

“Name Worship,” Epistemology and the Abuse of Christian Philosophy

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“Name worship” or the doctrine of *“imiaslavie”* is one the most eccentric of all doctrinal controversies in Orthodox history. In part, this is because of its metaphysical complexity and difficulty. Almost always, the terms are stated incorrectly since the author usually has only minimal training in metaphysics. Also, the acceptance or rejection of the theory has no impact on one's faith or life. This cannot be said of any other heresy or controversy in the past. More than anything else, it is almost totally unknown to the average, beleaguered parishioner, who now has to sort through yet another set of doctrinal controversies tearing his already damaged church apart. This essay is a brief analysis of what metaphysics has to do with Christianity. Since most do not know how to define “metaphysics,” most opinions are useless. It seems that the formulaic slogans about ecumenism have run their course. A new doctrinal controversy to justify schism is required.

In the Historical Dictionary of the Russian language, we read under the heading “name” –

In the Biblical sense, the concept of “name” is not just the proper name of something, but also the essence of that thing. It goes on to give examples of the name and its connection with the person in the old testament. For example, Abraham means the “father of the race.” Benjamin, the “son of happiness,” Moses is “saved from the water,” David is “beloved,” and so on.

In no way can this be evidence for the magical connection between the word and the person or the qualities of the person, but it might shed some light on the origin of our problem. Furthermore, the essential elements of apophatic logic are that any word cannot exhaust the experience and meaning it contains or seeks to replicate. Like anything else, words are historical products reflecting the fundamental ontological assumptions of those coining and using them. That those unfortunates alive in 2015 live in a society that is by its own self-definition “revolutionary” and “scientific,” the mental material needed to grasp these ideas is largely not present.

The apophatic approach argues that words are abbreviations of fundamental ontological truths. They are symbols in the best sense of the term. A “symbol” is not the opposite of “substantial,” but is the very expression of substance. The cross is a symbol that speaks volumes. However, to recount the history of the crucifixion each time we mean “cross” would be a tad irritating. Hence, these symbols are abbreviations for a massive amount of transcendent material, but are anything but non-substantial.

I.

In 813, the iconoclast emperor Leo V took power over a defeated, broken and demoralized Byzantium. From Irene to Michael, Byzantium lost a huge amount of money, men

and territory in a motley array of unsuccessful wars against Krum's Bulgaria. Leo, a strong populist, rebuilt the morale of the Byzantine army, but his source of ideological justification was iconoclasm, well established in the popular mind at the time with victory and military discipline.

It is always a good axiom to hold that no “academic” issue is ever merely ethereal, with no practical “value.” The heresies of the Byzantine period in the first millennium had extremely clear-cut and well known political and philosophical consequences that are often lost on the contemporary historian and, most certainly, the contemporary amateur historian within Orthodoxy.

From Arianism to Iconoclasm, one issue was at stake: the relationship of the Christian society to God, or even more basically, that of spirit and matter, form and content. Iconoclasm was always the party of the strong state, since the removal of icons was not really about “icons” as such, but the “autonomous” presence of grace within human affairs. The icons were a clear and understandable consequence of this issue, but not the heart. The concept of mediation and grace were the main concerns.

Each heresy, from Arians to Iconoclasts, had clear payoffs to political power. Every heresy had imperial support without exception, showing the Orthodox as a small minority. The emperor did not “force” Orthodoxy on the world, it was instead a reaction to long periods of state persecution that all heresies justified. If divinity and divine energy are not independent, operating outside of human channels, then it can be “created” and controlled. It is papism and the essence of totalitarianism.

In Panos Sophoulis' (2012) work *Byzantium and Bulgaria, 775-831*, we read a adept description of this problem:

[T]he decision to prohibit icons also represented a reassertion of imperial authority. It was a statement by Leo [V] that he held the position of supremacy in mediating between God and men, and that, consequently, bishops, monks and icons themselves were no longer to be the dominant force they had become under Irene and Michael I, but were to come under the control, and if necessary, the ban of the emperor (Sophoulis, 248).

The issue is mediation. The church's role is not about “channeling” the uncreated grace of God for any purpose, but about pointing to where it always is. It serves to sanctify the nation, people, economy and state, not just the person. Nothing is left out of its purview. Nothing is to be removed from God's saving grace. It's no accident that both the Greek and Lutheran banning of icons was met with the simultaneous and identical justification for a centralized state control. This issue gets to the heart of heresy and the distinction between Orthodoxy and heresy.

Icons, among many other things, are mediators, expressions of uncreated grace. Grace is not something created by bishops then “dispensed” to the people. This is the error of errors: it's what separates heresy from Orthodoxy. This is the essence of what Khomiakov called the “Kushite” approach to the world: Formal, logical and external unities typify this view of the world. The idea that bishops, the state, or a pope decides where grace goes, and that he may summon such power as he sees fit, is a preposterous superstition, but cannot be more critical to understanding the world. The vocabulary of this “channeling” is different, but the idea of persons, rights or purpose being the domain or creation of the state is just one manifestation.

When icons – in the broad sense – are removed, so is the cultural and liturgical center of a

people. Without mediation, there can be no Christian culture, no Christian family or Christian state: what remains is a chasm between God and man that can only be bridged by the power of the state acting in God's "stead." This is Islam. Bishops occasionally play this role, distorting and destroying the entire purpose of Scripture. This is why Arianism was the policy of the statist and centralist throughout its history: God is a distant creator that establishes natural law and leaves it. It is then appropriated by those with the power to do so. The opposition is Chalcedon, a balance the material and spiritual, form and matter, word and meaning, inner and outer.

All heresy assumes either that a) the divine has no relation to the material world, or b) that the material world is unreal. For either of these, then there is no limit on the power and action of the state, capital or any elite whatsoever. It is agnosticism's root, since there is no way to show or "experience" something that, by its very nature, cannot be connected with anything man might cognize. Each heresy upsets this balance between the things of man and the things of God mediated by Christ as logos. The autonomous realm of God, and the other of man, acting independently, is essential for freedom of any kind.

II.

The question of "name worship," once understood correctly, points to a systematic intellectual crisis in western man specifically, but increasingly on global terms as well. The entire controversy is being so mishandled, bungled and misappropriated that confusion is all that remains. It rests on a reductionist and positivist definition of "name" or "word." A "name" is not the phonetic pronunciation of a word, nor the shape of the letters on a page. It has nothing to do with language as a set of rules nor the preferred font used to print these symbols. Rather, a "name" or "word" is far broader, it is the content that these vessels contain; it is the reality behind the symbol.

There is no "name worship" controversy. The entire debate is prefaced on mass ignorance and presumption so intense that it delegitimizes much, if not all, of the present Orthodox mindset. This is because it is the gradual abandonment of the very language that theology uses to express itself. The patristic authors came of age in the Greco-Roman world. This can only be a matter of divine intervention in history. When educated Christians cannot agree on the definition or even existence of fundamental terms such as "physis," "nomos," "ousia," "prosopon," or "hypostasis," then theology has ceased to exist. Or at least, it cannot be communicated. There can be no Christianity if there is no way for it to be expressed.

The intellectual decay is the most obvious symptom of our era. Consider the following example: Brian Ephraim Fitzgerald's introduction to St. Basil's work on the Holy Spirit features an attempt to define the term "substance," "essence" or "ousia," without doubt one of the cardinal conceptions of patristic thought, classical metaphysics and even basic cognition:

For the ease of the reader, the terms "essence" and "person" have been used, which do not obscure the meaning of the concepts explained. But to understand these concepts more clearly, and to understand the theological contribution of St. Basil and the Cappadocian Fathers more aptly, it is good to have a basic understanding of the actual terms they used. . . [Ousia] is the being, essence, or substance of a thing, namely the material of which it consists. It can refer both to the substance of an individual item, or to the substance shared by several items, e.g., the golden lamp-stand or the coins of gold. Here gold is the essence of the

things mentioned (12).

To say the least, any Freshman philosophy major will not recognize this as a definition of “essence” or any of its synonyms. In fact, it is a definition of the opposite of essence, namely a quality or “accident” which is so named only because it is not important to the essential nature of a thing. This is the equivalent of an auto mechanic not being familiar with the meaning of “internal combustion” or a farmer having no idea what “manure” is used for.

Gold in the example above would be the “matter” of a thing and hence irrelevant to its essence. “Ousia” is the nature of an object. A lamp is a human artifact not found directly in nature, so its essence would be identical with its purpose. A lamp's essence, therefore, is to give artificial light. The material from which it's made is precisely that which is not included in its essence.

Mr. Fitzgerald claims a doctoral degree (but no mention of its field), is a clergyman, and sees himself as a teacher of patristic truths. That he cannot define one of the most basic concepts of any thought, let alone reading the church fathers, should suffice to show the crisis of ignorance and relativism affecting not just theology, but the existence of any clear thought. Worst of all, it seems that his colleagues have yet to inform him of his error. He remains an important theologian of the Syrian Orthodox in America.

One of the more unsettling problems with all of this is that nothing in the debate is denuded completely of specialized terminology. When something like this becomes a matter for public and popular debate, nothing of its classical content will remain. The job of the competent metaphysician is to stay as far as possible from the blog posts and the Syrian Orthodox as possible.

Another example of this disaster is the recent exchange of letters between Nikolai Stromsky and a Fr. Panagiotes over the “name” controversy. The only thing here that concerns us is how Plato, a name bandied about in these discussions, is clearly distorted, showing another parody of intellectual life in the church. Stromsky quotes Fr. Panagiotes as stating:

Many of [the name worshipers] argued that, since according to the ancient Greek philosopher, Plato, the name of an object exists before the object itself does, so the name of God must pre-exist before the world was created, and that it [the Name] cannot be anything but God Himself. Among other things, this was thought to mean that knowledge of the secret name of God alone allows one to perform miracles. A similar concept exists in Jewish Kabbalah and in Buddhism.” (Stromsky, answer to Bishop Photius of Marathon, November 2011).

Now, for someone who has, for many years, poured over the texts and commentaries of classical Greek and Roman philosophy, nothing in the above quote is accurate. In fact, it's a muddled mess of pretension. Of course, Plato never said any such thing. The name and the object are never the same, even if the object is fictional. Any x is a manifestation of divine energy which is dependent upon the spiritual world, that of the Real, the world of the Forms. In creation, all is flux, all is unstable; but the role of reason is to make sense out of this, utilizing Forms or archetypes from a realm that is not in constant motion. The realm of Being and Truth. Without this, no knowledge is possible. If the Forms are denied, all that remains is power, not truth. Without the connection to the spiritual world of Forms, “reason” becomes mere pragmatism and

is usually as a consequence incorrect, capricious and driven by passion.

Fr. Panagiotes is the typical amateur in a difficult field. Its typical marks are simplistic reasoning, the use of vague language, and most of all, sweeping conclusions that seem to have no connection to any data presented.

The “Greek philosopher Plato” allegedly argues that the name of a thing exists “prior” to the actual observable. The terminology says very little, since it might mean that it is logically “prior” or “before” the sensible thing. That is, the archetype of any x can exist without any individual x-es and thus is logically prior to it. That the priest here does not know that such confusion is common, he leaves it vague.

Later in the paragraph, he means “before” as temporally and chronologically “before” rather than as logically prior. This is a common mistake on collegiate philosophy papers and is often met with a lecture on the problem of time. This is the issue: it is fairly difficult for the modern American, regardless of his education, to leave the mentality of official nominalism or “empiricism.” Plotinus or St. Gregory of Nyssa describes the descent of the world from the One as it overflows with content until the world goes from the nous to the more fragmented world of Forms, which is the realm of Platonic archetypes. From then, it becomes more mixed with matter until at the lowest, it is matter and flux.

This is a problem because it is not a description of a temporal sequence. All of these levels exist at the same time and each causes and is caused by the other. Even our language and logic assumes a series of steps until an answer is reached. This is a human trait because we are embodied, and nothing universal can have a body. Bodies are things, observable objects.

The rest of the quote from Fr. Panagiotes Carras is one big non-sequitur. To have the “secret” name of God, if his understanding was correct, is to be God, not to “perform miracles.” The name is God is his description, and hence to know it and to pronounce it is the magician's proof of his dominance over “god.” This sort of “vibrational” theory is found in the Zohar, and because of that, all over the Renaissance. That is, that the pronunciation of the name, or certain sounds, imitates the vibrations spoken when “god” first brought all things into being through his voice. This is the only idea that the writer here can be referencing. This shows that, when an intelligent and no doubt good priest leaves his field and begins speaking about highly controversial, technical and specialized areas that most academic philosophers have never heard of, it can poison the discussion and destroy and potential for truth to settle the problem.

More importantly, this most certainly is not what “name worshipers” believe. Other than Alexei Losev (whose approach is different but not “name worship”), this writer has never come across a writer of any sort espousing the the vibrational or any other theory that would identify the “word” denoting the Supreme Being to, in fact, be that Supreme Bring. If I discover such a person, I will require many of my Orthodox brothers to have an intervention and get this person into the nearest long term psychiatric facility.¹

This is the problem: comments like this from Fr. Panagiotes or anyone leaving their own field to enter a radically different one can create a situation where many of the Orthodox really believe that “name worship” is the actual worship of letters and sounds.

The two examples mentioned here are most certainly not a way to demean anyone. It is not a claim to some arcane, secret knowledge by this author. It is, however, proof of the

1 The Jewish Philo and his school from Alexandria held to some version of the “word” as the literal pronunciation of God that creates through vibration, but this was only to eliminate Christ as logos and to reduce Him to vibrations – a deliberate insult.

differences between a lifetime of suffering and struggle to master an extremely difficult field of study as opposed to the desire to sound smart. Most of all, this sort of amateurism demonstrates how its errors can destroy the chance of getting to the truth. When basic concepts, ideas and theories are not known, then it is little more than the blind leading the blind. In this case, the blind men are deliberately so, have blinded themselves through a defective reasoning faculty and personal arrogance. It also derives from the sense that a bishop is the “leader” of the church rather than just another wretched sinner like this author. It is hardly unreasonable to demand that highly technical issues not be debated by just anyone, since it does nothing but muddy the waters and cause terminological and logical confusion that can destroy parishes and entire churches.

There is no worship of a “name” or a “word.” It is not advocated anywhere. The problem is when the instant-historian fails to realize that terms such as “word” have many meanings, and these change over time, it is very easy for to conflate them all indiscriminately. Terms such as “word” or “name” can refer to a) a set of letters of a specific language, b) the pronunciation of these verbally, c) the social understanding of the word when stated in discussion, d) the meaning, or content the word exists to communicate, e) the connotation of the word as contrasted to its simpler denotation, or f) most comprehensive of all, the full content of the meaning, social context and historical circumstance of any word's usage. This is just to name a few.

In other words, no name or word exists in isolation, as it is an infinitely plastic thing that connects my consciousness, an object and the rest of the cosmos in countless ways. The mere utterance of the word “Barbados” does not give us any experience that someone living there might have. Words are highly limited and can only express a tiny amount of experience relative to the whole, and even this is dependent on the clarity of thought and presentation.

The concept of language has tormented philosophy for almost the entirety of the 20th century. As a field, it is massive, abstruse and sometimes impenetrable. If the names of God (or any symbol denoting him) were to be claimed as, in itself, divine, then “name worship” would be a form of mental illness, not a theological heresy. Language is the last field that should be the subject of debate in the church. Is it possible that some people's salvation depends on the statements of the likes of Fr. Panagiotis?

The upshot of all this is that the “word” used to express a meaning is a temporary, contingent and historically relative object. However, this does not mean the word is an arbitrary invention. The English language has changed so much and so often that words common two or three centuries ago are not used today, or have had their meaning so radically altered as to make them dangerous. Some of my favorite examples include “law,” “family,” “love,” “state,” and “myth.”

These words are in common use today, but they also have little relation to their use in the patristic period or the the middle ages. The positivist idea has taken these complex symbols and reduced them to the simplest and most banal denotations. Hence, the word is now changed totally and rendered useless. But this also removes the immense array of ideas that it is meant to express. This also means that discussions about them are often very confusing.

III.

In Chapter IV of his most infamous book, Fr. Anthony Bulatovich writes:

When a person, driven by the grace of the divine, will work hard and spare no effort, time or interest to call upon God's sacred name in the Jesus prayer. . .with a

strong consciousness of his own weakness and need of God's help . . . The Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, so to speak, is present as if it were embodied in the man – people in this state often and clearly feel a strong presence of Christ himself in his name in the soul. This feeling of the Lord's presence and His name merges into one's being and identity, and eventually, one cannot distinguish one from the other (Bulatovich, Ch 4).

This passage is striking because first, it suggests that this is a feeling, not necessarily a real presence, but a mystical one. It is “generated” by the repetition of the name under the conditions of true Orthodox hesychasm and virtue. Eventually, third, it integrates itself with the man at prayer, and over time, one cannot be distinguished from another.

While certainly no endorsement of itself, there is no clear reason to reject this, and no clear reason to believe that it is anything other than a strong mystical state brought upon the grace of the name when properly joined to an Orthodox mindset.

Grace and energy are synonyms. Gregory of Sinai speaks of the energies of the Holy Spirit made “actual” by grace. Energy is “prompted by grace” as he writes in his *Signs of Grace and Delusion*. Palamas makes it clear that logos is the divine energy found in creation, and it is that which makes the natural order perceivable and describable.

In Palamas' *Topics on Natural and Theological Science*, he speaks of these energies as “divided” and granted to each according to his devotion (sec 69). He also states that the “energy is accessible to us creatures; for according to the theologians, it is indivisibly divided, whereas the divine nature remains totally undivided.” In section 74 he writes, “God's grace and energy are accessible to each one of us.” And in dealing with Moses and Aaron, they are both “vessels of divine energy” which makes of them “living icons. . .by grace rather than assimilation”(76).

Again, Palamas writes in Chapter 93 of his *150 Chapters*: This very radiance and divinizing energy of God, by which the beings that participate are divinized, is a certain divine grace but not the nature of God. Here, energy is a type of grace, but certainly not different from it. Again in 110,

This is therefore the object of participation for those deemed worthy of divinizing grace. Listen then once again to Chrysostom who taught both doctrines most clearly, namely, that it is the energy and not the substance which is participated and that it is the energy which is indivisibly divided and participated, and not the imparticipable substance from which the divine energy proceeds.

This is a clear statement showing that Palamas is using grace and energy interchangeably. The energy of any substance is its operations. It is the object in motion, accomplishing what it has set out to do in accordance with its very nature. Energy, as it applies to our human struggle, is grace, or the power and presence of God. This activity is divine in that it is from God, but relative to humanity, it is not the presence of God as if He were present Himself. He is present in his actions.

Again in Palamas, that grace and energy are one and the same is shown by this passage:

He who participates in the divine energy... becomes himself, in a sense, light; he is united with the light and with the light he sees in full consciousness all that

remains hidden for those who have not this grace; for the pure of heart sees God [the light] (Palamas, Sermon on the Feast of the Presentation of the Theotokos and cited by Lossky, 61, of the Image and Likeness of God).

The way its worded, Palamas uses “energy,” “light” and “grace” as interchangeable. While they might not be absolutely identical concepts, they are so close as to render this wording harmless. In a similar vein, St. Basil says the same in his analysis of the Trinity. In the context of denoting a common nature though the observation of a common “will” among the persons of the Trinity, St. Basil writes:

What, then, is my argument? In delivering the Faith of Salvation to those who are being made disciples in His doctrine, the Lord conjoins with Father and with Son the Holy Spirit also. That which is conjoined once I maintain to be conjoined everywhere and always. There is no question here of a ranking together in one respect and isolation in others. In the quickening power whereby our nature is transformed from the life of corruption to immortality, the power of the Spirit is comprehended with Father and with Son, and in many other instances, as in the conception of the good, the holy, the eternal, the wise, the right, the supreme, the efficient, and generally in all terms which have the higher meaning, He is inseparably united. Wherefrom I judge it right to hold that the Spirit, thus conjoined with Father and Son in so many sublime and divine senses, is never separated (Letter 439, to Eustatius the Physican, sec 5).

The argument of course, is to show that the Trinity has a single will, and hence, God's power should always be named by a unity of action. It is clear here that by “power” Basil means what will later be better known as “energy.” It is this power of the Spirit in changing our human nature, that is, to become deified, is an action of the trinity. The Spirit is “united” with the rest of the Trinity and hence, terms such as “right” or “wise” are present in this “higher sense,” that is, the trinitarian sense. The terms, so long as they are used in this sense, are also not separate from this power. Nothing here again, suggests that the name is God, but that the power so represented is, and the name is connected with that.

That energy and grace are one and the same, Basil continues in the same letter:

On the other hand to agree that even the world beyond us is governed by the power of the Spirit, as well as by that of the Father and of the Son, is to advance a contention, supported on the plain testimony of what is seen in human life. Identity of operation in the case of Father and of Son and of Holy Ghost clearly proves invariability of nature. It follows that, even if the name of Godhead does signify nature, the community of essence proves that this title is very properly applied to the Holy Spirit (sec 7).

Again, the world acts as an icon of the spirit: whenever something is named collectively or universally, it normally denotes a common operation and thus, a common nature. The operations of the Trinity, that is, what is Good for man, bespeaks the essence of the trinity. Since these operations are normally what is meant by God's “grace” or “power,” it is the same as

“energy” at least for all practical purposes.

Finally, in section 8:

There is, then, a distinction to be observed between the essence, of which no explanatory term has yet been discovered, and the meaning of the names applied to it in reference to some operation or dignity. That there should be no difference in the operations we infer from the community of terms. But, we derive no clear proof of variation in nature, because, as has been said, identity of operations indicates community of nature.

For us, no name can be granted to the essence of God but to the operations or energies of the same. That's close enough, since we know an x largely by its effects. If the essence cannot be named, then the energies (or its action) can be. At the same time, these energies cannot be radically different from the essence, or else, as Basil would argue, the essence would be different from the energies named.

The Moscow synod condemned “name glorification” in 1913 this way:

The name of God is holy and also gives the faithful a verbal designation of enlightened and holy beings. The name of God is divine because God revealed it to us and it elevates our mind. . . In prayer, in particular the Jesus prayer, the name of God and God Himself are the inseparable – but this is only for prayer and within our own hearts. In theology, the name of God is merely a name and not God Himself. . . .The miracles of the church are not performed by the name, but by the prayer of the church.

This is perfectly understandable, since no one is referring to the name as a mere verbal or written mark. In her *The Divine Name Controversy*, Tatiana Senina (Nun Kassia) writes in reference to the formula “the name of God is God himself” that “In my opinion, this formula evoked and continues to evoke misunderstanding because people are accustomed to understand as “names” only conventional signs and symbols that could of course not be identified with the object named.” This is very well put. Yet, the problem of poor word choice remains. Why state the doctrine in this strange and leading way? In other words, knowing that modernity has rendered the concept of a “name” radically different from the patristic use of the term, why use it at all?

Fr. Anthony himself argues,

In the Names of Christ we have, so to speak, the created shell – that is, the sounds and letters – with which we express Truth. These sounds and letters are different in every language, and they will not carry over into eternity, and are not united in any way with the Lord Jesus Christ, because when we, speaking about the Name, have in mind created human words with which we express ideas about God and about Christ, then it is appropriate to speak of the presence of God in His Name (Hieroschemamonk Anthony (Bulatovich). *My Battle with the Onomatoclasts on the Holy Mountain*, 117).

This is the “name” worshiping position. There is no doubt that the ignorant will describe this as some “divinity” adhering to the name, but that is not a new error. The only thing that Fr. Antony could be referring to above is the Truth that the name manifests or communicates. If this is the case, then there is no issue at all. There is no “name worshiping” controversy.

Fr. Anthony repeats elsewhere:

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)

Fr. Anthony might not express himself perfectly, but it is clear that he is speaking of the form and matter of a theological thing. A sacrament is both the grace that exists independently of the actions as well as the actions, rituals and words themselves. For example, one communes with God through the holy Eucharist. However, this is not the only way one can commune with God. Hence, the Eucharist contains the grace, the very presence, of Christ that might be found elsewhere. This does not permit the priest to then substitute any material for bread and wine. These elements have been chosen for their universal applicability and Christ's own examples.

The same might be said of names and descriptions that have this sort of “power” by virtue of the grace found within the formal elements such as language, gesture or movement. There is no issue here, no controversy. It is a problem of a highly nuanced vocabulary and logical structure in the hands of those who do not appreciate its depth. It is, rather than a theological controversy, largely an issue of personal incompetence and laziness: its the ham-handed performing surgery, or those with tin-ears explaining Mozart. The issue is over the expression of certain concepts that, as always, require patience and close analysis, not emotional condemnations.

The confusion was made worse by the Ecumenical Patriarch's order of April 5th 1913, where he accused this movement “of equating hypostatically the Name of Jesus with Jesus Himself.”

In 1918, the defenders of the “name worshipers” stated,

[O]ur opponents, with means that we are unable to comprehend, have been transforming an absolutely Orthodox veneration of the Name of God and our expression: “the Name of God is God Himself” – into an expression that is unacceptable to us: “the very Name is God” – something we have never said.

This is the full aspect of the issue. Certain parties seek personal justification in the sins and failings of others. Its an occupational hazard for the clergy and for lay theologians alike. It is also more and more common as Orthodox society remains less than a shadow of its former self and as nominalism does not only change thought patters, but these thoughts themselves.

Elder Illarion writes in a crucial passage:

Certainly one can also pray to the Son of God without the so-called Jesus prayer, even without words – just by a striving of the mind and heart. But firstly this is an achievement of those advanced in the spiritual life, absolutely unattainable for the majority; and secondly even in such contemplative, refined, and immaterial prayer the name of Jesus Christ cannot be excluded. Otherwise to what would the prayer adhere and to what would it attach itself? (76)

Finally, earlier in the book, he relates this to the Jesus prayer specifically,

But one must know that it is not possible to do any work well immediately. Everyone knows this by experience -- how much time, effort, and trouble it has cost each of us to learn the work he does in life. Just so, prayer, which is the highest science -- heavenly, divine, holy, uniting us with our Creator -- necessarily must pass through the initial stages of one's learning and getting accustomed to it, in a condition extremely weak, not corresponding to its great dignity. But this must not serve for us as a cause and pretense for leaving and despising it. (48)

These and many other qualifications show that Illarion, in referring to name, was actually referring to what used to be the domain of “symbol.” In a sense, a word is a symbol, but “word” or “name” are terms that have a far broader ancient understanding that is based on Plato's doctrine of Forms. Either way, the name, the orthography or pronunciation are not God.

Gregory Palamas is trotted out by many, often without the slightest idea of the ontological verbiage he uses as the foundation of his theology. Energy, as the grace of God, is not divine. It derives from his divinity, but it is not divine. If it were divine, then all that has been created would be God as well. Names, therefore, are human creations that mediate between God and man for the sake of imparting knowledge. They express some aspect of the eternal truth about God. They are “graces” as well. Palamas writes in chapter 144:

The substance of God is entirely unnameable since it is completely incomprehensible. Thus it is given names on the basis of all its energies although one of the names there differs from another in its denotation. For on the basis of each and all the names nothing other is named than the Hidden One, while 'what it is' is in no way known. But in the case of the energies each of the names has a different meaning, for who does not know that creating, ruling, judging, guiding providentially and God's adopting us as sons by his grace are different from one another? Therefore, those who say that these natural divine energies are created because they differ from one another and from the divine nature, what else but God do they drag down to the level of a creature? For things that are created, ruled, judged and all such things in general are creatures, but not the Creator, and Ruler

and Judge, nor even judging, ruling and creating in themselves, which are realities observed in his nature (Palamas, 150 Chapters).

First of all, the “thing” that makes God God cannot be named since it cannot be conceived. It cannot be named also because there would be no vocabulary in human life that could even approach it. Second, a name is given to its energies in the sense that God's action is not his substance, but imparts a truth when God's actions are observed. Third, Palamas argues that these energies are not created because God as substance is not created. The effects of this power, this operation in the world, are quite human and comprehensible. There, at least, mankind has a vocabulary that can convey some important information about God's actions, to wit, their effects in the world. This and only this is denoted with a name is attached to God's actions such as “powerful” or “just.”

IV.

Another example of the misuse of technical vocabulary is Vladimir Moss' work rejecting “name worship.” He quotes Gregory Lourié as saying:

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. (quoted from Moss, 27).

Moss concludes from this that Lourié is intrinsically connecting a glass cup with the common term “glass” as if they are identical. No one could or does say this. The deposed bishop only says that if the term “glass” were removed from human circulation, there would be no other way to refer to a cup except by some long, awkward phrase he cites above. You cannot “speak of it as a glass” because, in this example, the term does not exist. It is hypothetical. This is awkwardly phrased in the first sentence with the phrase “take away.” All he means is the absence of the simple, one-syllable term “glass.” He is not making an ontological statement.

Now, the problem developed when certain hierarchs, which under the conditions of Russia at the time, had little by way of canonical validity, stated,

On Athos the quarrels are continuing concerning the book of the fallen-into-prelest' schema-monk Ilarion, *Na Gorakh Kavkaza* – highly related to khlystism, which like a fire has now engulfed all of Russia. The essence of this khlystic prelest' consists in their calling some or other cunning and sensual peasant an incarnated Christ and some or other filthy old woman the Mother of God and worshiping them in place of God, after which they betray themselves to carnal (*svalnomu*) sin. This is the delusion into which Fr. Ilarion is directing his foolish followers, himself not realizing it, we hope.

This sort of ranting is the only reason there is a “name worshiping” controversy. This is precisely the danger when the weak, ignorant or simplistic begin to attach labels to doctrines they only dimly understand. It was rhetoric like this that created the “heresy” of name worship, since it repeats the strange argument that this is some sort of shamanism. From this, it is assumed that, since Rasputin was a reputed member of the Khlysty, he too was a “name worshiper.” Of course, that is all based on whether or not this idea is in fact, from the Khlysty themselves.

Vladimir Moss is far from his field when he tries to tackle these issues. While doing admirably well for much of the analysis, the problem is the conventional idea of “name.” Now, Moss is struggling in the beginning of Part II of his paper to comprehend the classical conception of “name” or “word.” He goes halfway, using elements of one and elements of the modern nominalist idea. Neither Moss nor Lourié fully grasp it. The ancient understanding of “name” or “word” is accurately but idiosyncratically summarized by Lloyd Gerson, dealing with names or symbols in the Platonic tradition:

The referents of names in the sensible or material world – the data that the theory of Forms seeks to explain – are essentially images. An essential image is both one that is not adventitiously an image and one that is necessarily related to that of which it is an image. Take away the Form of Largeness and we cannot say that the largeness in a large thing is essentially an image; it could only be adventitiously an image of some idea in the mind of a maker. As we have seen, there is nothing untoward in there being multiple copies of one paradigm. That they are made according to a paradigm is adventitious and produces adventitious sameness, the stipulative kind produced when we say, for example, that two people are from the same place. Real identity in difference, by contrast, requires essential imagery. An essential image is one whose entire being is to be an image (Gerson, 92)

Now, the “image” is the key concept. An image is a reflection, a pictograph, a complex “symbol” that summarizes some of the key elements of an x that make it an x and only an x. “Symbolic” in modern usage is almost identical with non-substantial. Of course, symbol, much like “name” in a different context is not a non-substantial thing, but a complex of graphic contours that manifest, but are not identical with, the Formal objects involved. So here, the deflation of the term makes any reference to the “symbolic” the same as a reference to nothing.

Now Moss seemingly misses Lourie's accurate connection of the denotative and connotative elements found in any description. This is essential: mere denotation is what moderns often mean by “symbol” or “name.” Moss is not willing to move further than the ordinary, denotative concept of words. Moss even goes so far as to argue that the Hebrew translation of the name “Yahweh” is a mere “tautology” and hence, communicates nothing. This ignores the cardinal ideas of apophatic thought. In the classical mind, it is not a tautology. Ontologically, God is showing himself to be the Being of being, or that which being requires for its existence (but also cannot be an object of experience for this very reason). God is the fundamental element of all things because He is uncreated. He exists only due to himself and requires no “other” to complete him. He is necessary, we are not, we are contingent.

Moss will not entertain the idea that a “name” is not merely an accidental link between, say, Vladimir Moss and the name Vladimir. In no way is his name “Vladimir” identical to Vladimir Moss as a human being. That is absurd. Names speak to the culture that creates them,

hence making them something other than arbitrary sounds. A “name” is not a “word,” as the concept of *logos* does not refer to words in a book. The fact is that Moss is prefacing his entire case on the fact that a “word” is just a sound. While this is the normal denotation today, it was not the case in the ancient or medieval worlds.

Moss' error is on page 29: “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 Man are one and the same word and one and the same name.” This is very true, so long as we are not speaking of the ontology of the classical world. The term “symbol” is used identically. Today, the word, similar to “myth” has no bearing on the classical conception.

Moss, however, muddies the waters further. Here is an unfortunate passage:

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 worshiping a different Jesus (Moss, 32).

Again, Moss is assuming that “names” and “symbols” are the words that conventional, daily, or practical language assigns to a class of things. It is not. Like so much else, the ancient or medieval grasp of an object has little relation to its modern, debased and nominal usage.

The Old Believers, specifically the more radical priestless sects, were making the same accusation to the Petrine synod. No intellectual in that movement would ever argue that the new spelling is a “different Jesus.” They would have to argue that the Hebrew Joshua is not Jesus at all. Of course, no one is saying this. Rather the Old Belief was making the claim that even the name of Christ was not open to revision and that, most of all, it would cause confusion.

Moss tries to make sense out of the created/uncreated distinction that the original name-worshippers used. He quotes what has already cited above as a refutation of the whole thesis. Moss types it out and ignores it from there on. The man has just stated “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 conventional expressed, then we say that God is present in His Name.”

Yet again, this only works on the condition that Moss has defined “name” or “word” correctly. The use of terms like “uncreated” are of no import. Moss has just – again – refuted the silly idea that the name worshippers worship the “J” or the “e” as elements of the divine essence in the world. Moss, having missed the purpose of his own reference, then states that Fr. Anthony's denial of this very thesis causes so many additional problems, including the question “what is the relationship between the created name and the Uncreated Energy-Name? Does not the one name the other?” The answer is simple: the former is not a word, but a complex, conceptual and even affective symbol. The latter is a word, a conventional marker and nothing else. It's not difficult. The problem of interpretation is that the word “name” meant something different many centuries ago than it does presently.

Moss then provides another citation from Anthony:

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” . . . these are words. Then there is “идея-благо”, and finally “Благо-Бог, триипостасный.”

Misinterpreting this again, Moss asks the question: “‘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.”

Moss adds the phrase “to the present writer's knowledge” so as to avoid getting tangled if he has radically missed the point. Moss is missing the entire argument and mangling it beyond recognition because he does not know what a “symbol” is. He does not know what either a “word” or “myth” is in the ancient or medieval conception. These words do not denote the same thing in modern usage, and in many ways, they conceal far more than they reveal. Since Moss is using these terms as a modern, he misses the entire argument.

It is reasonable that one argue that the word, the letters and pronunciation, are connected to the object. This is merely to say that the word or phrase that denotes an object is not totally arbitrary. So biology uses older Latin descriptions in naming species of animal, flower or any organic life. My favorite example in another area is the term “mortgage.” As is well known, it does not mean “death pledge” but rather a “dead pledge.” It's because the “dead” element that was non-organic was the money itself, in essence a variation on a distorting rent. Since it is unnatural that metal create more metal as if it were organic, the “dead” pledge referred to this element of usury. On the other hand, the more rational concept would be for a loan to be identical to capital and hence, the profits accruing from it. This was called a “living pledge.” It is based on the natural life of human need, free exchange and a loan for value, not merely for money as such.

The above example is telling here. First, it shows that words are part of a huge complex of images and conceptions that provide it with its meaning and context. Outside this, words are just random sounds. Second, the terms used have a relation to the practice described, mediated in this way. The problem is that now the word is meaningless, since usury is now considered legitimate “business.” So third, the vulgarity of capitalist society has rendered the real meaning of a “mortgage” hidden in the mists of a cultural type only few can even get glimpses of.

Now, taking these ideas, we can see the problems here: “In a name Fr. John of Kronstadt and the Holy Hierarch Gregory of Nyssa distinguish two aspects: the external – the individual sounds, and the internal - the thought united with these sounds. But both the one and the other he considers to be an image...” Now, this is not exactly revelation. All language has its corresponding thought, and as we saw with the term mortgage, and entire historical, moral and economic set of understandings that make sense out of the word. Since these no longer exist, the word seems bizarre.

Moss then ensures that no one will detect his elementary errors by taking a very simple idea and creating a flow chart so bizarre that it can only exist to confuse and hence, protect Moss from what this writer is presently doing. Moss, largely given up making sense out of this, creates a pseudo-academic typology that misses the point of everything he's just cited but misunderstood. Here is the gist of it,

It seems, therefore, that we must distinguish between the levels of reality: the name-word (letters or sounds), the name-idea (the thought united with these letters or sounds) and the object named. Thus we get the following expanded schema: “wisdom”, a name-word? (a) “wisdom”, a name-idea (b) Jesus Christ; “wisdom”, a name-word (c) “wisdom”, a name-idea? (a) Divine Wisdom; “wisdom”, a name-word? (c) “wisdom”, a name-idea? (b) human wisdom (Moss, 35).

First of all, this is entirely unnecessary and is written (or so it seems) to create an air of academic theorizing. Such a typology exists in no work on the philosophy of language and has never been made into a sequence like this. It adds confusion, since the usage of these terms has already be ill-defined. Second, he is not speaking of “levels of reality” here at all, but the arrangement of language among human beings.

Third, what it really says is ridiculously simple: when we speak of something, we have a word, the definition or the conceptual content (which Moss strangely refers to as a “thought”), and the object being spoken of, or the referent. This can be described to a 2nd grade class. Moss' approach takes the simplest and most elementary distinctions and uses Greek sequential letters/numbers to make it seem esoteric and “off limits” to the hoi polloi. Moss often has a sharp mind (when he's not plagiarizing this author), but he's bitten off more than he could chew here. Instead of asking someone with the requisite background, he's doing the “jack of all trades” dance that is adding more chaos to this “name worshiping” disaster.

V.

Vladimir Ern's Criticism of the 1913 Synod decree is one of the more interesting philosophical treatments in the 100 years since its release. After summarizing the Synod's opinion concerning the mental lack of separation between God and his name, he writes, in part VIII of his essay:

In other words, we need to magically create an illusion of identity [between the two], which actually does not exist. On the advice of the Synod, the act of prayer is a subjective mental state that is to build a mental idol of God. In other words, it is a regulative, rather than constitutive, element of God – in Kantian terms. It is the mind's own creation. It is an ideal fiction. Truly this is reminiscent of the “image-less” prayer in Soloviev's preface to the Three Conversations: “My home; my weakness! Save me!” The only difference is that the illiberal peasants had before him all the same vulnerability, a primitive, but real message from a real external being. And through “the window” of this inscrutable, vast uncertainty, strange, but not completely alien, the world could experience a higher and “saving Reality.” The more Enlightened writers of the Synod's condemnation closed the “hole” that communicates with the outside world, and with the rigor of true prayer, these Kantians reduced to almost nothing the individual cell in which to imprison our sinful empirical consciousness, “my home, save me!” This “home” the consciousness, is conceived by these writers as one “with no windows, no doors,” ie, without any access to God. When in such idealistic “houses” suffer in a precarious existence as “prisoners of spirit” when, become bored own prison,

they start banging their head against the wall in them, and in this narrow range of [merely] individual consciousness plays out a real tragedy – one without God and without anything real, where the judge and the victim have yet to learn to create the image of God himself, and they do not even wish to have any assimilation to God, then any outside observer will experience the greatest pity as the word condemnation freezes on his lips, for the kind of suffering our Redeemer experienced is always rebuked.

Ern's rhetoric is difficult to translate, but the argument is that the weakness of the human mind – summarized in that old folk-saying – can never be remedied. It is not experienced by the mind since there is no connection between prayer and God. The argument Ern makes here is that there is a definition of God (that is, the “regulative” principle) that is radically separate from the reality of God (that is, the “constitutive” principle). The former is all the mind can reach. The latter is not present in prayer at all, regardless of the names or words used. Only the dogmatic definitions are present, not God himself. Because of this, the mind is seen here as closed off – a peasant hut that has no doors and windows, and leads to insanity.

“Name Worship” is the amateurish inability to understand how the terms “name” or “word” can be used in many senses that cannot be taken for granted. The “word” in the vulgar sense of letters and phonetics is not at issue: no one is “worshiping” that. The “words” used, that is, the terms, in any conception of theology are highly relative. Now, the words used, while contingent, are necessary as vehicles to communicate – often poorly – the eternal truths of God. No one, of course, disagrees with this. Believe it or not, this is the “name worshiping” position.

To argue that anyone, no matter how retrograde mentally, is claiming that God is contained in a few letters needs to be evaluated for tumors. That such a thing is insisted upon by those condemning specific leaders of the “name glorification” school is both comical and unnecessary. It is true that some sloppy language can be found in the writings of these “name magnifiers” but that is always the case and is irrelevant.

Heresy too is important in this respect in that they come into existence, almost without exception, by overthrowing this very distinction. As always, things like the “divinity” of Christ has infinite, practical, and very utilitarian consequences. The “word” is really all culture: art, iconography, music, incense, vestments, embroidery patterns, climates and calendar developments are all “words” in that they are all “symbols” that use material and contingent entities to express elements of absolute and unchanging truths.

Since the modern world is based on nominalist ontology, the use of words has become far more a form of manipulation than of expressing truth. The nominalist idea destroys all knowledge, contradicts itself in its own formulation, and is a negative “weapon” used to break down cultures in hopes to plant the revolutionary new order in its place.

It holds that universal concepts, generalizations, abstractions and archetypes are just words. Words like “grace” cannot actually refer to anything since there is nothing that exists universally or transcendently. “Materialism” is one such universal and archetypal ideology. “Material” in its ideology is the substratum of everything, especially language and culture. It's all reducible to a utilitarian need. Materialism fails when it must argue that infinity is potentially present in each atom. Matter then becomes identical with “God,” leading to some comic conclusions.

Symbolism is identical with culture, rationality and truth. A word such as “love” has been

reduced to either the sex act or some saccharine indulgence. It means that “love” has no meaning. Nominalism argues that it literally has no meaning, since it has no referent. Love might be a convenient abbreviation to a series of acts that a society, or its elite, come to believe re “loving” things. But there is nothing inherent in “love” that a priori excludes anything. There is no inherent meaning as such, and hence, words are only referring to themselves and each other. They do not refer to things, since such a reference is to imply a universal.

SA Askoldov, in his *Thought and Reality*, argues that concepts stand for things in the same sense that money stands for labor. There is nothing suggesting these be things that are sensed or things that take up space. The content of the concept is what defines the perimeter. Nominalism is unworkable largely because there must be a universal entity that can make sense out of change. An x changes over time. The nominalist cannot then say that, after this change, the x remains an x. That would imply a universal reality beyond the mind of the observer.²

Rather than the connotation-denotation dyad used above, Askoldov uses the idea of “meaning disclosure” in the sense of a cosmic and cultural context for any utterance. Words overlap because there has never been a “pure” language where each word and gesture retains a well outlined purpose and definition. Words disclose their meaning relative to genre. Hence, in theology, it is clear that the context is nothing but a pure metaphor. We cannot picture “grace” but it is known by its affects and its source. The primary meaning of a word is that which it is normally associated with both by present users and its earlier definitions. The secondary meaning, its less formal meaning, is its cultural impact. By itself, the Latin “negro” means anything that is “black.” In American life, the term has different secondary meanings that often totally overwhelm its harmless original purpose.

The point is that Askoldov is making the argument of this paper: “name worship” does not exist in the way in which it has been condemned. No one argues for the divine power of vibrations, or letters strung together on a page. On the other hand, the concept of Romanides and his school is that there can never be any such connection of grace and the world, since the material world is not commensurate – not even metaphorically – with God. It is precisely this school that takes issue with the “name glorifiers” since their essential argument is that the symbols used by the church are manifestations of Truth and are not merely arbitrary creations of men.

The nominalism of those following Fr. John Romanides argue agnosticism: human beings cannot know God and cannot love him. He might be “experienced” but this is too ethereal for much use. There is no basis for connections between God and man, and even logos is either created or a nominal entity. Moss, as an aside, has written a skillful critique of Romanides in this regard.³ Moss correctly cites Romanides as saying this essential statement:

No similarity whatsoever exists between the uncreated and the created, or between God and creation. This also means that no analogy, correlation, or comparison can be made between them. This implies that we cannot use created things as a means for knowing the uncreated God or His energy (quoted from Moss, 2008)

2 Аскольдов, СА (1914) Мысль и действительность. Путь

3 Romanides, Deification and the Image of God, 2008. He is criticizing the assumptions found in Romanides *Patristic Theology*. (Dalles, Oregon: Uncut Mountain Press, 2008).

This shocking statement is the essence of nominalism and cannot be reconciled with Christianity. Moss is correct, further, to ask the obvious question,

if there is no similarity whatsoever between God and His creation, why, when He created man, did He create Him in His “image and likeness”? And again: is not this likeness between God and man precisely the basis which makes possible the union between God and man, and man’s deification?

It should come as no surprise that it is precisely this school of thought that took great umbrage at the very existence of “name worship.” If something like a word can bridge the gap between created and uncreated when even the Feast of the Annunciation fails can only be the result of arrogance!

The well known Russian Platonist EN Trubetskoy argued that the fragmented and vulnerable human condition created the linguistic nexus to understand himself. It is not a matter of feeding the stomach, but a matter of understanding what “feed” or “stomach” is and how they help us to grasp the social whole.

Nominalism justified and enshrines fragmentation and mutual exclusion. This arbitrary and utilitarian individuation of the “real” is of course, fictitious. Yet, the scientific and industrial revolutions required it in order to function. Why is this? Because the Platonic universe, one of absolute truth, essence and its anti-type in material change and passion, cannot be manipulated at will. The nominal idea alone provides the justification for technology, or that drive to replace nature with “superior” human knowledge. This then leads to commercialization and “dollarization” of all things – existence itself is dissolved into the cash nexus. Or more accurately, the image of the cash nexus.

The concept Trubetskoy puts forth is that Christ, in containing this world of absolute Truth, brought it directly to the simple man. Such a person believes because it makes sense to him, but he will not be able to refute a materialist on her own terms. Christ obviated the need to be a lifelong philosopher to gain the highest truth. Christ carried it.

This is the essential refutation of nominalism, Protestantism and iconoclasm – the spiritual world of truth is balanced by its need to be communicated in physical, temporary and transitory form: words, symbols, pictures, pictographs or icons. These modes of expression are not special in any way: they exist because they work, they make communication easier. They are not the same as what they represent, nor are they entirely arbitrary.

VI.

This article has already gone on too long. It has argued that the issues raised by the Name Worshiping controversy are precisely those that should not be a matter of public concern. The simple reason is that the distinctions that have been brought up in this controversy are some of the most difficult and dense of the entire Orthodox tradition. Grace and energy, name and power, essence and operation are all Orthodox contributions to ontology.

The church must make use of metaphysics for the same reason it must make use of grammar, art, sociology and historical science: the faith is not confined to a set of experiences, its about the resurrection and transfiguration of all things. Metaphysics has never been an easy subject, but today in 2015 it is made impossible because the methods of cognition inherent in nominalism and positivism have truncated the names, definitions and natures of words. The

original purpose and use of words has now become mere handmaidens to industry, technology and self-interest. Mass society and mass communications have ensured that every possible argument on any possible subject has been made, meaning that searching for the truth is impossible. Even if the truth were found somewhere, the mental foundation for expressing it no longer exists.

Christ came at a time of decaying Platonism and Stoicism, this is not an accident. Christ came to finish these ontologies and show that all of them, in very important ways, are really about the logos. Christ was the logos accessible to all. This accessibility does not imply that speculation about it's nature and function should be open to all comers. In 2015, even the truth itself has no real way of being expressed.

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<http://www.pravoslav.de/imiaslavie/english/english.htm>