

Transcript of the recording made 11.12.2005 at the talk given by Archbishop Anatoly in the London Cathedral. Published on dioceseinfo.org

Question: *Fr Andrey told us today he got a letter forbidding him to continue his talks – why is this?*

Achp Anatoly: I would not discuss this here...

Question: But this affected us so, we are upset.

Achp Anatoly: We have to pray, this is a misunderstanding..

Question: We prayed for Hillarion...

Question: Can laity express their opinion about a priest to this priest?

Achp Anatoly: Everyone should speak for himself, but one has to be competent in order to speak about it, but privately one is even obliged to state one's position especially if it is different from a Christian point of view. I did not feel anything wrong in Fr Andrey's talk when I heard the tape as I was not there; he said nothing against Orthodoxy.

Question: My personal opinion when he spoke about sobornost at the conference, and that the conference itself is against the tradition of the church. Having such a conference means someone divides himself from the line of the church and branches off into some other direction, and I do not agree with this.

Achp Anatoly: We can tell Fr Michael who organised this conference. Anyone has a right to organise a conference, any group, but if we talk about an Orthodox conference ... This Russian Christian Movement in Great Britain was not started by Bishop Anthony, who had a different, Orthodox approach. Emigrants here in the West started this Christian movement and what did it come to? – Ecumenism, which as you see caused a huge schism.

I spoke for a long time with Metropolitan Anthony in the day of my ordination as bishop and he told me: "I do not believe in ecumenism!" In the beginning the emigrant Orthodox Russians were trying to establish contacts with other Christians and understand our similarities and differences, Zander was very active there.

But many years have passed and this ecumenism boiled down to this World Council of Churches, which presents ecumenism in the form unacceptable for an Orthodox. They celebrate the Liturgy under the accompaniment of African drums.. This new movement calls itself Russian Christian and claims equality to other Christian movements but not like Orthodox Youth Movement in Russia today. By dropping the word "Orthodox" what is implied? Are we to study Protestantism and value their protestant values? We must follow Metropolitan Anthony who said: "I meet with representatives of other confessions on the basis of Orthodoxy and preaching the Gospel."

Based on the Russian Orthodox Tradition! And I disagree with the name without the word Orthodox in it.

Question: Why then did you participate and talked there if you disagree?

Achp Anatoly: I announced on Sunday from the amvon that Fr Michael asked me to make a talk about the teaching of Metropolitan Anthony about the Church. And I said that will do the talk but I do not belong to this organisation.

Question: It is so hard in this church, I really suffer here, but still come back because there is no where else to go, I am an Orthodox. But there are so many rumours, they are killing me...

Question: Were attempts made to discuss this with Fr Michael or did he persist in omitting the "Orthodox" from the name?

ArchBp Anatoly: No, I ... He sent me a letter since he now lives abroad, so all I answered was that I do not belong to the movement but do not mind speaking. Fr Michael started [the conference] by saying that we all live in a free country and nobody can forbid us anything, that this is our freedom and we all are free to express what we think. That is all. Here no one can forbid...

Voice from the audience: But Fr Andrey was forbidden...

ArchBp Anatoly: Well, you see, I do not start to discuss this issue now since I have nothing to do with Fr Andrey...

Another voice: How is this possible, technically, in the Church, that from above someone can forbid something?

ArchBp Anatoly: But it was said by the bishop, this is canonical, he has a spiritual power given to him by the Church to allow and to forbid, this is within the bishop's power. If it is just, of course. If it is unjustly, he can appeal and the suspension could be removed. The issue here is whether justly or not. But again I repeat it is not for me to decide, I am not a judge. I hardly see Fr Andrey, only in the church, I never meet him outside except once immediately after his arrival he visited me. We both are very busy and only see each other in church. I respect him because... and also he was recommended by his bishop, he is theologically educated, says wonderful sermons and as a priest carries an enormous burden here. If it were not for him, who would have been taking confessions? I remember when I arrived for the first 10 years I was taking confessions and even could not celebrate as we had a lot of people for confessions and no one to take them. Now he does this enormous work, help him God.

Marina Bezmenova: I would like to add a little about the Movement and its name, the reason it was called Russian Christian Movement. Fr Michael suggested this more than a year ago. The conferences (and we had 2 already) were called Orthodox. We used the name Christian inviting all faithful. We know there are Baptists nearby and they invite everyone, even unbelievers, preaching in Russian and saying their church is open to everybody. Our movement is based on strictly Orthodox tradition and foundations but we wanted to open doors to all faithful. If other confessions would like to know about Orthodoxy and come, we wanted to welcome them too. This is why Fr Michael suggested this name.

ArchBp Anatoly: Yes, but...

Marina: If you Vladyka disagreed, you had an opportunity to tell him a year and a half ago, when he still was here. It was very sad and strange for all of us to hear Fr Andrey's very sharp critical comments. People were disconcerted as Bp Basil blessed the conference, Fr Sergey Ovsyannikov came from Amsterdam to take part and this sharp criticism ... Maybe some points had a reason, but why not discuss the disagreements in advance and in the spirit of love with the priests. Perhaps some replies could have been found and it would not have been brought out...

ArchBp Anatoly interrupted: Well, fine, all clear, I now have to return to my lecture, we are here not to discuss this issue, we must wait for Bp Basil and his explanation, I do not take upon myself to discuss this now.

Marina: I just wanted to explain that Christian does not mean ecumenical but open to all Christians.

ArchBp Anatoly: I understand. But Fr Michael started and was gone and it is not for the first time he starts something and then leaves and I have to continue...He is full of initiative but does not finish what he begins. For example these talks were also started by him and I am doing them now (loud laughter). He started a register and all who attended even put their names there, it happened for the first several talks and I remember who attended and then he left for Russia for a month, then somewhere else. It was left for me to continue and I have done up to now. But I lead Orthodox Catechises talks, this is not a Christian Youth movement, we all participate here. And with this Movement again, you are saying he started it a year ago but he should have carried on with some organising group, to work out a plan and not just put on the wall here and also in Manchester. In this notice I was mentioned first before Bp Basil, I was indignant as I never included myself into this and I should have been asked. Would you like to be included or not? As it was, just a letter was sent. So I said straight away that I was not part of this. I do not refuse to make a speech if required, but I do not belong to this movement. Because I am unhappy about the name which was not seriously reasoned. Before putting it down like this serious reasons have to be given, even just a short introduction, but it was not done. I mean it was done in the private letter in the same sense as you just said... Of course Bp Basil also spoke, but he said in detail about his reasoning and thoughts and understanding of it...

Well, I think we should now...

Comment from the audience: So critical comments are not welcome...

ArchBp Anatoly: I also think Fr Michael himself invited to speak openly about what each of us thinks. So Fr Andrey did just that according to this invitation of Fr Michael's to speak freely in a free country, to express one's opinion. This is what he has done, can we judge him for it? Certainly not (laughingly)! This is why Bp Basil should look into this, nothing to do with me, I only spoke on the subject suggested to me and immediately left. I know nothing about the questions asked there, I have not had a recording of these questions.

A voice from the audience: They are being prepared I was told and very soon the conference talks will be available...

ArchBp Anatoly: Well, I understand, but before they are ready, why talk about it?