

## EPILOGUE

After the Bolshevik revolution the Russian church found other things to be more pressing than theological quarrels, and little more was heard of this one for several reasons. First of all, what began as private quarrels had escalated into churchwide controversy specifically because ecclesiastical authorities openly took stands, in the name of the whole Church, inconsistent with the Christian faith. But when the Moscow court dropped the requirement that imyaslavtsy repudiate in writing their faith in God's name in order to be received into communion with the church, those stands were effectively nullified, and so incentive for continued opposition to them was removed. Individual hierarchs did not abide by that decision, but this was a less pressing problem; false pronouncements made by individual bishops are everyday occurrences anyway and in any case are less harmful than falsehoods endorsed by the supreme authority of an autocephalous Orthodox Church. The latter situation calls for much more vigorous protest than the former.

In addition, the leading imyabortsy had one by one lost power or disappeared. The dissatisfaction in "higher circles" that had caused Abp. Antony to be dropped from the Holy Synod eventually reached Abp. Nikon as well. Here the nature of the "higher circles" can be more clearly ascertained: Niviere quotes a 1915 letter in which the grand duchess Elizaveta Fedorovna suggests to the tsar that Nikon be dropped from the Holy Synod because "He has on his conscience his sin of Athos." (367) Nikon was dropped from the Synod in 1915. Little more is heard of him, and he died not long thereafter, at the Trinity-Sergius monastery near Moscow in December of 1918.

Until the revolution Troitsky kept up his anti-imyaslavtsy propaganda but afterwards fled, leaving polemics about the name of God behind him. He then taught for a while at the University of Belgrade, later at the Orthodox Seminary of St. Sergius in Paris, and later in the Soviet Union at the Moscow Theological Academy. He died in 1973.

Abp. Antony, though dropped from the Holy Synod and demoted to the less important diocese of Khar'kov,<sup>64</sup> nevertheless remained quite powerful, and when the 1917 Council restored the office of patriarch he was among the three nominated to that office, from whom one was to be chosen by lots. But the lot fell to one of the other two, and not long after the revolution Abp. Antony abandoned his diocese and became the leader of an independent church group calling itself the "Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia." Ironically, of the Russian church and its offshoots, that group was the first to canonize Fr. John of Kronstadt and is so far the only one to canonize Tsar Nicholas II.

After the revolution Fr. Antony Bulatovich returned to his mother's estate of Lutsykovka where he lived in a small cabin, stayed in his monastic garb, and served as a priest for the local parish. In December of 1919 he was found near his cabin by some of his parishioners, shot in the head. His Soviet biographer ascribes this act to robbers; this is possible but is perhaps less probable than the surmise of Fr. Antony's sister:

... he was a friend, a great friend, of the peasants. The peasants *liked* him *always*; both during the revolution and before the revolution and aft[er] ... and they said that when he had a service in the local church, the church was overfull. Perhaps this displeased the Bolsheviks, that he was ... that he had such a religious influence -- and they destroyed him. ... They didn't arrest him. He was never arrested. ... Because he was extremely -- how do you say? -- democratic. In the real sense and best sense of this word. He was a democrat. He liked the soldier, he liked the simple heart, he said, "I like the simple people." He didn't like the sophisticated. He liked the ... plain ... truth. (Tape 4)

Revolutionary Russia was not a safe place for people who liked "plain truth." It is well known that the number of priests killed by the Bolsheviks reaches into five figures, so Mary Orbeliani's guess is not just a shot in the dark. In addition, it is hardly likely that robbers would go after a monk clothed in cassock and schema and living in a humble cabin, as these are the surest signs of poverty to be found in the Russian countryside. Finally, it is noteworthy that December of 1919 coincides with the advance of the Red Army towards Khar'kov. (See Niviere 370) In any case, Fr. Antony cannot have been less aware of the dangers inherent in staying to serve the

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<sup>64</sup>800 parishes vs. 1800 in Volynia; see Niviere 362. Ironically, the move made him Fr. Antony Bulatovich's archbishop since the latter's family estate of Lutsykovka was not far from Khar'kov.

spiritual needs of his local flock than were others in positions of spiritual responsibility who nevertheless fled to save their own necks; it would not be presumptuous to bestow on him the title of martyr for the faith.

As for the fate of Mt. Athos, although in May the Conference of London had endorsed the Russian project of turning over the peninsula to an international protectorate, the Conference of Bucharest in August of that year decided instead to recognize the Holy Mountain as annexed to Greece. That status has been maintained to the present day. How much the loss of a Russian majority affected this decision is difficult to say, but one thing is clear: the Russians' fear of what Greek sovereignty would mean for them had been quite justified. After the 1917 revolution the Greek government prohibited not only "repentant" imyaslavtsy but any Russian monks at all from settling on Athos, which policy it has maintained with rare exceptions up until the present day. And so the Russian population decline which began with the mass expulsions of July, 1913 accelerated and became irreversible. The Rossikon declined from its peak of nearly 2,000 monks to 560 in 1925, to 200 in 1940, and finally to about 24 which it has been able to maintain because a few monks have been allowed to move there relatively recently from the Soviet Union. The skete of St. Andrew's has been completely desolate for years. Both look like ghost towns, with many buildings standing only as shells of brick without roofs or interiors.

And so also the controversy over the name of God died. It was never again to trouble the Church of Russia, but outside of Russia it did feebly raise its head among Russian theologians in exile. Fr. Sergius Bulgakov (ordained in 1918) eventually developed a theological system around the idea of "Holy Wisdom" somewhat in the tradition of Vladimir Soloviev's sophiology, and in passing he equated God's name to "Sophia" as well as to God's "energy." (See *Svet Nevecherniy* 210,216) When in the 1930's the Moscow patriarchate condemned Bulgakov's sophiology, it said nothing about the question of God's name; but when Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitsky's group also condemned his teaching, Bulgakov's support of the imyaslavtsy was lumped together with his sophiology and the two attacked together. (See Sobolev) To say what degree the condemnations of Bulgakov's sophiology were justified is beyond the scope of this work, but a few observations are in order. The imyaslavtsy were protecting truths of the faith against those who would distort them; they were forced into that defense by their opponents, whereas "sophiology" was entirely an exercise in speculative theology, an attempt to work out a comprehensive theological-

philosophical system. The two tasks are by no means to be equated. In addition, Bulgakov's system was built entirely around one word that, while certainly not insignificant, is nevertheless not exactly central to the biblical message. This cannot be said of the name of God, which occurs constantly throughout every level of the Christian tradition and is presented as the very cornerstone and foundation of the faith. "Wisdom," on the other hand, occurs relatively infrequently in scriptural, patristic, or liturgical texts, and one can reasonably doubt the wisdom of creating a theological-philosophical system around it. In any case, Bulgakov's teachings about God's name as expressed in *Philosophiya Imeni* are linked to his sophiology only by a few chance comments made after the fact. There is no justification for lumping the two together.

More recent references to the imyaslavtsy among Orthodox and non-Orthodox writers alike generally reflect a deplorable lack of true information due to the years when the most well-known publications printed only the slanders and misrepresentations of the imyabortsy. Typical is a popular book by the monk Lev Gillet about the Jesus prayer, in which he briefly mentions the imyaslavtsy and remarks that "Their theory was obviously inadmissible ..." while devoting his whole book to propounding the very same point of view they had defended. He even adopts their very phraseology when he says that "Jesus" is "the single word that is the Word himself." (72)<sup>65</sup> Others, including the Russian Orthodox theologian Fr. George Florovsky (See Пути 572), as well as most of the recent histories of the controversy, either do not discuss the theological issues or simply say they are unresolved. Some say that the Ecumenical Patriarch's condemnatory epistles "remain in force." One wonders, in Orthodoxy does a patriarchal decree which is untrue but never explicitly countermanded nevertheless "remain in force"? Others speak of the imyaslavtsy as a "religious movement." One wonders, in Orthodoxy does one speak of the eighth and ninth century defenders of the icons as initiators of an "iconodule movement"?

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<sup>65</sup>Another Orthodox theologian, Sergey Verhovskoy, similarly misrepresents the issues in the 1912-1917 controversy in an article written in 1948.