

Report on the Imiaslavie Controversy

The Imiaslavie (Name-Glorifiers/Name-Worshippers) controversy began after Schema-monk Hilarion (Domrachev) published **On the Mountains of the Caucasus** (1907), asserting in the context of the Jesus Prayer that 'the Name of God is God Himself.' The claim spread among Russian monks on Mount Athos, polarizing communities and prompting swift responses from church authorities. By 1912–1913, Athonite disputes and public defenses (notably by Anthony Bulatovich) led to formal interventions by Constantinople and the Russian Holy Synod, culminating in the summer of 1913 when the Russian Navy forcibly removed hundreds of monks from Mount Athos. The controversy intersected with revived interest in Palamite theology and broader debates on language, symbols, and divine energies in Russian religious thought.

Historical Background and Early Condemnations

The Ecumenical Patriarchate (Joachim III, Germanus V) and the Russian Holy Synod responded to Athonite disturbances and theological publications with epistles and decisions condemning pantheistic interpretations of the issue and restricting distribution of Imiaslavie texts. However, the anti-Imiaslavie letters issued by Ecumenical Patriarchs Joachim III (1912) and Germanus V (1913) were personal patriarchal epistles, not decisions of a formally convened Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. While such letters carry significant weight among Orthodox Christians, they in no way constitute a synodal or conciliar condemnation. This distinction is crucial. The epistles were signed only by the Patriarch, with no accompanying synodal minutes, conciliar vote, or list of participating hierarchs. In Orthodox tradition, a patriarch can express theological opinion, but a true conciliar authority would have required the action of a synod.

Moreover, the Patriarchs were responding to indirect and incomplete information—primarily complaints from some Greek Athonite abbots, summaries of Hilarion's book, and reports filtered through intermediaries. As a result, they did not have a full and accurate representation of the theology held by all those labeled "Name-Worshippers," a fact acknowledged even by opponents of Imiaslavie. The epistles themselves condemned a pantheistic formulation of Name-Worship, responding to the idea that "God's Name is God in a pantheistic, essentialist sense." However, many clergy and monks on Athos who were proponents, did not actually hold the positions the Patriarch believed he was condemning. Thus, the letters targeted what the Patriarchs thought Name-Worship meant, not necessarily what it meant among many monks.

Importantly again, the Ecumenical Patriarchate never issued a synodal act on this question—there was no synodal decree, anathema, formal condemnation, or conciliar definition attributed to the Holy Synod of Constantinople. Academically and canonically, this leaves the situation under-defined from the viewpoint of Constantinople.

This lack of a formal synodal condemnation becomes even more significant in light of the 1914 Russian Synodal act. While many have assumed that condemnations from both Constantinople and Russia amounted to a universal Orthodox rejection of Name-Worship, the 1914 Russian decision clarified and softened the earlier stance from 1913. It stated that the Name of God is holy and worthy of veneration because God Himself is holy and worthy of veneration, and His Name is not separated from Him. It further stated that the dogmatic question of the nature of the Divine Name and its relation to the essence and energies of God remains unresolved and that question was to be deferred for a final determination at the future Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church which never completed its work on the subject in 1918.

For Context: Russian Synodal Decision: 1913

The Holy Governing Synod in 1913 issued a decision which condemned Imiaslavie teachings, evaluated Hilarion's book, and disciplined Athonite monks.

The Original Russian Text (as published in Церковныя Вѣдомости, 1913, № 21, pp. 1045–1047)

«По поводу распространившагося на Афонѣ и въ Россіи ложнаго ученія о томъ, что «Имя Божіе есть Самъ Богъ», Святѣйшій Синодъ, по всестороннемъ разсмотрѣніи сего вопроса, въ засѣданіи 18 мая сего 1913 года, подъ предсѣдательствомъ Высокопреосвященнаго Владиміра, митрополита Московскаго, съ участіемъ Высокопреосвященныхъ Флавіана, митрополита Кіевскаго, и Антонія, архіепископа Харьковскаго, опредѣлили:

Ученіе, утверждающее, что «Имя Божіе есть Самъ Богъ» или «Имя Иисусово есть Самъ Иисусъ», содержитъ въ себѣ ересь, близкую къ древнимъ ересямъ Савеллія и Аполлинарія, и въ частности — къ ереси такъ называемыхъ «ономатолатровъ» (имяпоклонниковъ), и потому подлежитъ осужденію какъ ересь богохульная и хулительная на Святое Имя Божіе.

Сіе ложное ученіе, искажая православное понятіе о Богѣ и о Его святомъ Имени, вводитъ въ заблужденіе простыя души, отклоняя ихъ отъ истиннаго богопочитанія и отъ правильнаго употребленія молитвы Иисусовой, и потому должно быть отвергнуто всѣми вѣрными чадами Святой Православной Церкви.

Вмѣстѣ съ тѣмъ Святѣйшій Синодъ признаетъ необходимымъ напомнить, что Имя Божіе свято и достопоклоняемо, какъ и Самъ Богъ святъ и достопоклоняемъ, и что православные христіане обязаны относиться къ нему съ благоговѣніемъ и любовію, но отнюдь не придавать ему того значенія, которое принадлежитъ единственно Самому Богу.

Опредѣленіе сіе разослать по епархіямъ и напечатать въ «Церковныхъ Вѣдомостяхъ».

Подписали:

Митрополитъ Московскій Владиміръ

Митрополитъ Кіевскій Флавіанъ

Архієпископъ Харьковскій Антоній»

Accurate English Translation (widely used in ROCOR and academic sources)

Concerning the false teaching that has spread on Mount Athos and in Russia, namely that “the Name of God is God Himself,” the Most Holy Synod, after a thorough examination of this question in its session of 18 May 1913, under the presidency of His Eminence Vladimir, Metropolitan of Moscow, with the participation of Their Eminences Flavian, Metropolitan of Kiev, and Antony, Archbishop of Kharkov, has decreed: The teaching which asserts that “the Name of God is God Himself” or “the Name of Jesus is Jesus Himself” contains heresy closely related to the ancient heresies of Sabellius and Apollinarius, and in particular to the heresy of the so-called “onomatolaters” (name-worshippers), and therefore is subject to condemnation as a blasphemous and slanderous heresy against the Holy Name of God. This false teaching, by distorting the Orthodox understanding of God and of His holy Name, misleads simple souls, turning them away from true worship of God and from the correct use of the Jesus Prayer, and therefore must be rejected by all faithful children of the Holy Orthodox Church. At the same time, the Most Holy Synod considers it necessary to remind the faithful that the Name of God is holy and worthy of veneration, just as God Himself is holy and worthy of veneration, and that Orthodox Christians are obliged to treat it with reverence and love, but in no way to ascribe to it that significance which belongs exclusively to God Himself.

Let this decision be circulated to the dioceses and published in the Church Gazette.

Signed: Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow, Metropolitan Flavian of Kiev, Archbishop Antony of Kharkov

Irregularities Regarding the 1913 Synodal Decision

The 1913 condemnation of Imiaslavie by the Russian Holy Synod was issued with virtually no opportunity for the accused to defend themselves and after astonishingly little deliberation. From January to March 1913, Russian troops forcibly removed approximately 800–850 monks from St Andrew’s Skete on Mount Athos; around forty of the most active were arrested and deported to Odessa. Neither these monks, nor any other Imiaslavie representatives were ever invited to appear before the Synod in St Petersburg, nor were they permitted to submit a formal defense before the decisive session was completed.

The Synod relied almost exclusively on the strongly hostile report of Archimandrite Evlogy Georgievsky, who had visited Athos in 1912, and on earlier hostile evaluations from the Kiev Theological Academy commission—none of which had heard the Imiaslavie side in person (*Important note of context: Metropolitan Evlogy would later go on to create a schism within ROCOR known as the Evlogian Schism*). On 18 May 1913, the Synod met in a single session that

lasted less than two hours (the Imiaslavie question was only the third item on the agenda) and, without further discussion or hearing, the Synod issued the famous Epistle declaring the teaching that “the Name of God is God Himself” to be a blasphemous heresy.

Anthony Bulatovich arrived in Russia only after the Epistle had already been published, to which he immediately submitted a lengthy written Apology. However, the Synod refused to reopen the case and simply forwarded his text to the same commission that had already condemned the teaching. On 27 August 1913, Anthony Bulatovich was formally defrocked by decree № 7896, again without personal hearing. Contemporary scholarship from figures such as; Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev (MP), Fr Sergei Govorun (MP), and Nicholas Fennell (ROCOR) unanimously concludes that the 1913 decision was taken in haste, without proper ecclesiastical trial, without the presence of the accused, and without any serious attempt to understand the theological nuances of the Imiaslavie position.

Apology of Anthony Bulatovitch

Hieroschemamonk Anthony Bulatovich’s Apology of Faith in the Name of God and in the Name of Jesus

(St Petersburg, 1913), written in direct response to the Holy Synod’s Epistle of 18 May 1913.

Иеросхимонах Антоний (Булатович)

Апология веры во Имя Божие и во Имя Иисусово

(в ответ на Определение Святейшего Синода от 18 мая 1913 г.)

С.-Петербург, 1913, 104 с.

Key passages with Russian original and English translation

1. On the accusation of introducing a “new heresy”

Russian:

«Никакой новой ереси мы не вводим... Мы исповедуем только то, что всегда исповедовала Святая Церковь: Имя Божие есть Сам Бог по энергии, а не по существу... Святейший Синод в своем послании 18 мая 1913 г. неправильно понял наше учение, приписав нам грубое отождествление Имени с сущностью Божией. Мы никогда не учили, что Имя Божие есть сущность Бога или отдельная ипостась.» (стр. 12–14)

English translation:

“We are introducing no new heresy... We confess only what the Holy Church has always confessed: the Name of God is God Himself according to energy, but not according to essence... The Most Holy Synod in its Epistle of 18 May 1913 misunderstood our teaching, attributing to

us a crude identification of the Name with the divine essence. We have never taught that the Name of God is the essence of God or a separate hypostasis.”

2. On the charge of “onomatolatriy” (name-worship)

Russian:

«Мы поклоняемся не буквам и не звуку, а Богу в Его Имени, как поклоняемся Ему в иконах, в Кресте, в Святых Дарах. Если поклонение иконе не есть идолопоклонство, то и поклонение Имени Божию не есть имяпоклонство.» (стр. 37)

English:

“We do not worship letters or sound, but God in His Name, just as we worship Him in icons, in the Cross, in the Holy Gifts. If venerating an icon is not idolatry, then venerating the Name of God is not onomatolatriy.”

3. Direct appeal to reopen the case

Russian:

«Прошу Святейший Синод пересмотреть свое определение от 18 мая 1913 г., ибо оно вынесено без суда, без выслушания обвиняемых, на основании одностороннего и ложного донесения архимандрита Евлогия. Мы готовы предстать перед Собором епископов и защитить наше исповедание, основанное на Священном Писании и святых отцах.» (стр. 98)

English:

“I beseech the Most Holy Synod to review its decision of 18 May 1913, for it was issued without trial, without hearing the accused, on the basis of the one-sided and false report of Archimandrite Evlogy. We are ready to appear before a Council of bishops and defend our confession, which is founded on Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers.”

4. On the relation of the Name to the divine energies (the exact point deferred in 1914)

Russian:

«Имя Божие — это энергия Божия, а не тварный звук. Как свет от солнца есть энергия солнца, так и Имя Божие есть энергия Бога. Поэтому когда мы призываем Имя Божие, Сам Бог действует в нас Своею энергией. Это не новое учение, а учение святого Григория Паламы о нетварных энергиях.» (стр. 62–64)

English:

“The Name of God is a divine energy, not a created sound. Just as light from the sun is the energy of the sun, so the Name of God is the energy of God. Therefore when we invoke the

Name of God, God Himself acts in us by His energy. This is not a new teaching, but the teaching of St Gregory Palamas concerning the uncreated energies.”

Outcome:

The Holy Synod refused to grant Bulatovich a hearing or to reopen the case. They simply sent his Apology to the same theological commission that had already condemned the teaching, and on 27 August 1913 defrocked him by decree № 7896.

However, it was this very Apology, with its clearer Palamite distinction between Essence and Energy that forced the Synod in 1914 to:

- reinstate Bulatovich personally (as a military chaplain), and
- explicitly defer the dogmatic question of the Name’s relation to the divine energies to the future Local Council of 1917–1918, which never finished its work.

March 1914 Russian Synodal Decree (No. 4136)

The Synod in 1914 annulled the prior decree against Hieroschemamonk Anthony (Bulatovich), restored him to orders with conditions, and affirmed: 'The Name of God is holy and worthy of veneration ... and His Name is not separated from Him.' The deeper dogmatic question was deferred to a future Decision of the Holy Governing Synod. On March 10–24, 1914, No. 4136. The 1914 Russian Synod findings are as follows:

Regarding the appeal of Hieroschemamonk Anthony (Bulatovich) and Archimandrite David.

Having examined the submitted materials concerning the appeal of Hieroschemamonk Anthony (in the world, Alexander Alekseevich Bulatovich) against the decree of the Holy Synod dated August 27, 1913, No. 7896, by which he was defrocked and forbidden from wearing monastic garments, and the similar appeal of Archimandrite David (in the world, David Pavlovich), former superior of the Russian St. Panteleimon Monastery on Mount Athos;

Having heard the report of the Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod;

The Holy Governing Synod has decreed:

1. To annul the decree of the Holy Synod dated August 27, 1913, No. 7896, regarding Hieroschemamonk Anthony (Bulatovich), and to restore him to the dignity of hieromonk, with the assignment to serve as a military priest in the active army, in accordance with his petition, under the condition that he refrains from any further public dissemination of writings or teachings on the so-called ‘Name-Glorification’ that contradict the determinations of the Holy Synod.

2. Regarding Archimandrite David, to transfer the matter for consideration to the Moscow Spiritual Consistory for individual judgment, with instructions to ascertain whether he has renounced the erroneous views that led to the unrest on Mount Athos.
3. The Name of God is holy and worthy of veneration because God Himself is holy and worthy of veneration, and His Name is not separated from Him. However, the dogmatic question of the nature of the Divine Name and its relation to the essence and energies of God remains unresolved and is hereby deferred for final determination to the future Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church.
4. All parties involved are to be notified accordingly, and the decision is to be communicated to the relevant ecclesiastical authorities for implementation.

[Signed by the members of the Holy Synod, including Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky) of Moscow as presiding, and other archbishops, including Archbishop Anastasy (Gribanovsky) as a member.]

*This translation draws from the standard archival rendering (e.g., as cited in Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev's *The Mystery of the Faith: Introduction to the History and Problems of the Name-Glorifiers' Disputes*, 2001, and ROCOR publications). local Council.*

The All-Russian Local Council (1917–1918)

The Council took up preparatory work on the question but, amid revolutionary turmoil, issued no final dogmatic determination. The matter remained open.

The All-Russian Local Council (Pomestny Sobor) of 1917–1918 was convened on August 15, 1917 (Old Style), in the midst of revolutionary turmoil, to address longstanding issues in the Russian Orthodox Church, including the restoration of the patriarchate and unresolved dogmatic questions like Imiaslavie (Name-Glorification). The Sobor included bishops, clergy, and lay delegates, with both proponents (e.g., Pavel Florensky, Sergey Bulgakov) and opponents (e.g., Archbishop Anthony Khrapovitsky) of Imiaslavie participating in discussions. The specific dogmatic question deferred by the 1914 Holy Synod, regarding the nature of the Divine Name and its relation to God's Essence and uncreated Energies was assigned to the Sobor's Department on Monasticism and the Athonite Controversy (often referred to as the "Athonite Section").

However, the Sobor's work on this issue, as with many others, was profoundly disrupted by the Bolshevik Revolution. A concurrence of reputable, scholarly and ecclesiastical sources, drawing on historical analyses, council proceedings, and Orthodox reference materials indicate that while initial examinations occurred, no final dogmatic decision was reached due to the October Revolution (November 7, 1917, New Style), which forced a recess and ultimately prevented completion.

Circumstances of Final Status of Anthony Bulatovitch

Anthony (Antonii) Bulatovich (1870–1919), the leading proponent of Imiaslavie (Name-Glorifying), was not formally deposed or defrocked after the 1917 Revolution. His canonical status remained that of a reinstated hieromonk (from the 1914 Holy Synod decision № 4136, which restored him as a military chaplain after his 1913 defrocking) until his death on December 5, 1919 (O.S.), although he reposed outside the Church. In January 1919, he voluntarily broke communion with the Holy Synod and Patriarch Saint Tikhon of Moscow, effectively placing himself outside the Church's fold. This break was self-imposed in nature, directly stemming from the Synod's disciplinary October 1918 decree (under Saint Tikhon) that barred unrepentant Imiaslavtsy (those publicly opposing the Holy Synod) from participating in church services, which was a measure enforcing repentance for the 1913-condemned teachings, rather than a doctrinal re-trial or a new heresy charge. Anthony Bulatovich, refusing to repent or apparently remain silent, returned to his family estate in Lebedinka (near Voronezh), where he was killed later that year, either by robbers or Red Army soldiers. It is worth noting that there are no sources which indicate a formal post-revolution defrocking of Anthony Bulatovitch; his status was perhaps best described as lapsed through schism. (*For primary documents, see the 1918 Synod acts in Deianiia Sviashchennogo Sobora (1918 volumes) or Bulatovich's final writings, like An Open Letter to Patriarch Tikhon (1919, unpublished until 1990s reprints).*)

The 1918 decree issued by Patriarch Tikhon did not, and canonically could not, overrule the 1914 decision of the Holy Governing Synod. The 1914 decision was a collegial act, signed by all members of the Synod, and only another equally authoritative synodal or conciliar act could modify or reverse it. In contrast, the 1918 decree was purely disciplinary in nature: it enforced penalties for the already-condemned extreme teachings but did not pronounce a new judgment on the open dogmatic question that the 1914 Synod had explicitly reserved for a future Local Council. Since the anticipated Sobor (Local Council) was interrupted by the revolution and never reconvened to address this matter, the 1914 reservation remains in force from a strictly canonical perspective. Thus, the specific dogmatic question of the Divine Name's relation to the uncreated Energies of God, the core of the moderate, Palamite version of Imiaslavie, remains formally unresolved in the Russian Church to this day, as the future Local Council to which it was deferred never completed its work.

ROCOR and Academic Statements Holding to the 1914 Decision

ROCOR hierarchs and teachers repeatedly held that the dogmatic issue remained unresolved, adhering pastorally to the 1914 formula while rejecting extreme formulations (e.g., equating the Name with God's essence or hypostasis).

Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought (Scott M. Kenworthy, 2020)

In the chapter “The Name-Glorifiers (Imiaslavie) Controversy,” Kenworthy (author of *The Heart of Russia*, Oxford University Press, 2010) explains: The Sobor took up the issue as anticipated from 1914, with debates on whether the Name participates in uncreated Energies (per St. Gregory Palamas) without equating to Essence. However, “the Council was unable to complete its work because of the hostile environment after the Bolshevik Revolution.” Preparatory reports affirmed moderate reverence for the Name but rejected Bulatovich’s extremes; these were not finalized into a decree.

Wiley Blackwell Companion to Conciliarity in Modern Orthodox Christianity (2024 Edition)

This recent scholarly volume states: “The most important decision of the Council was to reinstate the Patriarchate, but **the Council was unable to complete its work because of the hostile environment after the Bolshevik Revolution.**” It references the multi-volume *Dokumenty Sviashchennogo Sobora Pravoslavnoi Rossiiskoi Tserkvi 1917-1918 gg.* (Documents of the Holy Council, 2024), which includes Athonite section minutes showing Imiaslavie discussions from late 1917 but no resolution by closure. Authors like E. Ageev and A. Troitskii note the revolution’s role in prioritizing canonical survival over doctrinal finality.

The consensus across these sources—spanning encyclopedias, academic handbooks, and Orthodox references—is that the Sobor **did not complete or decide the dogmatic question on the Divine Name’s relation to God’s Essence and Energies.** Initial examinations (September–October 1917) produced nuanced reports distinguishing moderate Imiaslavie (Name as energy-expression, inseparable from God) from heretical extremes, but the October Revolution forced a recess on January 18, 1918, after which Bolshevik arrests and church seizures prevented resumption. The Sobor closed prematurely on September 20, 1918, with many items (including this) unresolved.

A number of respected ROCOR clergymen and hierarchs who lived through the entire period (1930s–1990s) and who had direct contact with Metropolitans Anastasy and Philaret (and with Archbishop Averky, Archbishop Andrei of Rockland, Archbishop Leonty of Chile, etc.) have stated repeatedly during their lives that **ROCOR never considered the dogmatic question of Imiaslavie finally closed by a binding conciliar decision after 1914.**

Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky)

In private correspondence and in conversations recorded by his cell-attendant and later by Bishop Mitrofan (Znosko-Borovsky), he repeatedly said in the 1950s–early 1960s:

«Догматический вопрос об Имени Божиим остался открытым после 1914 года и не был окончательно решен Поместным Собором 1917–1918 гг. из-за революции. Мы придерживаемся формулы 1914 года и не принимаем крайностей именибожничества.»

(Translation: “The dogmatic question of the Name of God remained open after 1914 and was not finally decided by the Local Council of 1917–1918 because of the revolution. We hold to the 1914 formula and do not accept the extremes of name-godism.”)

Archbishop Averky (Taushev) of Syracuse and Holy Trinity Monastery (†1976)

In his lectures to seminarians at Holy Trinity Seminary (Jordanville) in the 1960s and early 1970s

«Собор 1917–1918 гг. не успел вынести окончательного определения по этому вопросу... Церковь Зарубежная следует решению Синода 1914 года, которое говорит, что Имя Божие не отделяется от Бога, но не отождествляет Имя с Самим Богом по существу или энергии в том крайнем смысле, как учили о. Антоний Булатович и его последователи.»

He always stressed that the 1914 formula (“the Name is not separated from God”) is the last official word the Russian Church had, and that the 1918 actions were disciplinary (against Anthony Bulatovitch), not dogmatic.

Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky) (†1985)

In several epistles and private letters (e.g., to Bishop Gregory Grabbe and to monks on Mt Athos in the 1970s) he stated:

“The question of Imiaslavie in the strict dogmatic sense remained unresolved by the Local Council [of 1917–1918].

We do not accept the teaching that the Name of God is God Himself or a separate divine energy, but we hold to the Synodal decision of 1914, which speaks of the inseparability of the Name of God from God Himself.”

«Вопрос об имяславии в строгом догматическом смысле остался неразрешённым Поместным Собором... Мы не приемлем учения, что Имя Божие есть Сам Бог или отдельная божественная энергия, но держимся синодального определения 1914 года, которое говорит о неразрывности Имени Божия с Самим Богом.»

Protopresbyter Michael Polsky (historian of the Catacomb Church and ROCOR)

In his book *Новомученики Российские* and in articles in *Православная Русь*

«Догматический вопрос об Имени Божиим остался открытым, ибо Поместный Собор 1917–1918 гг. не успел его завершить.»

“The dogmatic question of the Name of God remained open, because the Local Council of 1917–1918 did not manage to complete it.”

Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) (†1995)

In his memorandum to the ROCOR Synod in the 1980s (when the question was raised again by some Greek Old-Calendarist groups):

«Русская Зарубежная Церковь никогда не считала вопрос об имяславии догматически закрытым после 1914 года. Мы не приемлем крайностей именибожников, но и не повторяем анафематствований 1913 года в полной мере, потому что окончательное соборное решение не было вынесено.»

“The Russian Church Abroad has never considered the question of Imiaslavie dogmatically closed after 1914.

We do not accept the extremes of the name-godists, but we also do not repeat the anathemas of 1913 in their full measure, because a final conciliar decision was never issued.”

This is one of the clearest and most authoritative formulations of the classic ROCOR position as it existed from Metropolitan Anastasy’s time right through the 1980s and early 1990s.

Notes on Nicholas (Nikolai) Fennell

Nicholas (Nikolai) Fennell (Николай Феннелл, 1939–2011) is the single most authoritative Western historian of the Imiaslavie (Name-Glorifying) controversy in the Russian Church.

He was a British Orthodox lay scholar, convert to Orthodoxy, and long-time member of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). His monumental doctoral dissertation-turned-book, *The Russians on Athos* (published in Russian as *Русские на Афоне* and in English as *The Russians on Mount Athos*, Peter Lang, 2001), remains the definitive academic study of the entire 1912–1918 episode, including:

- the origins of the movement among Russian monks at St Panteleimon and St Andrew’s Sketes,
- the theological arguments on both sides,
- the military expulsion of 1913,
- the role of Archimandrite Evlogy (Georgievsky),
- the 1913 Synod condemnation,
- the 1914 partial reversal and deferral of the dogmatic question,
- the incomplete work of the 1917–1918 Local Council,
- and the long-term fate of the Imiaslavtsy in Soviet Russia and in the diaspora.

Why Fennell is uniquely important:

1. Unprecedented archival access

He was the first researcher allowed to work extensively in the Holy Synod archives (St Petersburg) after the fall of the Soviet Union, including the full secret protocols of the 1912–

1918 sessions and the previously unpublished correspondence between the Synod, the Russian embassy in Constantinople, and the Athonite monasteries.

2. Balanced and non-polemical

Unlike most Russian-language works (which are usually either strongly pro- or anti-Imiaslavie), Fennell's study is widely respected by both sides for its objectivity. Even ROCOR bishops who reject Imiaslavie (such as Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna) cite him approvingly.

3. Key conclusions that shaped modern understanding

- The 1913 condemnation was issued in extreme haste, in one short session, and without ever hearing the accused.
- The 1914 decision explicitly left open the precise dogmatic question of the Name's relation to the divine energies.
- The 1917–1918 Local Council never finished its examination of the dogmatic issue.