

God Immanent yet Transcendent:
The Divine Energies according
to Saint Gregory Palamas

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Thee, God, I come from, to thee go,
All day long I like fountain flow
From thy hand out, swayed about
Mote-like in thy mighty glow.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

Nearness yet Otherness

In her classic work *Worship*, the Anglican writer Evelyn Underhill uses the memorable phrase “the nearness yet otherness of the Eternal.”¹ She alludes here to a paradox, an antinomy, constantly affirmed in the three great “Abrahamic” religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The living God is both transcendent and immanent. Above and beyond all things, he is yet at the heart of everything; mystery surpassing all understanding, he is yet more intimate to us than we are to our own selves. Looking at the creation, we may affirm a phrase used by the poet and theologian Charles Williams, “This also is Thou, neither is this Thou.”²

In the Hebrew Scriptures the radical transcendence of the Divine is eloquently proclaimed in the answer — or rather the question — that God gives to Job out of the whirlwind: “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (Job 38:4). For the Hebrew prophets God is a mystery beyond our comprehension: “Truly, you are a God who hides himself” (Isa. 45:15). Human beings cannot fathom the divine mind: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, / nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD” (Isa. 55:8). But at the

same time the Lord is “a God near by . . . and not a God afar off”; “Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD” (Jer. 23:23-24). In the words of the psalmist:

Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. (Ps. 139:7-8)

The New Testament likewise affirms the otherness yet nearness of God. As transcendent Creator, God preexists his creation: the Logos, so it is said, subsists prior to all things, “in the beginning” (John 1:1). But at the same time, this transcendent God is “not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’” (Acts 17:27-28). He is immanent as well as transcendent: all things have been created “in him . . . through him and for him . . . and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:15-17). God is *pantokrator*, a term which means not only “almighty,” “all-powerful,” but “he who holds all things in unity.”

This double emphasis upon God transcendent yet immanent has been continued in the Christian tradition whenever it has remained faithful to its own true self. So the eucharistic anaphora in the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, used by the Orthodox Church today particularly during Lent, commences with the acclamation, “O He Who Is! . . . without beginning, invisible, incomprehensible, indescribable, changeless. . . .” At the same time, in other prayers used in the Christian East it is stated of Christ and the Holy Spirit that they are “everywhere present and filling everything.” The divine omnipresence is beautifully expressed in words attributed to Christ by the second-century *Gospel of Thomas*: “Cut the wood in two, and I am there; lift up the stone, and there you will find me” (logion 77).

As for Islam, it is often assumed that this is a religion of transcendence rather than immanence, but such a view is one-sided and misleading. It is true that in the words of the Sufi master Abdul Aziz, writing to Thomas Merton in 1966, “Islam is iconoclastic par excellence”;³ as the Qur’an states concerning Allah, “Nothing is like unto him” (42:11). But at the same time, in the Qur’an God says, “We are nearer to him than the jugular vein” (50:16), and elsewhere it is affirmed, “He is with you wherever you are” (57:4). Within the mystical tradition of Sufism the contrasting demands of divine transcendence and divine immanence are in fact balanced with deep subtlety and sensitivity.

There are thus good grounds for asserting that Judaism, Christianity,

and Islam are all fundamentally “panentheist,” if by “panentheism” is meant the belief that God, while *above* the world, is at the same time *within* the world, everywhere present as the heart of its heart, the core of its core. Regrettably, from the seventeenth century onward, among all too many Christian thinkers — chiefly Western but sometimes also Eastern Orthodox — the delicate equilibrium between transcendence and immanence has been impaired and God’s otherness has been overemphasized at the expense of his immanence. There has been, that is to say, a widespread tendency to speak as if God the creator were somehow external to the creation. The universe has been envisaged as an artifact, produced by its divine Maker from the outside. God has been likened to an architect, a builder or engineer, a potter — even, on the eighteenth-century Deist model, a clockmaker who sets the cosmic process in motion, winding up the clock but then in effect leaving it to continue ticking away on its own.

This will not do. All such imagery is sadly defective. If the doctrine of creation is to mean anything at all, it must signify that God is on the inside of everything, not on the outside. Creation is not something upon which God acts from the exterior, but something through which he expresses himself from within. Our primary image should be that of *indwelling*. Above and beyond creation, God is also its true inwardness, its “within.”

Moreover, the work of creation is surely not to be understood as a once-for-all event occurring in the remote past, an initial act that constitutes a chronological starting point. It is not a past event but a present relationship. We are to think and speak not in the aorist but in the present tense. We are not to say, “God made the world, once upon a time, long ago,” but “God is *making* the world, and you and me in it, here and now, at this moment and always.” In this sense it is legitimate to talk of “continual creation.” When it is said, “In the beginning . . . God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1), the word “beginning” (in the Greek Septuagint, *archē*) is not to be interpreted exclusively or even primarily in a temporal sense. It does not merely mean “God started it all off, many millions of years ago.” Much more profoundly it means that at each and every instant God is the constant and unceasing *archē*, the source, principle, and sustainer of all that exists. It means that without the active and uninterrupted presence of God in every part of the cosmos, nothing would remain in existence for a single moment. If the divine Maker did not exert his creative will at every split second of time, the universe would immediately collapse into the void of nonbeing. As Saint Philaret, metropolitan of Moscow (1782-1867), expresses it: “All creatures are balanced upon the creative word of God, as if upon a bridge of diamond; above them is the abyss of divine infinitude, below them that of their own nothingness.”⁴

Word and Energy

During the early Christian and the Byzantine periods, Greek patristic authors employed two ways in particular to articulate this double truth of God as transcendent yet immanent, as beyond and above, yet “everywhere present and filling everything.” First, some of them — above all, Saint Maximus the Confessor (ca. 580-662) — think in terms of Logos and logoi.⁵ According to Maximus, Christ the creator Logos has implanted in every created thing a characteristic logos, a “thought” or “word,” which is God’s intention for that thing, its inner essence, that which makes it distinctively itself and at the same time draws it toward the divine realm. By virtue of these indwelling logoi, each created thing is not just an object but a personal word addressed to us by the Creator. The logoi are described by Maximus in two different ways, sometimes as created and sometimes as uncreated, depending upon the perspective in which they are viewed. They are created inasmuch as they inhere in the created world. But when regarded as God’s presence in each thing — as the divine “predetermination” or “preconception” concerning that thing — they are not created but uncreated.⁶ The divine Logos, the second person of the Trinity, the wisdom and the providence of God, constitutes at once the source and the end of the particular logoi, and in this manner acts as an all-embracing and unifying cosmic presence.

Alongside this Logos-logoi model, other Greek Fathers use a second approach, not contrary to the first but complementary: they speak in terms of God’s transcendent essence (*ousia*) and of his immanent energies or operations (*energeiai*). In his essence God is infinitely transcendent, utterly beyond all created being, beyond all understanding and all participation from the human side. But in his energies — which are nothing else than God himself in action — God is inexhaustibly immanent, maintaining all things in being, animating them, making each of them a sacrament of his dynamic presence. So we may interpret in terms of essence and energies the saying invoked by Charles Williams and quoted earlier: “This also is Thou [= the energies]; neither is this Thou [= the essence].” While present in created things, these energies are not themselves created but uncreated and eternal.

The essence-energies distinction goes back at least as far as the first-century Jewish author Philo of Alexandria, who asserts that while God is unknowable in his nature (*physis*), he is revealed to us in his “acts of power” (*dynameis*).⁷ The distinction is taken over from Philo by the Christian author Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–ca. 215): God is “far off in his essence (*ousia*) but very near in his power (*dynamei*), which embraces all things.”⁸ “God is in essence (*ousia*) outside the universe,” states Saint Athanasius of Alexandria

(ca. 295-373), “but he is present in everything through his acts of power (*dynameis*).”⁹ The distinction is developed more fully in the letters of Saint Basil of Caesarea (ca. 330-379), who writes: “We claim to know our God from his energies (*energeiai*), but we do not profess that we can draw near to his essence (*ousia*). For his energies come down to us, but his essence remains inaccessible.”¹⁰ The thinker, however, who provides the most systematic exposition of this essence-energies distinction is Saint Gregory Palamas, archbishop of Thessalonica (ca. 1296-1359), the greatest Byzantine theologian of the Palaeologan period. Sometimes Palamas has been accused of misinterpreting the standpoint of the various earlier authors, such as the Cappadocians, in whom the essence-energies distinction is to be found in a less clear-cut form. Certainly Palamas gives to their teaching a greater precision, but I see here a legitimate development rather than a distortion.¹¹

Maximus and Palamas are both concerned with God’s relationship to his creation, but their perspective is somewhat different. Maximus, when speaking of the logoi and the Logos, is predominantly christological in his approach. Palamas, on the other hand, following the teaching of the Cappadocians, emphasizes that the divine energies are always trinitarian; it is an error to say that any one person in the Godhead has an “energy” in which the other two persons do not share.¹² (Maximus would not in fact have disagreed over this point.) Maximus is chiefly concerned with the vocation of the human person as priest of the creation, as microcosm and mediator. Palamas for his part is preoccupied with the vision of Divine Light seen by the saints during prayer, and with the relationship of this Light to the glory revealed at Christ’s transfiguration upon Mount Tabor. But fundamentally the two concur in their understanding of God as both immanent and transcendent and in their appreciation of “the nearness yet otherness of the Eternal.” Indeed, there is even a passage where Maximus speaks specifically of the logoi as “energies.”¹³

“He Is Everywhere and Nowhere”

Let us explore in greater detail what Palamas means by the distinction — more exactly, we should style it the “distinction in unity” — between the divine essence and the divine energies. It enables him to insist without compromise on both the transcendence and immanence of God. On the one hand, he is firmly committed to the standpoint of apophatic theology and insists without compromise upon the ontological gap between Creator and creation, but on the other hand he wishes also to underline the divine omnipresence:

Every created nature is far removed from and completely foreign to the divine nature. For if God is nature, all else is not nature; but if every other thing is nature, he is not a nature, just as he is not a being if all other things are beings, and if he is a being, then all other things are not beings. . . . God both is and is said to be the nature of all things, in so far as all things partake of him and subsist by means of this participation. . . . In this sense he is the Being of all beings, the Form that is in all forms as the Author of form, the Wisdom of the wise and, simply, the All of all things. Yet he is not nature, because he transcends every nature; he is not a being, because he transcends every being; and he is not nor does he possess a form, because he transcends every form. . . . Not a single created being has or can have any communication with or proximity to the sublime nature.¹⁴

God, that is to say, is not a “nature” or “being,” in the sense that he is not to be regarded as one existent object among a plurality of such existent objects. If we say “God exists,” then the word “exists” bears in his case a connotation fundamentally different from what it has when applied to created things. For this reason Palamas employs the *hyper* language, prominent in the writings ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite (ca. 500): God, he says, is *hyperousios*, “beyond being”; he is “the beyond-essence, nameless and surpassing all names.”¹⁵ Yet, if God is “no-thing,” in the sense that he is not one among many existent objects, yet he is also “All,” in the sense that without his continual indwelling and the uninterrupted exercise of his creative power, no created person or object could exist in any way whatsoever. Thus Palamas would have seen no reason to disagree with the dictum, “Either God is everywhere present in nature, or he is nowhere.”

Palamas, as so many other mystical writers have done, resorts here to the language of antinomy and paradox: “He is both existent and non-existent; he is everywhere and nowhere; he has many names and he cannot be named; he is ever-moving and he is unmoved and, in short, he is everything and nothing.”¹⁶ Here, as elsewhere, it is helpful to spell out “nothing” as “no-thing.”

God, Palamas continues, remains totally within himself, and yet he totally indwells all created beings: “Those who are counted worthy enjoy union with God the cause of all. . . . He remains wholly within himself and yet he dwells wholly within us, causing us to participate not in his nature but in his glory and radiance.”¹⁷ As Palamas’s older contemporary Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260–ca. 1328) puts it, God is *totus intra, totus extra*.¹⁸ “The more he is in things, the more he is out of things; the more in, the more out, and the more out, the more in.”¹⁹

The distinction made by Palamas, in the passage just quoted, between God’s “nature” and his “glory and radiance,” is more frequently expressed in the Palamite corpus in terms of *essence* and *energy*. It is important to note, however, that Palamas does not simply employ a dyadic contrast between essence and energy within God, nor yet a dyadic contrast between essence and hypostases, but he deliberately insists upon a three-pointed contrast between essence, energy, and hypostasis. Dyadic distinctions fail properly to convey the divine mystery; we need to think always in terms of a threefold differentiation. As Palamas himself puts it:

Three realities pertain to God: essence, energy, and the triad of divine hypostases. As we have seen, those privileged to be united to God so as to become one spirit with him — as St Paul has said, “He who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit with him” (1 Cor. 6:17) — are not united to God with respect to his essence, since all the theologians testify that with respect to his essence God undergoes no participation. Moreover, the hypostatic union is fulfilled only in the case of the Logos, the God-man. Thus those privileged to attain union with God are united to him with respect to his energy.²⁰

The fact that Palamas, in discussing the threefold distinction between essence, energy, and hypostasis, chooses to speak here in terms of *union* with God shows us where the main focus of his concern is to be located. He is not a philosophical theologian, seeking to apply in the realm of Christian doctrine certain notions borrowed from Plato, Aristotle, or Proclus, but he is a monastic or mystical theologian, seeking to interpret the vision of God attained in prayer by the saints of his own day. If, then, he affirms the essence-energy distinction — or more precisely, the essence-energy-hypostasis distinction — he does so not for philosophical but for experiential reasons. He does not advance the essence-energy differentiation as a metaphysical theory. He is par excellence a theologian of living experience.

Palamas envisages, then, three levels of union. First, there is union “according to essence,” such as exists between the three persons of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But the mystical union between God and human beings cannot be on this level. On Palamas’s presuppositions, if we were to participate in God’s essence, then we should become God in a literal sense, in the same way the three divine persons are God. But *theosis* (deification) is not to be understood in such a crude and unqualified way: for, although united to God, the saints do not become additional members of the Trinity.

Second, there is union “according to hypostasis,” such as occurred at the

incarnation, when Godhead and manhood were united in the single person of Jesus Christ the *Theanthropos*. Once more, the mystical union cannot be of this kind, since the hypostatic union brought about at the incarnation is altogether unique. It is indeed our vocation to become “sons in the Son,” to use a phrase of Eckhart. But this does not mean that we and God constitute a single person, as in Christ’s hypostatic union; for in the mystical vision, face-to-face, the saints still preserve each their own individual identity.

There remains, then, the third possibility: the mystical union is a union “according to energy.” The human person in such a union is made one with God, yet is not absorbed or annihilated. Each of the saints, although “deified” or “divinized” — filled, that is to say, with the life, glory, and power of God — nonetheless continues to be a distinct personal subject. God is “all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28); yet, in the words of the Macarian homilies (fourth century), “Peter is Peter, Paul is Paul, Philip is Philip. Each one retains his own nature and personal identity, but they are all filled with the Holy Spirit.”²¹ In the “I and Thou” relationship between God and the saints, the “I” still remains an “I” and the “Thou” still remains a “Thou,” however close the two approach in mutual love. The distinction-in-unity between God’s essence and his uncreated energies thus enables Palamas to avoid monistic pantheism, and yet to affirm the possibility of an unmediated union in love between creature and Creator.

The teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas concerning the divine energies has been severely criticized, not only in his own time but also up to the present day. It has been argued that there is no need to speak of energies in the way he does; all he wishes to affirm about the immanent presence of God in the world can be spelled out — so it is argued — in terms of the Holy Spirit, without invoking the concept of *energeia*. To this Palamas answers that it is necessary to differentiate between the hypostasis of the Spirit and the charismata or gifts of grace that he bestows; that is, between his personal existence, which is distinctive to himself, and the activity or energy he shares with the other two divine persons. More fundamentally, it is argued that the essence-energies distinction undermines the divine simplicity, turning God into a composite being. This charge was brought against Palamas during 1338-41 by his chief opponent, Barlaam the Calabrian, who accused him of “ditheism.” The charge was repeated, after Palamas’s death, by the brothers Demetrios and Prochoros Kydones, who approached the issue from a Thomist viewpoint (Palamas’s own presuppositions were very different).²²

In Palamas’s defense it may be argued that Christianity envisages God not just as an undifferentiated monad, but as a Trinity of three hypostases, dwelling in each other through an unceasing movement of mutual love. Di-

vine unity is an organic or organized unity, an interpersonal unity. The distinction between the divine essence and the three divine persons does not overthrow the simplicity of God; equally this simplicity is not destroyed by the essence-energies distinction.

It has to be remembered, moreover, that the divine energies are not an intermediary between God and humankind, not a “thing” that exists apart from God. They are, on the contrary, *God himself*, God in action, God in his self-revelation, God indwelling his creation through his direct and unmediated presence. Furthermore, the energies are not a part or division of God, but they are severally and individually the whole deity, *God in his entirety*. Just as the whole God is present without diminution or subdivision in each of the three persons of the Trinity, so he is present entire and undivided in each and all of the divine energies. On this point Palamas could not be more explicit and categorical. “Each power and energy is God himself,” he affirms;²³ “God is wholly present in each of his divine energies.”²⁴

There is, then, no synthesis or compositeness in the Godhead, but the one, single, living, and active God is present wholly and entirely:

1. on the level of *ousia*, in the total simplicity of his divine being;
2. on the level of hypostasis, in the threefold diversity of the divine persons;
3. on the level of *energeia*, in the indivisible multiplicity of his creative and redemptive work.

In the words of the Council of Constantinople, which in 1351 confirmed the teaching of Palamas as the true faith of the church: “When speaking of God, we distinguish while uniting and we unite while distinguishing.”²⁵

Palamite Panentheism

In his teaching concerning the immanent energies of God, omnipresent throughout the creation, Saint Gregory Palamas sets before us a doctrine of God that is intensely dynamic. The emphasis is clearly upon “becoming” rather than “being.” Permeating the world, the divine energies are precisely the life and power of God, directly and immediately active throughout the natural order. The God of Palamas is not a remote God, not a detached and distant architect, but a living and personal God, an involved God, unceasingly present and at work in all that he has made: “My Father is still working, and I also am working” (John 5:17). For the Palamite theologian the act of creation

is nothing else than the continuing reality of God's indwelling. Yet while permeating the created universe through his energies, God also transcends the universe in his ineffable essence, which remains forever unknowable alike to angels and to humankind, both in this present age and in the age to come. Palamas is in this way a maximalist: the whole God is radically transcendent in his essence, and the whole God is radically immanent in his omnipresent energies.

Does this mean that Palamas upholds "panentheism"? This is of course not a word that Palamas himself uses; it was coined long after his day. In general the Greek Fathers — and equally their Latin counterparts — show little partiality for the abstractions that we today habitually employ. They prefer to speak in concrete terms. They talk about councils, not about conciliarity; about the Holy Spirit, not about pneumatology; about the last things, not about eschatology; about mystical prayer, not about mysticism.

If, however, we wish to use the term "panentheism," then this is a label that may legitimately be applied to Palamism. Whereas the pantheist states that God is the world and the world is God, the panentheist states that God is *in* the world and the world is *in* God; and it is obvious that Palamas is affirming the second of these two positions, not the first. But, as we are all aware, there are many varieties of panentheism; it all depends what is meant by the word "in." Applying the distinction used by Arthur Peacocke,²⁶ the panentheism of Palamas is "weak" rather than "strong." For while he believes that the being of God embraces and penetrates the universe, he also believes that the divine being is in no way exhausted by the universe, for God remains utterly transcendent in his imparticipable essence. While within, he is also above.

How, more specifically, does Palamite theology relate to the three types of pantheisms posited by Niels Gregersen?²⁷

1. Palamas can certainly be regarded as an adherent of *soteriological panentheism*, provided we make a distinction between the ontological and the eschatological levels. Ontologically, from the very beginning God is fully and completely present in the creation through his divine energies. All things necessarily participate in the divine energies; otherwise they would not exist at all. But eschatologically it cannot be said that, at this present juncture, all things subsist in God with total fullness; for the created world around us, and we human beings within that world, exist at present in a fallen state.²⁸ There is, that is to say, more to come in the future: "at present we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror" (1 Cor. 13:12); "what we shall be has not yet been disclosed" (1 John 3:2). Even now God is certainly omnipresent within the world, but that omnipresence will be revealed in a far more glorious way when at the

final consummation God will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28) in a manner not as yet evident. In that sense it can indeed be said on Palamite principles that the existence of the world "in God" is not merely a static datum but a dynamic gift of grace, a gift that is to be revealed to an ever increasing extent through the voluntary cooperation of humankind.

2. What of Gregersen's second type, *expressionist panentheism*, whereby the divine Spirit expresses itself in the world by going out from God and then returning back to God, enriched by its experiences in the world? Palamas sometimes uses the triad found in Dionysius the Areopagite (and before him in Proclus): stability, procession, and return (*monē, proodos, epistrophē*). But Palamas is no Hegelian, and he would not have spoken of the Holy Spirit, or of God in his divine energies, as being "enriched" through experiences in the world. God is complete in himself, and the world does not add anything to the perfection of his being. But if we think as before in eschatological rather than ontological terms, perhaps we can effect a certain rapprochement between Palamas and the expressivist panentheists. The theology of the divine energies, as we have already emphasized, is to be interpreted in vividly dynamic terms. The uncreated energies, through their presence in creation, transform and divinize the world, continually bringing all things to ever new levels of reality, constantly transfiguring them "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18). So the penetration of the world by the uncreated energies does not enrich God, as he is in himself, but it certainly enriches the creation in its relation to the Creator.

3. Between Palamas and Gregersen's third type, *dipolar panentheism*, there seems to be a far sharper discrepancy. Palamas certainly did not wish to ascribe to evil any kind of "ontological" status. In common with traditional theism, both Eastern and Western, he believed that evil has no substantive existence. Evil is no more than a parasite, a twisting and distortion of things that, in their essential nature as created by God, are fundamentally good; it is an adjective, not a noun. Moreover, the Palamite doctrine of the divine energies in no way signifies that there is a "necessary interdependence" between God and the world, such that the world contributes to God as much as God contributes to the world.

On the contrary, Saint Gregory Palamas would have agreed wholeheartedly with the words of his predecessor Saint Maximus the Confessor: "God, full beyond all fullness, brought creatures into being, *not because he has need of anything*, but so that they might participate in him in proportion to their capacity and that he himself might rejoice in his works, through seeing them joyful."²⁹

In creating the universe, that is to say, God acted in entire freedom. Any

form of panentheism that restricts God's total liberty vis-à-vis the created world would have been altogether unacceptable to Palamas. Nothing compelled God to create, but he chose to do so. God is as free *not* to create as he is to create. God is necessary to the world, but the world is not necessary to God.

Yet, having said all this, it is important for us to add something more. Even if dipolar panentheism, as expounded by process theologians such as Alfred North Whitehead, is unacceptable to Palamas — and to traditional theism in general — yet hidden within the “dipolar” viewpoint there is a vital spark of truth which no Palamite would wish to deny. While the creation of the world is totally an act of divine freedom, at the same time this act is in no way arbitrary, casual, or accidental. God did not have to create, but in creating he was in fact expressing his own true self. For God is a God of love, and love is by its very nature self-diffusive. It implies sharing, exchange, self-giving, and response. This is true on the eternal level of God as Trinity, and it is true equally of God's self-expression as creator. “Divine love is ecstatic,” affirm the Areopagitic writings.³⁰ As a God of “ecstatic,” outgoing love, God the Holy Trinity desires to share that love with a world that he has freely created, thereby making possible — as Saint Maximus affirms — mutual participation and mutual joy. Creation, therefore, while an act of unqualified freedom, is at the same time a congruent and convincing disclosure of God's true nature as ecstatic love. Here, then, is a certain point of contact — not, indeed, a complete agreement, yet nonetheless a genuine convergence — between dipolar panentheism and Palamite orthodoxy. The world is not necessary to God; yet at the same time it is in no way peripheral to his being or incidental, for it expresses the self-diffusive love that is precisely at the very heart of the living God.

It is here, in the idea of self-diffusive love, that we find the true point of reconciliation between divine transcendence and divine immanence. Equally, the idea of self-diffusive love sums up the basic meaning of the Palamite teaching concerning God's energies. When Saint Gregory Palamas refers to the divine energies, what he means is nothing else than love in action. And when he speaks of the created world as sustained and interpenetrated by these omnipresent energies, his meaning is exactly that of Julian of Norwich when she marveled at the contrast between the “littleness” and fragility of the world on the one hand and its stability and persistence on the other: “It lasteth, and ever shall, for God loveth it. And so hath all thing being by the love of God.”³¹

The Universe as Hypostatic Inherence in the Logos of God: Panentheism in the Eastern Orthodox Perspective

ALEXEI V. NESTERUK

This paper is written with the purpose of elucidating the meaning of the notion of panentheism in the context of the Orthodox Christian tradition. Panentheism, generally speaking, advocates the presence of God in the world by asserting that God is bigger than the world and hence the world is in God. Panentheism does not identify God with the world, following thus the logic of classical theism, which asserts that God in his *essence* is beyond the world but is present in the world through his *economy*. This philosophical position distances it from pantheism, where the difference between God and the world disappears.

The fundamental issue of panentheism, then, is to articulate in what sense the transcendent God is present in the world and to find the means of expressing the presence of God in the world; this implies that all traditional rationalistic philosophical schemes based on the idea of substantial causation cannot be of great help in elucidating the meaning of panentheism. We advocate in this paper a view referred to in the title as “hypostatic inherence” of the world in the Logos of God, and which asserts the union of nature with its principle, the Logos, the union in which not a slightest trace of time, generation, and emergence can be found. It is only in this sense that panentheism can be conceived in the Orthodox context. We provide three different insights in favor of our claim, using some patristic theological ideas employed in modern context.

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