I already have. It seems to me, forgive me, that you acted too quickly. You've yet to send me any evidence of wrongdoing and at the same time, provoked the collapse of the intercommunion and a landslide of libel against yourself and

the synod. I apologize profusely for my tone, I mean this only in filial devotion. If I'm wrong, then please forgive me.

Now I've already spoken my piece on Matt Heimbach and, as always, was ignored. Apparently, Bishop Joseph has superior insight into American racial politics. Being made a bishop does not confer insight. As of today, the Orthodox world is saying that you've turned your back on me and betrayed me. "Fr. Raphael repudiated by his bishop" is quite common among the younger ROCOR crowd.

Nothing has been done. That terrible statement on race is still sitting on the website even after I've asked you to take it down. Its causing me great personal embarrassment. Unfortunately, it's hurting you as well. You've asked for alternative wordings. I've sent you several that – yet again – remain unread. As I've stated elsewhere, that statement you wrote on the issue is incorrect and incoherent theologically and politically. Here's what I wrote:

First, Phyletism is a hoax, its not a heresy. I prove it clearly here:

<http://www.rusjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Phyletism.pdf>. Keep in mind this is the same "synod" that anathematized and excommunicated the Kollyvades fathers. There were few (if any) valid bishops at the time. That's fairly easy to demonstrate (and I do above).

Second, even if it were real, it had nothing to do with "national diversity" or "racial mixing." That's a 20th century American political issue and a demand of the globalists and liberals. Now THAT's not only heresy, but a central teaching of Antichrist through his globalization New World Order.

Third, no one is saying that people of "mixed racial" heritage cannot receive communion. That's not an issue, nor has it ever been.

Fourth, The Old Testament lays out our political views on economics, monarchy, democracy and yes, racial mixing. It is incorrect that only abortion and a vague reference to "long standing teachings" is required by the church. It is a fairly complex legal tradition we uphold. For example, no Orthodox man can uphold the American political system, liberal democracy, Soviet Marxism, liberal capitalism, usury, central banking, or feminism. That's just to name a few.

This was also ignored. I've also sent you a statement of faith for your acceptance both for me as well as a personal statement from you. This was partly at your request. That too was ignored. I don't think you really read these things from me. Or anything of mine for that matter.

During the Paschal liturgy here, I apologized on behalf of the synod to Matthew Heimbach during my sermon. He has been treated horribly. Bp. Joseph in Canada should be ashamed: how dare he condemn someone behind his back. Was Matt contacted by Bp. Joseph? He needs to be rebuked for his presumption and arrogance.

He knows nothing of this man or what this group believes. How dare he. Bp. Joseph is afraid of being called names on the internet. That's his sole motivation. If that's not true, then he needs to be told that the ROCOR supported the Third Reich during World War II and had its own bishop (Seraphim Lade) as Head of the Orthodox in the Reich. This had the full blessing of Anastassy – as is proper. Hitler built a state far more Christian than our present US government and destroyed Stalin's military might. He truly

was a Godsend.

I fear you are listening to anyone and everyone except those who actually know anything. For all of these issues, you've had an in-house academic expert who has been ignored totally. While formed in 2012, I've only just heard of this "commission for inter-Orthodox relations" that you've founded. Its members: Hieromonk Enoch (Fetter), Deacon Joseph Suaiden, Deacon Finbarr Brandt-Sorheim. This is satire. Joseph Suaiden? He's single-handedly pissed off every Orthodox writer on the internet. He's your "Inter-orthodox Commission" member? And what experience or knowledge does Enoch have? Knowledge in a specific subject. Its all I have. Small wonder its so essential to me.

To summarize:

I believe you've acted with good and prayerful intentions. In fact, I know you have.

You've strangely not involved me on important decisions that also just happen to be my major areas of expertise. In fact, I'm certain you've gone to some lengths to make sure I'm not involved, not even as an adviser.

You acted too quickly against Raphael and without advice from anyone competent (that I know of). Your accusations against him were false. You have no evidence that he worships God's name as such. You've still not sent me any evidence about G. Lurie or the Metropolitan himself. I know there is no evidence. Lurie might be sleazy, but that's not our business and is no reason for schism.

You're too worried about what others think of you. It doesn't matter. In truth, we don't matter. Even among true Orthodox few have heard of us. Joseph Suaiden has given us a terrible reputation (whether justified or not).

You're worried about Matt and I not being politically correct, but Joseph Suaiden is on the "Interorthodox Relations Commission" (you're not living this down any time soon, at least for comic reasons). Having Joe on this commission is like making me the president of the Philip Saliba Memorial Foundation.

Matt has brought me about 75 people so far interested in the faith. How many has Suaiden? Or Bp. Joseph?

Understand that you are my father and I write like this because I know I can. I know I can get away with it. I know you will take it in the spirit it is intended. The synod is not using its resources properly and misusing the resources it has. Maybe I'm being dramatic. Maybe I'm not being dramatic enough or being dramatic too late. I'm not sure.

I decided to write this after reading yet another attack on me motivated by the "statement" you've put online. While not intending to, its no universally seen as denouncing me. This needs to be clarified by you and in public. Unfortunately, if you do not, I have no choice but to do it myself unless explicitly forbidden by you (in which case I'd comply).

But you see the problem and I know you understand. Please help.

Kissing your right hand,

Fr. Raphael