

Vasilije Vranić

***Imiaslavie* as an Ancient Trajectory of Eastern Orthodox Monastic Theology**

Imiaslavie is a theological phenomenon that emerged among Russian monks at the beginning of the 20th century. It rapidly spread and became popular among the Slavic monks on Mount Athos. *Imiaslavie* taught that the essence of God is contained in His name. A connection is evident *between Imiaslavie* and the ancient mystical theology of Second Temple Judaism, which was forged by the transmission of the ideas through the centuries within the ascetic milieu. It is interesting to note that the underlying concept of *Imiaslavie* continuously exists in the mystical theologies across religions (Judaism and Christianity) and periodically surfaces in the theological discourse. In ancient Jewish theology, it is evident in the mystical teachings regarding the *sacred tetragrammaton* – YHWH, which was accorded divine attributes. Another trajectory of the same religious tradition is the *Shem Theology*, which contemplates the divine name. In early Christianity the teachings on the divine name are transmitted through the works of the monastic mysticism, namely the writings associated with the invocation of the name of God in the “Jesus Prayer.” This prayer exists from at least the sixth century as a distinct teaching, and flourishes in the 14th century when it receives its theological expression. It continues to exist in a dominant manner in the Eastern Christian Spirituality to this day.

In my paper, I will seek to explore the theological foundation of *Imiaslavie* as a teaching to which Slavic monasticism gave expression, although its tenets were present in the Eastern monastic spirituality for many centuries. I will argue that, despite the obvious difficulties with regards to the impossibility of the discourse about the divine essence and its condemnation by the Church, *Imiaslavie* is a part of an ancient venerable mystical tradition to which the Russian monks lately only gave a clear form and a theological framework. I also intend to continue to look for evidence of this tradition among the manuscripts on microform in the Hilandar Library.